

Inspection of a good school: The Featherstone Academy

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

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 March 2022

Outcome

The Featherstone Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff understand the community that they serve. Leaders use this knowledge to plan a curriculum that develops pupils as individuals as well as enabling their academic success. Staff share leaders' vision. Everyone is pulling in the same direction for pupils at The Featherstone Academy.

Pupils are supported to become resilient learners. They enthuse about their 'Applied Resilience' programme. Younger pupils get the freedom to learn new skills and try new things. For example, some pupils choose to learn Latin, some develop their sports leadership skills, and others deepen their understanding of engineering. Pupils value this dedicated time to develop their personal interests. As one pupil put it, 'it gives us diversity of learning'. This work builds their confidence and supports their learning across the curriculum.

Pupils feel safe. They know that the door is open if they want to talk to pastoral staff about any issues. Year 7 pupils feel well supported to settle into the school. Leaders swiftly clamp down on any bullying that occurs.

Leaders set a high bar for what they expect of pupils. Lessons are generally calm and orderly. Pupils say that behaviour has improved over time. However, some pupils told inspectors that occasionally behaviour can disrupt learning in some subjects. A small minority of pupils find it difficult to consistently reach the school's high behaviour expectations.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Academic subjects are at the heart of the school's curriculum. The vast majority of Year 10 pupils continue to study GCSEs in the English Baccalaureate subjects such as history, geography and modern foreign languages. Pupils have opportunities to study other subjects such as childcare and performing arts. Until recently, some important subjects such as music and computing were not taught. The new principal has acted swiftly to

address this. Leaders have purchased new equipment. Staff are being recruited. With the support of the trust, pupils in Years 7 and 8 have begun to study these subjects. Leaders know that continuing to develop music and computing is important work moving forward.

The school's curriculum is well designed. Leaders have set out the subject knowledge that they want pupils to learn and a logical order in which it should be taught. This allows pupils to build their knowledge and deepen their understanding over time. For example, in history, pupils develop their understanding of important historical concepts from one year to the next. By the end of Year 11, pupils have a deep understanding of concepts such as power and Parliament.

The curriculum is for everyone. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. They access the same curriculum as everyone else. Trustees have a sharp focus on this group of pupils. So do leaders. They ensure that the curriculum supports pupils with SEND to make effective progress. This includes pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Teachers know their subjects well. They frequently check what pupils know from previous lessons and previous years so that they can be sure that pupils are learning the curriculum. Pupils value this. It helps them to remember important knowledge. Subject leaders use assessment information intelligently to further develop the curriculum. For example, leaders have used Year 11 assessments to identify which topics pupils find difficult. Leaders have strengthened the key stage 3 curriculum in these topics to ensure pupils have firmer foundations for key stage 4.

Reading is an important part of school life. Leaders have responded immediately to the increased numbers of pupils who have arrived in Year 7 with gaps in their reading knowledge. There are regular opportunities to read with adults. Pupils who need to catch up are helped by trained staff.

Teachers apply the behaviour system consistently. Pupils generally behave well. Inspectors saw lessons that were orderly. However, some pupils told inspectors that there are occasions where a small minority of pupils disrupt lessons. Pastoral staff help pupils to turn things around. Some pupils improve their behaviour. Others keep making the same mistakes and are repeatedly removed from lessons or suspended from school. There is more for leaders to do to reduce the amount of time that a small minority of pupils spend out of lessons because of their behaviour.

Leaders invest time to support Year 7 and 8 pupils to adapt to secondary school. The applied resilience programme builds pupils' confidence and resilience. Pupils select from a range of activities to undertake and study throughout the year. They became more determined learners as a result of this programme. Pupils transfer the skills that they develop to help them succeed in other lessons. This work is a strength of the school.

Staff feel that the school is well led. Inspectors agree. Staff value the high visibility of leaders. The vast majority of staff feel supported with their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school carries out the appropriate vetting checks on staff prior to their employment. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. Leaders use questionnaires to check that staff understand the key safeguarding information that they receive. Staff know what signs might indicate that a pupil may be at risk and report any concerns in a timely manner. Safeguarding leaders ensure that pupils get the help that they need.

Pupils value the pastoral support that they can access. This includes support for pupils' mental health and well-being.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum does not currently give all pupils access to a broad range of subjects. However, it is clear from leaders' actions that they are in the process of bringing this about. For example, computing and music have recently been introduced to the curriculum. Leaders need to complete the process of ensuring pupils have access to a broad range of subjects at key stage 3 and 4, within their identified timescales. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.
- Over time, suspensions and internal sanctions have been high. A small minority of pupils are repeatedly issued with internal sanctions or are suspended from school due to behaviour incidents. This means that pupils miss lessons. Leaders should work to reduce the incidents of poor behaviour that are leading to suspensions and internal sanctions.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2017.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	138593
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10211404
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	448
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Annette Hall
Principal	Diana Townshend
Website	www.featherstone.academy
Date of previous inspection	7 and 8 February 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with an EHC plan. This is attended by pupils with complex communication and interaction needs.
- The school has three pupils who attend a registered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, the senior leadership team, middle leaders, teachers, pastoral staff and non-teachers.
- The lead inspector held virtual meetings with the chair of trustees and the chair of the local review board. He also held meetings with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, history and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a

sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors spoke to other subject leaders and looked at curriculum plans. The lead inspector met with senior leaders to discuss curriculum development.
- The lead inspector met with the school's designated safeguarding lead and the trust's safeguarding lead. He reviewed the school's single central record, safeguarding records, relevant policies and other safeguarding documentation.
- Inspectors visited lessons across the school as well as the school's isolation room. They observed break and lunchtime arrangements as well as lesson changeover.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally, including pupils who receive support to improve their behaviour.
- An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from the registered alternative provision used by the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. The lead inspector reviewed minutes of meetings of the trust board and local review board.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, parents and staff from Ofsted's questionnaires.

Inspection team

Graham Findlay, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Mills

Her Majesty's Inspector

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