

Woodchurch Road Academy

URN: 150119 | Inspected: 25 November 2025

Safeguarding

standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

Achievement

Expected standard

Leaders have ensured that pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave the school. Current published outcomes are typically in line with the national averages at key stage 2. In 2025, more pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and other vulnerable groups, successfully met the expected standard in the multiplication tables check compared to previous years. From their starting points, pupils make sustained progress. The proportion of pupils meeting the Year 1 phonics screening check standard has historically been below the national averages. The school has identified and addressed previous issues that impacted the quality of phonics delivery. The current teaching of the phonics programme is now much more secure. Across the wider curriculum, pupils generally achieve well. In some subjects, their knowledge and understanding are particularly well developed, reflecting the impact of leaders' work to strengthen subject expertise and curriculum sequencing. Overall, pupils leave the school well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have successfully improved the curriculum so that it is high quality, ambitious and well matched to pupils' needs. The curriculum is thoughtfully designed to challenge learners and incorporates important themes such as social justice, diversity and belonging. Projects, including 'Climate in Our Hands', enable pupils to engage with topical issues such as the impact of human activity on the environment. The knowledge within each project is carefully sequenced, allowing pupils to build a secure understanding of individual subjects over time. Leaders have equipped staff with the skills required to deliver the new curriculum effectively. Staff are motivated and confident in their teaching. Their expertise continues to improve. This has resulted in increasingly strong practice across a range of subjects. Typically, staff use assessment effectively to identify where pupils have not secured the intended knowledge. Overall, staff adapt learning and activities well for pupils with barriers to learning, including for some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils secure key knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. When pupils fall behind, timely interventions help them catch up and close gaps in learning. For example, pupils who initially struggled with phonics make rapid progress and become fluent, confident readers who enjoy reading.

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Early years

Expected standard

Adults engage positively and effectively with children, creating a calm atmosphere where they settle well and respond to routines. High-quality interaction supports the development of pupils' communication skills, with staff actively introducing new vocabulary to build children's language. The school has refined its early years curriculum. Improvements have had a positive impact on children's overall development and communication. For example, the school now considers children's starting points more closely when thinking about its curriculum sequencing and the key knowledge that children need to learn. This includes for nursery- age children. Reading is a priority. From the start of Reception Year, children receive effective phonics teaching that enables them to read and write confidently. The school has appropriate care practices for children. Staff are in the process of embedding health education, including dental hygiene, across the provision. Nursery children are well supported to develop strong foundational learning such as communication and language skills. This ensures a smooth transition to Reception Year and then Year 1. Nursery children have a suitable curriculum that helps them to settle into school quickly. The school works closely with parents and carers to promote learning at home and to enable successful transitions into and through the early years.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders have significantly strengthened their approach to identifying pupils' individual needs. They have embedded effective systems that enable staff to understand pupils' additional needs swiftly and effectively. This ensures that pupils receive timely and precise support that meets their individual requirements. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are helped well to engage positively with learning. For example, staff provide pupils with additional resources in lessons to ensure they can access the curriculum successfully. Leaders have prioritised high-quality professional learning for staff. This has equipped staff with the skills and knowledge to adapt learning for pupils when appropriate. Leaders monitor pupils' progress effectively in most subjects. However, in some subject areas, monitoring is not yet sharp enough to give leaders an accurate and rigorous understanding of pupils' progress. Leaders recognise this and are taking steps to strengthen these systems further. These positive improvements are relatively new, and it is too soon to see the intended impact. Leaders use pupil premium funding increasingly well to improve pupils' experiences in school. For example, they deploy additional adults to provide timely emotional and academic support, which helps pupils access learning more effectively. When pupils attend alternative provision, leaders ensure that this is used well. They keep a check on how effective this is for pupils who attend.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

There have been significant changes in the school's leadership team since the previous inspection. Trustees have

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appointed staff with the right skills to lead the school's improvement journey. School leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priority areas. Through careful analysis, leaders have set appropriate priorities to move the school forward. In a short time, they have improved key areas such as the curriculum, teaching and pupils' behaviour, which has influenced pupils' experiences in school positively. However, some leaders do not have the rigorous oversight that they need to evaluate the impact of their actions. Senior leaders have identified that, for wider leaders in the school, this is in the early stages and needs to embed further as the school continues to make improvements. Trustees and governors support and challenge leaders appropriately to secure necessary improvements. They remain focused on pupils' achievement and hold leaders to account when expectations are not met. Trustees and governors have a thorough understanding of their statutory duties. They ensure that effective policies and processes are in place. Their tenacity and commitment to improving pupils' education demonstrate that they have pupils' best interests at heart. Leaders ensure that staff have access to high-quality professional learning. This has resulted in staff delivering the curriculum with confidence and expertise across different subject areas. Trustees, governors and leaders monitor staff's workload and wellbeing closely and effectively. Staff morale is high. They are proud to work at the school. Staff feel consulted on decisions that affect them and are invested in the school's direction.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

The school offers a well-structured, comprehensive programme for personal development. Relationships and health education is embedded throughout the curriculum. Pupils enjoy a rich variety of cultural experiences, including visits to beaches, museums and local art galleries. Guest speakers visit the school to introduce pupils to diverse career pathways such as aviation, archaeology and museum curation. Opportunities to debate and explore topical issues, such as 'fake news' and media bias, help pupils to develop critical thinking skills. These discussions link closely with online safety education, equipping pupils to use the internet safely. The school also fosters an understanding of democracy and respect for others, supported by visits from the local MP and community initiatives such as litter picking. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including rugby, recorder club and a well-established choir that performs in the local community. These experiences are highly valued and contribute significantly to pupils' personal growth. Leaders make a conscious effort to ensure that disadvantaged pupils access these wider opportunities. They actively monitor pupil participation at these events. Where pupils have potential barriers to attending, these are successfully removed for pupils. The school's commitment to promoting fundamental British values is evident across the personal development programme. Pupils demonstrate mutual respect and tolerance, reflected in a reduction in discriminatory incidents. Older pupils understand the ways in which people can be different and the importance of protecting these differences in law. Pupil leadership development is a key feature of the school's wider curriculum offer. All pupils participate in 'School Council Crew' sessions to build confidence in public speaking and decision-making. Year 6 pupils chair these meetings, ensuring they remain child-led and focused on issues that matter to the school community. Pupils show respect for their classmates by listening considerately to what others are saying and responding appropriately.

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What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils feel a strong sense of belonging within this small school community. This is a safe, nurturing environment where they are valued as individuals. Pupils describe themselves as part of the school 'crew'. New pupils quickly feel included in school life. Positive relationships underpin the school's ethos. Adults care deeply for pupils' wellbeing. Pupils know staff respect them and will treat them with care and kindness. Pupils thrive and are highly engaged in learning. They benefit from the range of opportunities to influence school life through different leadership roles. Leaders and staff hold high expectations of pupils. These are rooted in the school's values of 'Learning without limits'. Pupils share these ambitions and enjoy a stimulating curriculum that captures their interest. They are eager to showcase their learning to others, both in school and in the wider community, reinforcing the value of their work. Where barriers exist, staff provide focused support so no pupil is left behind. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, make notable gains. They achieve consistently well and demonstrate clear progress from their starting points. Pupils behave well. They settle quickly into routines, follow rules diligently and feel safe. They cooperate well with peers, and bullying is rare. When concerns arise, pupils trust staff to respond effectively. The school offers rich opportunities for pupils to develop as active citizens, such as contributing to the local community through initiatives like litter picking. These experiences, alongside the academic curriculum, prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to embed their attendance strategy to improve how often pupils attend school. This includes ensuring that persistent absence continues to decrease over time.
- Leaders should ensure that monitoring activities and analysis are used effectively to gain a deeper understanding about how well pupils, including pupils who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve. They should then use this information to set appropriate priorities to improve their achievement over time so that they can address any identified issues.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders have implemented effective strategies to improve attendance. Structured routines, including initiatives such as a breakfast club, help pupils transition smoothly into the school day. Historically, attendance was low and absence rates were high. This includes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. Leaders' focus on improvement, combined with targeted interventions, has led to improvements in pupils' attendance. Leaders rigorously analyse attendance across different pupil groups and act swiftly to provide tailored support. As a result, pupils now attend more often, and the school's absence rate has fallen from previously high levels. Nevertheless, continued improvement is required to continue to raise attendance further. This still remains the case for some pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. Pupils' behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, is consistently positive. High expectations and the consistent application of rules and routines by staff create a calm, orderly environment where pupils engage well with

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learning and take pride in their work. Relationships between pupils and staff are respectful. Bullying or derogatory incidents are rare because leaders have fostered an inclusive community that pupils value. When issues arise, leaders act promptly and decisively to resolve them. Pupils who need additional help to regulate their behaviour or emotions receive effective support.

For detailed performance data including disadvantage gap analysis, historical trends, and comparison tables, visit the school's profile on WhatSchool:

<https://whatschool.ai/en/school/woodchurch-road-academy-birkenhead>