

Inspection of a good school: Western House Academy

Richards Way, Cippenham, Slough, Berkshire SL1 5TJ

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 November 2022

Outcome

Western House Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say that their school is friendly and that the teachers are helpful and kind. The motto of the school is that 'every opportunity shapes a life'. Leaders achieve this by providing pupils with an impressive range of experiences. Leaders have high ambitions and they want all pupils to reach their full potential. Pupils are keen to rise to the challenge of these high ambitions. They work hard and enjoy demonstrating their understanding in lessons.

Leaders have high expectations regarding behaviour. Pupils are encouraged to follow the school's values, which include being courageous, resilient and honest. In lessons and around the school, pupils behave well. They feel happy and safe and value their friendships. Bullying is rare, and teachers are good at sorting out any problems.

Pupils enjoy taking on a range of responsibilities. For example, those who are 'peer buddies' patrol the playground in high-visibility jackets and make sure that everyone has someone to play with. 'Music mentors' talk confidently to the whole school about the composer of the week. Head pupils, school councillors and prefects are all encouraged to help towards the smooth running of the school. They enjoy making suggestions for further improvements.

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

The curriculum is well designed. It is ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum is based on several key principles that aim to expand pupils' knowledge and experiences. Subject information is planned carefully so that pupils receive information in a step-by-step way. There are many opportunities built into the curriculum that enable pupils to revisit and build on past learning. There are effective systems in place for identifying and supporting pupils with SEND. Individual support plans are detailed and inform the next steps in learning. Suitable adaptations are made to the curriculum to ensure that pupils make good progress in achieving their individual targets.

Teachers implement the aims of the curriculum well. They explain concepts clearly, and this enables pupils to talk confidently about their learning. Staff are well trained, particularly in subjects such as English and mathematics. However, in some other subjects, teachers have not yet had subject-specific training. Teachers are constantly working to continuously improve their practice. Teachers' checks on pupils' learning in many subjects are strong. This enables teachers to identify what pupils already know and what they need to learn next. However, these processes are not as strong in a small number of subjects. Specialist staff in computing, modern foreign languages, music and physical education provide a depth of subject knowledge. Many pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the extensive range of sports provision, for instance.

Pupils get off to a good start in learning to read. Leaders have prioritised reading. They have ensured that staff are well trained. Children in Nursery are carefully helped to develop their speaking and listening skills. Those in early years quickly learn to recognise letters and the sounds they represent. They enjoy listening to staff reading exciting stories and rhymes. As they progress through key stage 1, pupils become confident readers. Staff provide effective guidance to pupils who have gaps in their knowledge and need to catch up. Older pupils get regular opportunities to develop their reading skills.

The school excels in providing for pupils' wider development. Pupils are given a range of experiences that help them to become active citizens. For example, some pupils recently participated on the panel of an international youth advisory board. Pupils benefit from an extensive range of extracurricular activities. These include cooking, gardening, origami and contributing features for the school radio. Leaders are focused on ensuring that pupils are well prepared for their future. The digital literacy programme enables pupils, particularly those in Years 4, 5 and 6, to access and develop their learning through electronic devices. Pupils are given an early understanding of future career pathways. They enjoy meeting representatives from different spheres of work and asking questions about a range of different opportunities.

Staff work well together as an effective team. Those with governance responsibilities are very experienced. Leaders are very aware of staff workload. They ensure that staff well-being is always considered when considering making any changes.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong safeguarding culture. All staff are well trained, and any concerns are acted on promptly. Staff make sure that pupils and their families get the help and support needed.

The curriculum teaches pupils to stay safe. They learn how to avoid risks when using the internet or playing games online. Pupils receive good support to look after both their physical and mental health. Pupils say that they are happy to share any concerns they may have. They know that there is always someone available to talk through any worries.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- It is not always clear how successfully pupils have understood their learning in some foundation subjects. This is because teachers do not regularly assess learning in these subjects. Leaders need to ensure that the assessment system is fully implemented so that teachers can check whether pupils are remembering key information.
- In some foundation subjects, teachers do not always have the subject-specific expertise that they need in order to implement the curriculum fully effectively. This means that sometimes, pupils do not make connections in their learning between what they are doing now and what they have done before. Leaders need to ensure that teachers get the training they need to fully implement the intended curriculum.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 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.

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	140857
Local authority	Slough
Inspection number	10241713
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	685
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Muralee Nair
Principal	Coral Snowden
Website	www.westernhouse.academy
Date of previous inspection	14 and 15 June 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school currently does not use any alternative provision.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had 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 held discussions with the principal and other leaders. They also spoke with subject leaders and members of staff. The lead inspector spoke with two trustees, including the chief executive officer, and two members of the local governing body, including the vice-chair.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, during playtimes and lunchtimes, and around the school. They spoke with different groups of pupils to discuss their views on the school and their learning and safety.

- Inspectors checked the arrangements for keeping pupils safe. They reviewed documentation, checked attendance information and spoke to leaders, staff, pupils and those with governance responsibilities.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, geography and music. 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 reviewed samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also observed pupils reading to a familiar adult. Inspectors also considered other subjects on the school's curriculum.
- Inspectors considered 44 responses to Ofsted Parent View, including 24 free-text comments. There were 35 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 134 responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents provided by school leaders, including the school development plan and leaders' self-evaluation documentation.

Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jon Hills

Ofsted Inspector

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