

# The Featherstone Academy

Pontefract Road, Purston, Featherstone, Pontefract, West Yorkshire WF7 5AJ

## Inspection dates

7–8 February 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	<b>Requires improvement</b>

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The executive headteacher and head of school have an uncompromising ambition for the school. Their strong leadership has led to better teaching, improved behaviour and attendance and higher attainment for pupils.
- Staff share leaders' vision for the school and are rightly proud of the improvements they have secured since the previous inspection.
- The school's system to promote excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning is highly effective. Pupils work hard and treat each other and adults with respect. They are proud to belong to the school and have high aspirations for their future.
- Governors have the right expertise and skills to provide robust challenge to senior leaders. They know the school well and are clear about what more needs to be done.
- Leaders have taken effective action to eradicate weaker teaching and increase the proportion of good or better teaching. As a result, teaching is good overall and the progress made by pupils in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science, has accelerated over time.
- Pupils feel safe in the school and have an acute awareness of issues that may pose a risk to their safety. If they have a problem, they have trust in staff to help them resolve the issues.
- Effective professional development and coaching support for staff has resulted in improvements to the quality of teaching. Teachers plan activities that interest pupils and help them to make good progress in most subjects.
- Support for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective. Leaders act as champions for these pupils. As a result, their progress has improved.
- In a few subjects, including humanities, the work set for the most able and middle-ability pupils does not always challenge them to make progress as quickly as they can, particularly in key stage 3. Occasionally some teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils' presentation and basic skills in their written work.
- Leaders undertake regular checks on the quality of teaching. These checks do not take enough account of the progress pupils make over time.
- Leaders know what needs to be done to improve the school further. However, the targets set by leaders to improve the school are not precise enough to ensure that leaders can check on the impact of their work.
- Some middle leaders are highly effective in securing improvements in their area of responsibility. Others are newer to their role or have yet to fully develop the skills they need to improve the outcomes achieved by pupils.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership by:
  - continuing to provide support so that all middle leaders develop the skills they need to improve pupils' progress and attainment in their subject areas
  - making sure that checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are sharply focused on the progress made by pupils and groups of pupils over time
  - ensuring that targets in the school's development plans are measurable so that leaders can keep a more precise check on the progress made on key priorities.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils make substantial progress across all year groups and particularly in humanities by:
  - making sure that teachers' assessments of pupils' work are accurate in history
  - ensuring that work set for middle- and high-attaining pupils challenges them to achieve as well as they can, particularly in key stage 3
  - setting consistently high expectations for the presentation of pupils' work and for the accuracy of their grammar and punctuation skills.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The executive headteacher, head of school and governors have taken decisive action to strengthen the quality of teaching and improve pupils' outcomes since the previous inspection. Leaders have the strong support of staff in improving the school and morale is high. Consequently, the overall effectiveness of the school has improved and is now good.
- Since the previous inspection the trust has provided very effective, practical support and challenge to improve the school. This has included help with recruitment of staff, improving attendance, staff development and safeguarding. The regular tours of the school and feedback provided by the executive headteacher have led to consistency in the application of the school's behaviour policy. Pupils' behaviour is now outstanding.
- The special educational needs coordinator is a passionate advocate for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. She and her team have an exceptional knowledge of the needs of each pupil. She has improved systems to share this information with teaching staff so that they too can understand the barriers to learning for each pupil. Funding is used to provide well-targeted support for pupils inside and beyond classrooms. As a result, the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving strongly.
- Leaders make very good use of additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils and those who need to catch up in Year 7. Pupils receive bespoke programmes of support and are allocated an adult who reviews their progress regularly. Senior leaders check carefully on the impact of this work and make changes to improve its effectiveness. As a result, the progress of disadvantaged pupils has accelerated and is now in line with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally with similar starting points. Pupils across Year 7 have made better-than-average gains in their reading skills.
- Leaders have established good systems to keep a close eye on alternative provision attended by pupils. Leaders check the progress, attendance, behaviour and safety of this very small number of pupils and can evidence the positive impact of the provision on their outcomes.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well organised. Assemblies and form time are used productively to deliver a comprehensive personal, social and health education programme and pupils develop into mature, responsible individuals. Conversations with pupils and an analysis of pupils' work showed that they take time to reflect sensitively on their beliefs and values and those of others, and show tolerance and respect. This helps pupils to be well prepared to take their place in modern Britain.
- The school makes good use of time at the end of the school day to provide extra support for those who need it and for a variety of extra-curricular activities. The carefully targeted interventions which took place over the last academic year made a major contribution to the improved examination results in Year 11.
- The curriculum interests pupils and ensures that they make good progress in most areas. There is a wide range of courses available to pupils, leading to higher proportions of pupils moving into education and employment at the end of Year 11. Leaders review

the impact of the curriculum carefully. Their recognition that pupils needed to develop resilience resulted in a programme of work, including residential experiences for pupils, which has improved pupils' attitudes to learning. Pupils are given an early element of choice in Year 8 in subjects such as the performing arts and technology and this has led to high levels of pupil engagement. Leaders have recognised that the most able scientists need the challenge of studying the three sciences separately and that is now in place for Year 10 pupils. Leaders know that pupils are not yet achieving as well as they could in history and geography and are taking steps to address this.

- Leaders and managers have an accurate view of what is working well in the school and where improvements are still needed. Their plans for development focus well on the most important priorities and are supporting strong improvement. However, leaders do not ensure that the targets they set are measurable. This limits their ability to check precisely on the progress they are making.
- Increasingly middle leaders are playing their part in improvements across the school and in their subject areas. Senior leaders have given them greater responsibility and middle leaders are rising to the challenge. This is particularly evident in mathematics where strong leadership has improved the consistency of teaching and the outcomes achieved by pupils. However, middle leaders are at different stages in their development and some are new in post. Senior leaders recognise this and are providing a wide range of support to help them to develop their skills.
- Leaders use a range of evidence to determine the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils are making. A system is in place for checking the performance of teachers and identifying areas that require strengthening, and this has led to improvements in the quality of teaching across the school. Professional development is designed around the varying needs of individual teachers. The impact of this work is checked regularly through lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. However, at times these checks do not focus precisely enough on the progress made by pupils and groups of pupils over time.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors are very ambitious for the pupils and staff. They have effective systems in place, including frequent visits to the school to check on progress and to ensure that the school is improving. Governors have a clear handle on the quality of teaching and know where it needs to improve. They understand the link between performance and pay progression and have challenged the school leaders to take appropriate action when teaching has not been good enough.
- Governors are highly skilled and have the necessary expertise to support their work. They have a particularly strong grasp of how to analyse pupils' assessment information. They could see there was much to celebrate with the examination results of Year 11 in 2016, but challenged leaders robustly on why certain groups did not make the same progress as other pupils.
- Governors recognise that while the school's development plan is targeted at the correct issues for improvement, targets set by leaders are not always precise enough. This limits the ability of governors to accurately judge the impact of leaders' work.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff and governors are very clear about their responsibility to keep children safe and fulfil their safeguarding duties. Governors review the school's processes regularly to check that systems are fit for purpose. The school conducts appropriate checks on the suitability of adults to work with children.
- There is a clear ethos across the school that sets the safety of pupils as a high priority. Leaders work closely with external agencies such as the 'early help' arrangements in the locality to ensure that appropriate action is being taken to keep the most vulnerable pupils safe.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep safe and assess the risks that might face them. The school has engaged well with the local police community support officer who has provided comprehensive advice to pupils on issues such as online safety. As a result, every pupil spoken to by inspectors could explain the strategies necessary to keep them safe online.
- Leaders have robustly tackled pupils' absence and go the extra mile, visiting homes to check on pupils on the first day of absence and tenaciously chasing up non-attendance. As a result, the much-improved attendance is contributing well to pupils' safety and well-being.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Leaders have taken determined action to improve the quality of teaching. Carefully targeted professional development and coaching has helped teachers to develop their skills. As a result of this better teaching, the progress made by pupils has accelerated rapidly since the previous inspection.
- Positive relationships and mutual respect feature strongly in the school. Teachers have established purposeful classroom routines which pupils follow without question and this enables lessons to progress smoothly and without interruption.
- There is impressive consistency in teachers' adherence to the school's policy on feedback to pupils. Teachers monitor pupils' learning closely within lessons and are quick to pick up and address misconceptions. Pupils take on board the advice they are given and this leads to improvements in the quality of their work.
- Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning. They support pupils with a range of abilities and have the subject knowledge they need to answer questions and intervene promptly when pupils are struggling with their work.
- School leaders have focused intensively and successfully on improving pupils' reading skills. The most able pupils read with fluency and feeling. Lower-ability readers have the right techniques to tackle words they find more difficult. Pupils in Year 7 are very positive about their reading project, where they come to school early twice a week to read with a teacher.
- At its best, teaching challenges pupils of all abilities. In mathematics, able pupils are making strong progress through a 'traffic light' system which allows them to select tasks

of appropriate challenge, overseen by the teacher. While teachers closely monitor what pupils choose, pupils demonstrate ambition themselves in selecting trickier work. However, in some subjects, some teaching does not routinely ensure that middle- and higher-ability pupils are challenged sufficiently well.

- Analysis of pupils' workbooks across a range of subjects shows that in some subjects, pupils' progress accelerates in key stage 4. Leaders recognise that there is still more to do to ensure that pupils are consistently challenged to make progress at the same rate across key stage 3. While many teachers insist on impeccable presentation and accuracy in grammar and punctuation skills, occasionally, some teachers do not expect as much and pupils' work is inconsistent in this regard.
- Leaders recognise that the quality of teaching in history and geography has not been consistently good over time and this has resulted in weak outcomes for pupils. Teachers' assessments in history have not been robust. Leaders are beginning to get to grips with this and have appointed new staff to lead and teach in these subject areas. Some improvements are already apparent in geography, but it is too early to discern the full impact of this work on the outcomes achieved by pupils.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils wear their uniform immaculately. They are extremely proud of their school and the opportunities it provides for them. They value the support of their teachers and staff and recognise and appreciate the improvements brought about over recent years at the school.
- The ambition which staff have for pupils is encouraging all pupils to be highly aspirational for their future. Pupils know the demanding targets which their teachers have set for them. Regular reviews and feedback ensure that all pupils are aware of how close they are to their targets and what they need to do to reach them. Pupils demonstrate an impressive determination to succeed, recognising that success at the school will increase their chances of a good job and a fulfilling life.
- Pupils receive comprehensive guidance on how to stay safe in school and within their community. Pupils discuss the risks relating to online safety, drugs awareness and the importance of healthy relationships with maturity. Pupils have great confidence in the staff to deal with any issues that they take to them.
- Pupils enjoy excellent opportunities to develop their personal views, especially during form time and 'positive discipline' lessons. An after-school club has been set up for those pupils with the ability to consider attending the top universities. They value the forum this provides to discuss topical issues and current affairs in more depth.
- Pupils are extremely knowledgeable about the different types of bullying and the strong curriculum for personal development has ensured that they do not tolerate racism or homophobia. During the inspection, pupils showed great sensitivity when discussing information relating to social injustice. In conversation with an inspector, a pupil described the importance of individual liberty in our society, recognising that this must be within the rule of law. Pupils are adamant that discrimination has no place in the school.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are polite and very welcoming to visitors, holding doors open for them as they walk around the school, eager to talk about what they enjoy. During lunch and breaktimes pupils mix together extremely well and behave very sensibly.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons is excellent. They settle to their work promptly. As a result, learning proceeds quickly and without interruption.
- Staff and pupils agree that behaviour has improved significantly since the introduction of the new behaviour system. Teachers use both rewards and sanctions effectively and pupils have responded extremely well to the new approach.
- Initially, with the introduction of the stricter regime, fixed-term exclusions rose sharply. However, they have now reduced significantly as pupils accept and meet staff's high expectations. The proportion of pupils receiving detentions for inappropriate conduct has also declined.
- Leaders introduced more rigorous systems to monitor and improve attendance, recognising that high absence was having a negative impact on some pupils' learning. As a result, attendance for all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special needs and/or disabilities, has improved significantly and is now above the national average.
- Leaders keep a close check on the behaviour, attendance and welfare of the very few pupils attending alternative provision. As a result, pupils are making good progress in those settings.

### Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Since the previous inspection, rates of progress have accelerated significantly. In 2016, by the end of Year 11, pupils' progress in a wide range of subjects was in line with that of other pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved a good GCSE pass in both English and mathematics by the end of Year 11 has risen significantly since the previous inspection and is now above the national average. Consequently, pupils are better prepared for their next stages in education, employment or training.
- Leaders' effective use of pupil premium funding has improved the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils since the previous inspection. In 2016 the progress of disadvantaged pupils was broadly in line with the national average at the end of Year 11. The proportion of pupils achieving a good GCSE pass in English and mathematics was close to the national average for non-disadvantaged pupils. Assessment information for pupils currently on roll at the school indicates that this improved performance is continuing.
- Valuable careers advice and guidance, together with improved achievement, are securing better destinations for pupils when they leave the school. In 2016, only one pupil who left Year 11 did not enter employment, education or training routes.

- Over time, the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been inconsistent. However, new approaches to support and intervention for pupils, combined with the determined ambition of leaders, have led to an improving picture with current pupils making much better progress to catch up to their peers.
- Outcomes achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 indicate that the progress of middle ability and most-able pupils, including the most-able disadvantaged pupils, is broadly in line with that of pupils nationally with similar starting points. However, a review of current pupils' workbooks shows that their progress is more rapid in Years 10 and 11 because teachers demand more from them. Leaders acknowledge that middle- and higher-attaining pupils are capable of making better progress in key stage 3 so that a higher proportion can reach the highest grades at the end of key stage 4.
- The progress and attainment of pupils in some humanities subjects has been weaker over time. Leaders identified this correctly and are taking appropriate steps to improve the quality of teaching. This is beginning to bear fruit in geography but it is too early to assess the full impact on pupils' outcomes, particularly in history.



## School details

Unique reference number	138593
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10023831

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	327
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Alan Winn
Headteacher	Andy Goultly (executive headteacher)
Telephone number	01977 722805
Website	<a href="http://www.featherstoneacademy.org.uk">www.featherstoneacademy.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@featherstone.academy">info@featherstone.academy</a>
Date of previous inspection	3–4 March 2014

## Information about this school

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is smaller than the average secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is slightly above the national average.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- There are two alternative providers currently used by a few pupils. They are Action to Change and the U Can Centre. These pupils remain on roll at The Featherstone Academy.
- The school is part of the Rodillian Trust.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of teaching and learning in parts of lessons, with four sessions jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Throughout the two days of the inspection, inspectors spoke with pupils, both informally and formally, about their learning and safety.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading. They reviewed pupils' work in lessons and scrutinised samples of work in pupils' books.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with two governors and with the executive headteacher as a representative of the Rodillian Trust. Inspectors also held meetings with senior and middle leaders and other staff.
- An inspector conducted a telephone meeting with the two alternative providers who serve the school.
- Inspectors reviewed leaders' evaluation of the performance of the school, the school development plan and minutes of governing body meetings. They considered a range of documentation in relation to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors analysed 26 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents (Parent View) and 35 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

David Pridding, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Brown	Her Majesty's Inspector
Elizabeth Cresswell	Ofsted Inspector

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