

Winsford Academy

Grange Lane, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 2BT

Inspection dates

4–5 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school transferred to the Fallibroome Trust in September 2014. Exceptional leadership and robust governance mean that standards and achievement for all pupils have risen sharply since then.
- The trust's executive principal and senior leaders have brought about rapid and sustained improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, pupils' outcomes and their behaviour.
- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress in most subjects and very good progress in English.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability achieve very well.
- Pupils benefit from mostly good or better teaching. They say that they enjoy their lessons and are determined to do their best.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they speak highly of the opportunities to make a contribution to school life.
- Senior leaders provide training for staff that is effective in developing the quality of their teaching. Teachers are now sharing good practice within the school and are collaborating with colleagues across the trust.
- Leaders have made sure that there are very strong safeguarding procedures in place to protect pupils. This means pupils are cared for very well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The sixth form requires improvement. Provision has been suspended and only Year 13 learners are following 16 to 19 study programmes. Standards for those currently on roll are improving.
- There are occasions when teachers do not give pupils precise feedback or expect them to improve their work.
- Although attendance is rising rapidly, a small number of pupils still fail to attend regularly.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement further by ensuring that the school's policy on assessment is followed so that:
 - teachers check pupils' understanding of their work before moving on
 - teachers give pupils quality feedback which consistently improves their progress and ensures pupils push themselves more to extend their learning.
- Raise the levels of attendance for the small number of pupils who are persistently absent.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- There have been considerable changes in structures and staffing since the school's transfer to the Fallibroome Trust. Governors and senior leaders have managed the changes with exceptional expertise, efficiency and compassion. The transfer was led by the executive principal of the Fallibroome Trust. He has demonstrated absolute clarity of purpose in securing robust structures for all aspects of school improvement, including governance.
- The academy's acting principal, together with the acting co-principal, has ensured that standards have continued to rise. In the absence of a principal, they have held colleagues to account for the progress of pupils. There are positive and mutually supportive professional relationships across the trust and the high ambition from leaders at this level have contributed to the improvement in standards.
- The school's 2015 English results were affected by changes introduced by the Department for Education (DfE) to only take into account pupils' first entry for an English examination. This meant that a significant proportion of the pupils' results were not counted in the overall results. The school has recognised this was a mistake and has put in further quality assurance to check this aspect of the school's work. The school has acted on advice from the DfE to schools to ensure that all their own data is published and available to Ofsted and parents.
- Leaders have drawn on the expertise of the wider trust to secure an accurate view of the strengths and areas for improvement across all aspects of the school. Leaders have tackled underperformance with determination. They have also managed the problems of overstaffing swiftly and with compassion. Systems for securing financial stability, processes for improving the quality of teaching and the use of achievement information have all improved considerably.
- After the transfer to the new trust, leaders realised that provision for 16 to 19 programmes were not meeting the learners' needs. They took a considered decision to suspend the sixth form and as result, only Year 13 learners are on roll at present. Strong leadership of provision for the current cohort mean that standards are improving. Consultations and feasibility studies are under way to assess the viability of future provision.
- Leaders evaluate the work of the school accurately. When the school transferred to the Fallibroome Trust, the executive principal arranged for a review of all aspects of the school's work, including the performance of departments, governance, finance and human resources. This work was incisive and effective. It resulted in considerable change of structures and of responsibilities. These have played a significant part in the swift turnaround in standards. External reviews of the school's work support the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation.
- Leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. Training for staff is structured, frequent and meets the needs of the school's ambitious aspirations and for all teachers' individual needs.
- Arrangements with the wider trust mean that colleagues from across a number of schools work together to improve standards for all pupils. Staff welcome this collaboration and speak highly of the support they have received and say they are now more confident in their roles. Staff morale is good and contributing to the rapid improvements being made.
- There is now a 'culture of improving learning'. While this work was originally driven by senior leaders, teachers are now offering to lead training sessions. This is an indication of the extent to which all colleagues are rising to the challenge of improvement. Developing the capacity of middle leaders is a high priority and many are working towards national leadership qualifications. The projects they are undertaking for these qualifications are making a difference to pupils' outcomes across the school.
- Underperformance has been robustly challenged and the setting of targets for teachers to improve is used well to identify the skills they need to develop.
- Leaders' use of information about how well pupils are doing is sharp. Their predictions for GCSE results in 2015 were accurate. This means they have a very clear view of how pupils are likely to perform in 2016 and also for pupils in all year groups. This analysis means that they are able to fine-tune the support given to pupils to make gains in their learning.
- Leaders have an accurate view of where standards need to rise. For example, they recognised that while the most-able pupils were achieving well in science, those with low prior attainment were not making the same progress. They have addressed this by strengthening the provision for these pupils and they are now making better progress.

- Additional coaching support for pupils who have fallen behind is strong. This is more than a 'quick fix' and ensures that pupils securely closed the gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Pupils spoke very highly of this aspect of the school's support.
- The broad and balanced curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to learn. The range of subjects and courses helps pupils acquire knowledge, understanding and skills in all aspects of their education. The school promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well across the curriculum and in making the school's values clear. Pupils spoke highly of wider curriculum opportunities such as enterprise clubs, a mathematics games club, dance, drama and singing. They have many opportunities to engage in the wider aspects of school life. For example, parents spoke in glowing terms of a dance session organised by pupils in Year 10 for pupils from local primary schools.
- Leaders have developed policies and systems which reflect the national assessment changes. Although they are used and understood by most teachers and pupils, leaders recognise that there are some departments where they are not used as well and they are working to address this. Parents spoken to during the inspection said that they find their children's reports helpful.
- Extra government funding for disadvantaged pupils is used well. Leaders monitor these pupils closely and arrange effective extra support when necessary. Pupils' academic, social and emotional needs are developed effectively, so these pupils progress well.
- Pupils in Year 7 who receive additional funding to catch up to the expected level receive purposeful additional support through small-group numeracy and literacy sessions. Literacy support is provided to other year groups and reading age scores have risen. Pupils were very enthusiastic about how these sessions have helped them to improve.
- Leaders carefully monitor the progress and attendance of pupils who attend off-site provision. As a result these pupils make similar progress to that of their peers in the academy.
- Links with the community are increasingly strong. The new principal who is due to start at the school in June 2016 has met the parents and children in primary schools and as a result, numbers choosing the school for the next academic year are rising.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved considerably. Members of the governing body now have exceptional management, educational and financial experience. They have used their skills to bring about change swiftly and to great effect. Since taking over governance they have managed a considerable financial deficit, a large number of redundancies, and secured the smooth transition for the appointment of a new principal.
 - Governors have secured structures so that that the school continues to improve. They have thorough procedures for checking progress in meeting ambitious targets, including attendance at meetings about pupils' progress. They set targets for teachers to improve and link teachers' performance and pupils' outcomes to pay progression. They are very clear about how all groups of pupils are achieving. Members of the board have information about how successfully the government's additional funding, known as pupil premium, for disadvantaged pupils and 'catch-up funding' is used.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's work to keep pupils safe is systematic and exceptionally well led. Staff are trained in the identification and reporting of risk. The most vulnerable pupils receive close support and the school's liaison with other agencies is effective. Leaders and managers have created a culture of care where pupils' welfare is actively promoted. Pupils are listened to and feel safe. Staff are trained to identify when a pupil may be at risk of neglect, abuse or exploitation and they report their concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Teachers have received effective support to improve and most speak highly of the additional training opportunities.
- In most lessons, teachers plan activities that stimulate and engage the pupils. There were many examples of teachers using subject-specific and technical vocabulary and expecting pupils to use these terms correctly. Expectations are high and, in the majority of cases, the most-able pupils are being challenged to achieve high standards; they are now making good progress. Some pupils said: 'Our teachers push us to do well.'
- In many lessons, the learning is explained carefully so that pupils understand what they are doing and how

to reach high standards. In these lessons teachers provide work which makes pupils think and as a result they are highly motivated to do their best.

- High expectations are evident in many lessons, for example in a drama lesson which included pupils with special educational needs, the teacher instilled confidence so that these pupils were willing to try new ideas. The teacher's questions and use of technical language with a low prior-attaining group maintained challenge. Less-confident pupils were fully engaged and well supported by a teaching assistant. Similar examples of high expectations were seen in a number of subjects, including sports science and in the key stage 3 nurture group.
- Formal assessments take place at key points throughout the year and leaders use this to make sure that gaps in pupils' learning are identified and addressed. However, a few subject leaders are not clear about how the various achievement information, such as target grades and 'working-at' grades, should be used to really drive progress. Senior leaders are addressing this to ensure all teachers use assessment information effectively in their planning so that the work in lessons is at the right level to meet groups of pupils' needs.
- While much feedback provided to pupils helps them to make improvements or extend their work, teachers do not always make sure that pupils act on the guidance they receive. In some lessons, teachers move on before checking that all pupils understand what they have been learning. Occasionally, when this happens, pupils are not clear about what they are expected to do and, if not checked swiftly enough, pupils do not make as much progress.
- Teaching assistants work effectively and make a positive contribution to how well pupils who need support learn. Several examples of this were seen when they used probing questions to make pupils think more carefully about their work.
- Literacy is well developed across the school and reading skills are rising rapidly.
- Teachers challenge stereotypes and the use of derogatory language in lessons and around the school. They are quick to tackle inappropriate language and promote equality of opportunity and diversity in teaching and learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is good.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are very positive. Pupils are very well cared for. They and their families spoke highly of the quality of care and support the school provides. Where concerns are raised, close relationships with local agencies and parents mean that pupils' welfare needs are managed quickly and sensitively.
- Pupils take part in activities which keep them fit and healthy. Form time, assemblies and the well-planned personal, social and health education programme mean that pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including sensible use of the internet.
- Pupils are very clear about what constitutes bullying and they work with staff to promote anti-bullying. They are confident that the school does not tolerate it and they were clear that derogatory name calling is unacceptable.
- A programme of careers education is taught from Years 7 to 11. Pupils in Year 11 have support and guidance to decide on their next stage of education or training. As a result, all pupils continue in education, employment or training. There are very good systems to support vulnerable pupils in the next stage of their education or training.
- School leaders have strong systems in place to support pupils' welfare and safety. There are good links to outside agencies and these support the school's work in teaching pupils about emotional and mental health issues.
- Pupils attending off-site provision improve their basic skills, behaviour and confidence. The school monitors their attendance and behaviour and progress very closely. Leaders take swift action to support any who are in danger of falling behind and as a result outcomes for these pupils are good.
- Leaders make sure that pupils have opportunities to understand British values. This was evident in assemblies, and in talking to pupils about their opportunities to contribute to school life. For instance, pupils take part in departmental reviews and organise a 'buddying' system for pupils new to the school.
- Leaders' work to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism is very effective. Leaders respond swiftly when pupils are vulnerable to these issues.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the improvements in behaviour. Behaviour is now good in lessons and around the school. Pupils say they find the rewards system for behaviour very motivating and parents appreciate having texts letting them know that their children are working hard. Most staff and parents believe that behaviour is good.
- In lessons, pupils show respect to their teachers and each other, which creates a positive atmosphere for learning. Pupils are keen to do well and they generally take pride in their work.
- Pupils look after the school well and respect the environment. The canteen is a central part of the school, both in its location and as a place to socialise. Pupils use this area well and know that it is unacceptable to drop litter.
- Leadership of behaviour and attendance is strong. As a result, attendance has improved significantly and is now broadly line with national figures. While there has also been a significant drop in the number of pupils who are persistently absent, there remain a small number of pupils whose attendance is not as high as others.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils start at the school with standards which are well below those of other pupils nationally. They make good progress in mathematics and very good progress in English. In 2015, the proportion of Year 11 pupils attaining five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, rose to within 6% of the national figure.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. However, because other pupils made even better progress in 2015, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school widened in English and mathematics. These gaps and the gaps to other pupils nationally are closing quickly throughout the school.
- Those pupils who have special educational needs or disability achieve well and make very good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils achieved well in 2015 in a number of subjects, including art, geography and performing arts. Current pupils in all year groups are now making more rapid progress due to the significant improvements that have been made to teaching since September 2014. Pupils are responding to higher expectations and say that they enjoy the additional challenge.
- The proportion of most-able pupils is well below the national figure and they have not always achieved the higher grades. Teaching is now much stronger for these pupils and they are on track to reach their targets.
- Reading and literacy across the curriculum is very well developed. The library is at the heart of the school. It is well resourced and is used both formally and informally by pupils, who say that they enjoy reading for pleasure.
- The school's inclusion unit is exceptionally well run. Leaders provide considerable support, high expectations and engage in regular dialogue with families. As a result, these pupils are making good progress and are on track to meet their targets.
- As a result of pupils making good progress in English and mathematics, combined with impartial careers guidance, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

16 to 19 study programmes

requires improvement

- In 2015 learners did not achieve their potential in academic courses.
- On taking over sponsorship of the academy in September 2014, the trust and the governing body took the view that the provision and outcomes for the sixth form were providing neither value for money nor good-quality outcomes for learners. As a result, no Year 12 learners were admitted to the sixth form in September 2015. At the time of the inspection there were 35 pupils on roll in Year 13, with just a few weeks before finishing their courses. Feasibility studies for future 16 to 19 provision are under way.
- Having taken this decision, leaders focused on raising standards, particularly for academic qualifications. They appointed an experienced senior leader to take on responsibility for ensuring that learners currently on roll have the best possible experiences.

- Teaching has improved and they are on track to improve the results they achieve in their academic and vocational qualifications this year. A small number of learners took their GCSEs in English and mathematics in order to achieve a grade C.
- Learners receive effective independent advice and guidance. They had opportunities for work experience in Year 12. All learners have obtained places at higher education, on apprenticeships or in employment once they have completed their courses.
- Non-qualification provision, including a wide range of effective enrichment activities, effectively develops learners' personal development and well-being and prepares them well for life beyond the sixth form.

School details

Unique reference number	136184
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10012138

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	862
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	35
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joanne Watkins
Acting Principal	Darren Christian
Telephone number	01606 592300
Website	https://winsfordacademy.net
Email address	admin@winsfordacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 January 2014

Information about this school

- The school transferred from the E-ACT Trust to the Fallibroome Trust on 1 September 2014. The former principal left the school in December 2015; a new principal is due to start in June 2016. In the interim, two senior leaders (an acting principal and acting co-principal) are leading the school, supported by the executive principal of the trust.
- Winsford Academy is an average-sized school.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is significantly above the national average. This funding is provided for those known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Mid-Cheshire College.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school meets the requirements on the publication of information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 27 lessons, a number of which were jointly observed with senior leaders. Inspectors also made short visits to lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with the executive principal, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils and learners, members of the governing body and parents.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documents, including information on pupils' outcomes, the school's monitoring of its work, minutes of meetings, records relating to the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment, behaviour and the safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 54 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), 31 comments from parents and the 22 questionnaires completed by staff and 19 completed by pupils.

Inspection team

Mary Myatt, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Timothy Long	Ofsted Inspector
Charles Lowry	Ofsted Inspector

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