

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Will Adams Academy

Woodlands Road, Gillingham, Kent ME7 2BX

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 November 2024

Outcome

Will Adams Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Emma Smith. This school is part of Alternative Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Emma Bradshaw, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sam Guy. There is also an executive headteacher, Marie Woolston, who is responsible for this school and two others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils rekindle their passion and interest for learning at this school. They arrive with a history of low attendance and poor attitudes to learning. Many pupils also have significant social, emotional and mental health needs on entry. Staff ensure they get to know pupils quickly. This helps pupils to build warm and respectful relationships with staff. Staff identify pupils' barriers to learning and aspirations accurately. These support staff to create personalised programmes to prepare pupils for their next steps.

Pupils feel safe and well supported at the school. They have trusted adults that they know will deal with any concerns they may have. Staff act as positive role models. They apply the school's well-designed systems calmly and consistently. As a result, pupils generally behave well. The school is happy and orderly.

The school has designed a bespoke curriculum to provide pupils with the information and skills they need. Teachers enhance this with support for pupils to improve their resilience and strategies to regulate their own behaviour effectively. As a result, pupils usually learn well and have positive attitudes to learning. If pupils need extra support, teachers react swiftly. They use their knowledge of the pupils and the positive relationships they have with them to help them refocus and return to learning.

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

The school has been through a period of significant change since the previous inspection. There have been several leadership changes and a radical redesign of the curriculum and school systems. The school has used trust expertise and established systems to quickly effect change. Governors offer appropriate support and challenge. The school recognises that some systems are in the early stages of development and require additional work. However, the school has a clear vision that skilled staff are working towards.

The school quickly identifies pupils' needs. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school uses this to plan programmes and identify content to help all pupils achieve well. For example, the newly opened respite pathway has a well-designed curriculum to help pupils to return to mainstream settings.

The school has high ambitions for all. Pupils work towards a number of GCSE and vocational qualifications. The school has matched these to pupils' potential future careers. These prepare pupils for their next steps effectively and most pupils achieve well from their starting points. They are suitably prepared for training, employment, or further education. The school understands the importance of reading. Staff assess all pupils' reading ability on entry. The school uses this information to plan effective interventions for those pupils in the early stages of reading. Consequently, pupils improve their reading over time.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They use this to explain learning clearly. In practical subjects, they model techniques accurately. Teachers select activities that provide pupils with the key content of the subjects they learn. However, work given to pupils does not always allow them to apply and deepen their knowledge consistently well. As a result, pupils do not understand the content that they learn as deeply as they could.

The school works hard to improve pupils' attendance. Staff identify potential barriers to attendance clearly. This allows them to offer pupils bespoke support, including providing school transport or therapeutic input for pupils with a history of non-attendance. Pupils are beginning to attend more frequently. However, a small number of pupils do not attend punctually and do not always use their time effectively enough in school. As a result, they do not learn as well as they could.

Pupils respond well to the school's rewards system. Most pupils work hard to achieve rewards for their work, behaviour and attendance. Pupils work positively with staff to reflect on their behaviour. This helps pupils to improve their behaviour during their time at the school. Pupils receive appropriate support and guidance to succeed in future employment or training, including weekly career lessons. The school enhances these through well-planned work experience activities. All pupils have an opportunity to speak to a range of employers. This helps them to plan their next steps effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, the activities that teachers select for pupils do not support pupils in applying the important skills and knowledge they learn. As a result, pupils learn the curriculum content but do not always deepen their understanding. The school must ensure that teachers design activities that allow pupils to apply and build on the curriculum content they learn.
- A small number of pupils are not always punctual to school, or to their lessons. They do not always use their time in school as effectively as they could. As a result, they miss out on opportunities to deepen and maximise their learning and do not always learn as well as they could. The school must ensure that pupils are supported to attend school and lessons on time so that they learn all the skills and knowledge they need.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 predecessor school, The Will Adams Centre, to be good for overall effectiveness in July 2018.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	149009
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10341919
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	38
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sam Guy
CEO of the trust	Emma Bradshaw OBE
Headteacher	Emma Smith
Website	www.willadamsacademy.org.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school's headteacher and senior leadership team has changed since the last inspection.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school provides an education for pupils who have been referred to the school by the local authority or by mainstream schools.
- Pupils join the school throughout the academic year. Many have had low attendance at their previous schools and arrive having experienced gaps in their education.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspection team met with the headteacher and other leaders. The lead inspector also met members of the governing body. They also met with the CEO of the trust and held an online meeting with trust board members.
- The inspection team focused inspection activity on the following groups of subjects: English, science and mathematics, hair and beauty, sports and art. For each group of subjects, the inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspection team reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interest first.
- Throughout the inspection, the inspection team met with groups of staff. They also considered the opinions expressed through the staff survey.
- The lead inspector had regard to the views expressed through Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Gavin Thomas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Aimee Floyd

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024