

# Finch Woods Academy

Bailey's Lane, Halewood, Liverpool, Merseyside L26 0TY

## Inspection dates

20–21 June 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>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The newly appointed headteacher and deputy headteacher have moved the school forward rapidly. They have built upon the good foundations laid down by the previous headteacher since becoming an academy. Their drive and enthusiasm have led to this becoming a good school.
- Staff have worked well together to create a safe and enriching learning environment. They have established extremely positive relationships with pupils, so that they become increasingly self-confident in lessons.
- All groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make expected or better progress from their starting points. Pupils' outcomes by the time they leave school are good. All pupils attain a range of accreditation, including at least one GCSE, before moving on to further education, employment or training. However, most-able pupils do not make the levels of progress of which they are capable in mathematics.
- Senior leaders check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that most teaching is at least good or better. The level of challenge in mathematics needs to be increased for some pupils, especially for the most able.
- Pupils' attendance and behaviour have improved notably over the past two years. As a result, pupils' engagement and attitudes in lessons are strengths. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is also a strength of the school.
- Governors have overseen a number of changes since the school became an academy, including the appointment of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They have done this with care and efficiency. As a result, the school has good capacity to build upon its many strengths, including the partnership working established within the Adelaide Academy Trust.

## Full report

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

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment even further, by:
  - ensuring that teachers' assessment and planning in mathematics enables all pupils, especially the most able, to attain even higher outcomes through more-challenging work
  - ensuring that teachers of mathematics receive close professional support to develop their assessment and planning skills while governors are in the process of recruiting a specialist teacher.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been the driving force behind rapid improvements made at the school, building upon positive work led by the previous headteacher. They have received strong support from a knowledgeable governing body and from leaders in the Adelaide Academy Trust. There is good capacity for the school to make further improvements. Leadership and management are therefore good.
- There is now a strong culture of learning. All staff provide consistent support to pupils to develop positive behaviour and improve their attendance in school and lessons. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and British values are featured strongly in the school's work. Pupils demonstrate the qualities of respect and tolerance consistently through their engagement and attitudes in lessons.
- Senior leaders check upon the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They provide advice and guidance to teachers and teaching assistants. This ensures that pupils benefit from good or better teaching and support, thereby making progress in their work and behaviour. There is further work to be done to ensure that pupils are fully challenged in mathematics, especially the most able.
- Leaders are using and promoting a whole-school tracking system successfully to agree and set individual learning targets for pupils in each subject. Pupils have full involvement in this process and feel proud when examples of their work are uploaded on to the system.
- Middle leaders are contributing well towards school improvement. For example, they have developed the use of 'pupil portraits' to inform pupil support interventions and target-setting. A computer-based system has been introduced that enables pupils to keep updated constantly on how well they are doing in their work and behaviour. Pupils are also able to put information on to the system to keep staff informed about which lessons are most enjoyable.
- The curriculum is enriching and includes a range of experiences and opportunities for all pupils. Equal opportunities are well promoted through the Finch Woods 'pledge'. On admission to the school, all pupils are encouraged to work towards earning opportunities to participate in additional activities. Examples of these include educational visits, residential trips and a trip to Barcelona. The school-based curriculum includes a wide spectrum of subjects and experiences, including the Jamie Oliver home cooking skills course and Forest School lessons. Pupils' improved engagement in lessons and their improving social, emotional, moral and cultural development are clearly linked to their improved attendance and behaviour.
- The careers guidance and support programme has had a positive impact for pupils moving on from Year 11. As well as school-based lessons, there has been input from the careers advisory service and from alternative providers for some pupils, leading to very positive outcomes for all leavers.
- Partnership working within the trust is a developing strength. The executive headteacher for the trust is a driving force behind a number of initiatives. For example,

the school's English teacher is the lead practitioner across the trust and shares best practice within school and with other schools. Teachers state how they are benefiting from involvement in this partnership working. The trust is ably supported by an external consultant.

- Parents spoken to have nothing but praise for the support they receive from the school, especially the care and sensitivity offered by the headteacher and her staff team.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governance is a strength of the school's work.
- Governors have overseen and managed a number of changes since academisation, not least the appointments of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher from within the staff ranks.
- Governors are knowledgeable about the school's work and ask challenging questions of school leaders, for example about trends in pupil attendance and behaviour.
- Governors provide support and challenge for teachers where needed. They adopt a robust approach when appraising teachers' applications to move through to the upper pay scale.
- Governors attend meetings regularly and benefit from ongoing training, such as in safer recruitment or 'Prevent' duty training.
- They work in partnership with the trust to ensure that each school fully benefits from the sharing of best practice. They know that support is required to ensure that mathematics teaching in the school is further supported. This is particularly important while governors actively recruit a specialist teacher of mathematics.
- Governors are knowledgeable about how pupil premium and the small amount of Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding the school receives are used. They have a clear understanding of the impact this funding has on pupil outcomes. They know, for example, that disadvantaged pupils make good or better progress in reading, writing and numeracy skills in line with their peers.
- Governors make good use of funding available for special educational needs, especially towards encouraging pupils' engagement in school life.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's recruitment of staff follows appropriate guidelines as evidenced in the single central record.
- The school premises are well maintained and secure, further reinforced by police officer presence. Arrangements for visitors follow a strict protocol.
- Risk assessments are robust when pupils go off site on educational trips or residential visits.
- Staff receive regular, updated training, for example in the safe handling and management of pupils who present challenging behaviour and in the recognition of

signs that might indicate child sexual abuse or female genital mutilation.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers and support staff work consistently as a team to ensure that pupils have good attitudes to learning and engage well in lessons. Teachers make good use of an agreed whole-school system to assess pupils' needs and abilities when planning their lessons.
- While senior leaders' checking of lessons has contributed greatly to the overall good quality of teaching, learning and assessment, further work is needed to ensure that mathematics teaching, learning and assessment improve in line with other subjects. This will ensure that all pupils make progress to achieve their potential, particularly the most able.
- Each class base is named after a mountain. Classrooms are welcoming, with attractive displays that depict and celebrate pupils' journeys of progress 'up the mountain'. Pupils spoken to say that they take pride in their achievements because staff reinforce the positive aspects of their learning each lesson.
- Staff promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils in lessons. Examples of this during the inspection included encouraging turn-taking when handling tools in Forest Schools lessons, and peer support when wiring an electric plug in science lessons or when studying plays by Willy Russell about family life.
- Teachers make effective and consistent use of the school's agreed assessment system to inform planning and target-setting for each pupil. Pupils benefit from knowing what they are learning. They often make written replies to teachers' marking and feedback in line with the school agreed policy. Pupils are encouraged that their achievements are recognised and assessed electronically. They are then able to look at past work and reflect upon what they have achieved, for example in independent writing or artwork.
- Teachers' preparation for lessons is good and based upon pupils' overall needs regarding social, emotional, behavioural and learning factors. Leaders are imaginative and creative in their deployment of resources and teachers to ensure that pupils engage well in lessons.
- Teachers ensure that they promote and reinforce the teaching of communication, literacy and numeracy skills across different subjects, for example, in science, geography and design and technology. Pupils know that a variety of writing skills are needed when writing up experiments in science or when note-taking in geography. They know that they will need to talk about and reflect on their achievements and use accurate measuring skills when attending design and technology lessons.
- Homework is provided in some cases, but is not a regular feature of the school's approach. Instead, homework clubs, for example in science, ensure that pupils are able to follow up on their work in class.

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff work extremely hard to foster pupils' self-confidence so that they acquire good learning habits. Pupils respond positively to the support they receive and begin to rely less upon adults' direct instructions and guidance. Pupils spoken to said that when they first started at the school, they did not have the confidence to do anything. They said that they now recognise the importance of 'talking about stuff'. They also said that they are more confident to ask questions in class. Inspectors observed a great deal of independent learning and perseverance in lessons, including examples of peer support.
- Staff have an agreed whole-school policy to reinforce pupils' positive attitudes and self-belief. Pupils spoken to said that they like the fact that they can track their own behaviour each lesson. They can link their achievements to a potential reward or outcome, for example related to the Finch Woods 'pledge'. Pupils spoke about tracking how well they are doing on 'the mountain of progress'.
- Parents spoken to said that their children have 'received strong emotional and behavioural support' from the headteacher and all staff.
- There is a police officer based at the school. He has done work with pupils about knife crime in the context of keeping safe. Through personal, social and health education sessions, pupils have learned to keep safe, especially from bullying on the internet. Pupils engage well with theatre group visits and school assemblies to reflect upon the impact of local, national or world events, for example, the recent Grenfell Tower tragedy.
- Supervision arrangements at the start and the end of the school day are good. Pupils arrive calmly and are greeted by staff. They accept that they need to hand in their mobile phones and that they will be checked to ensure that they are not carrying anything sharp. Some even salute the staff pictures on arrival!
- Pupils attending off-site provision with alternative providers make similar progress to their peers in school in their self-confidence and engagement in learning.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils spoken to say that 'behaviour is better than it used to be' and that 'people know each other and calm each other down.' They say that staff interventions 'help them to learn and behave better'.
- Pupils' conduct in lessons, on the corridors and, in particular, at lunchtimes, is invariably good. Staff supervision levels throughout the day are good. Nonetheless, staff ensure that pupils learn to be independent and to make decisions without requiring direct instructions.
- Fixed-term exclusions have reduced notably over the past two years, as have incidents where safe holding has been required to manage challenging behaviour.

- Overall attendance has increased substantially over the past year to be more in line with other special schools nationally. The attendance and behaviour of pupils in alternative provision is in line with school averages. School leaders are aspirational. They are planning for further and rapid improvements in whole-school attendance, alongside the planned admission of more pupils due to an increased demand for places.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils arrive at the school with lower-than-average prior attainment. Most have had to manage barriers to learning relating to their social, emotional and mental health needs. However, the large majority of pupils (including those who are disadvantaged, looked after, the most able, the most able disadvantaged and the less able) make good or better progress from their starting points. As a result, pupils' outcomes overall are good across most subjects.
- Every pupil who leaves at the end of Year 11 attains at least one GCSE. Every leaver gains a qualification in English and mathematics. The most able pupils gain up to seven GCSEs, including in English and mathematics. Some attain up to grade B, for example in art, or a grade C in English. The least able pupils attain functional skills or entry-level awards in English and mathematics.
- While all pupils achieve a qualification in mathematics by the time they leave, a number of pupils, especially the most able, do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils are able to follow a wide range of accreditation beyond English, mathematics and science. For example, pupils are able to follow courses in photography, preparation for working life, history, geography, physical education, cookery, art, design and technology and land-based studies. As a result, pupils are able to follow individual 'pathways' that enable them to pursue their aspirations.
- The school promotes a strong equal opportunities policy alongside good careers education and guidance. This relates to all pupils, including those attending alternative provision. As a result, all pupils, on leaving the school in Year 11, advance successfully to further education, employment or training.
- The school promotes reading successfully. Most pupils who arrive at the school have had negative experiences in reading which have affected their self-confidence. Pupils were seen to engage in and enjoy twice-weekly, class-based reading sessions with their class teachers. Leaders were able to demonstrate that pupil premium funding and Year 7 catch-up funding have been used to increase the school's stock of books in classrooms and the school library.
- Assessments in reading, comprehension and spelling show that the large majority of pupils make good or better progress from their starting points. Inspectors noted that pupils readily used and applied their skills in reading and writing across different subjects, for example when following instructions and writing up their experiments in science.
- Pupils are encouraged to enjoy mathematics. For example, pupils were observed calculating and comparing the speeds of electric cars around a track. However, opportunities were missed when most-able pupils were allowed to use calculators to

work out solutions. They were not encouraged to use their mental arithmetic or paper calculation skills. Occasionally, mathematics exercise books show that the work provided is pitched at too low a level for the most able pupils.

- Numeracy skills are encouraged across different subjects, for example in science and design and technology.
- Due to the diverse needs of pupils at the school, and because some of these groups are relatively small, it is not possible to make accurate comparisons with levels of progress made by pupils nationally.

## School details

Unique reference number	141033
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10022798

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Harvey
Headteacher	Laura Dickinson
Telephone number	0151 288 8930
Website	<a href="http://www.finchwoodsacademy.co.uk">www.finchwoodsacademy.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:finchwoods@academy.knowsley.gov.uk">finchwoods@academy.knowsley.gov.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school meets the requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Finch Woods Academy opened in September 2014 and is part of the Adelaide Academy Trust.
- All pupils have education, health and care plans or statements of special educational needs.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The school receives a very small amount of Year 7 catch-up funding.

- The school makes use of three alternative providers. They are: Peregrinate, Motiv8 and Evolve.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been confirmed in their appointments within the past four months, having been in acting capacities beforehand.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a cross-section of classes in the school and outside when a Forest School lesson was taking place.
- Inspectors heard pupils read in lessons, including a class-based reading session.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, three members of the governing body (including the chair of governors) and the executive headteacher of the Adelaide Academy Trust.
- An inspector held a telephone conversation with the trust's school improvement partner.
- An inspector held telephone conversations with four parents. There were insufficient responses from Parent View for inspectors to use these in making an overall judgement about parents' views.
- Inspectors took account of returns from the online staff and pupil surveys.
- A range of documents was considered, including the school's self-review document, the school improvement plan, a range of school policies, documents relating to teaching, learning and assessment, appraisal and performance management documentation and governors' reports. Information about pupils' learning, behaviour and attendance were looked at, as well the work in pupils' books.

## Inspection team

Jon Ashley, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector

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