

Workington Academy

Stainburn Road, Workington, Cumbria CA14 4EB

Inspection dates

22–23 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' rates of progress at key stage 4 in 2017, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils, was significantly below the national average in a number of subjects.
- There is an increasing proportion of effective teaching. However, variation in the quality of teaching remains and some pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- There are times when teachers do not use assessment information effectively to challenge pupils. As a result, some pupils do not make the progress that they should.
- Too many pupils are regularly absent from school. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- A small proportion of pupils are still unable to regulate their behaviour as they move around the school.
- On occasion, teachers do not use leaders' systems to manage pupils' behaviour effectively during learning. As a result, some pupils do not display consistently positive attitudes to learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Despite challenging circumstances, leaders ensure that outcomes for pupils remain on a trajectory of improvement. This is particularly the case in English and mathematics.
- The new headteacher has a clear vision. His plans to improve the school are sharp and precise. Pupils and staff are positive about his encouraging effect on the school's culture.
- Leaders' effective use of additional funding is securing improvements in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils.
- Teachers have established supportive relationships with pupils. Pupils appreciate the support they receive from staff.
- Leaders have a clear rationale for the curriculum. Improvements to the curriculum are having a positive effect on pupils' outcomes.
- Students in the sixth form benefit from individualised study programmes. Teachers plan learning that allows students to make good progress.
- Leaders' work to promote equality and diversity across the school is remarkable. The school is highly inclusive and differences are celebrated. The work of staff to keep pupils safe from harm is exceptional. Pupils feel safe at school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve outcomes for pupils, particularly for the most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment further by ensuring that:
 - leaders reduce further the variation in the quality of teaching and build upon the strong practice already evident
 - teachers use assessment information effectively to plan learning that challenges pupils, particularly the most able pupils.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by ensuring that:
 - teachers apply leaders' systems consistently in order to manage pupils' behaviour effectively during learning
 - pupils move around the school calmly and in an orderly manner
 - leaders further reduce rates of pupil absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- With the support of the trust, leaders and the local advisory board have significantly raised expectations and aspirations across the school since the school opened in September 2015. Leaders aim for pupils and staff to 'be the best they can be'. They are ambitious for pupils. Together, they ensure that an increasing proportion of pupils and their families understand the importance of a good education.
- Leaders have ensured that the school remains on a trajectory of improvement. This is despite a number of challenges. The two predecessor schools both faced difficult circumstances. There has also been considerable turbulence in both staffing and the leadership of the school in the past. More recently, leaders have managed the move to a modern building well.
- Senior leaders have been effective in raising standards across the school. For example, rates of pupils' absence have reduced significantly. Pupils attend school more often. The proportion of pupils excluded for a fixed period is also reducing because there have been considerable improvements in pupils' behaviour. This is because leaders have implemented a policy with clear sanctions and rewards. However, some teachers do not apply this policy effectively.
- The newly appointed headteacher has swiftly identified what aspects of the school require improvement. For example, he identifies that although teaching is improving, it is not yet consistently good across the school. Variation in the effectiveness of teaching remains within subjects and year groups.
- The headteacher has a clear and strong vision. His plans to improve the school are sharp and precise. He has a strong sense of moral purpose and a comprehensive understanding of the school's context. Pupils and staff are highly positive about the effect he has had on the school's culture in a relatively short time. Staff morale continues to improve and pupils have strong confidence in the headteacher's ability to improve the school further.
- The actions taken by senior leaders have already secured improvements in pupils' outcomes. This is particularly the case in English and mathematics at key stage 4, where pupils now make similar rates of progress to pupils nationally. Leaders' efforts to stabilise staffing are securing healthier outcomes for pupils in other subjects. This is particularly the case in science.
- Middle leaders are enthusiastic and committed to securing improved rates of progress for pupils. They demonstrate an acute awareness of senior leaders' priorities. Senior leaders hold middle leaders to account effectively for pupils' outcomes. This ensures that rates of pupils' progress are improving across the curriculum.
- Albeit from a low baseline, leaders' actions are beginning to secure improvements in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders use additional funding effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. For example, leaders' strategies to improve pupils' reading ages have been particularly effective.
- Leaders monitor the progress of disadvantaged pupils closely across the curriculum. Staff provide support and help to close gaps in pupils' learning. This is particularly

important at key stage 4, where pupils' rates of progress have been adversely affected by weaker teaching in the past. Leaders evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies they use to support disadvantaged pupils and they use this information to inform their actions going forward.

- Leaders' strategy to improve pupils' rates of progress is focused primarily on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Leaders spend the Year 7 catch-up funding appropriately. As a result, the pupils who benefit from this funding are making faster rates of progress in English and mathematics. This allows pupils who have not met the expected standards at key stage 2 in reading and mathematics to catch up with their peers.
- Leaders have a clear rationale for the curriculum. Their aim is to ensure that pupils have the qualifications and skills they need to move onto the next stage of their education. Leaders have focused on improving aspects of the curriculum that will make the biggest difference to pupils. For example, leaders' changes to the curriculums in English and mathematics are already securing better outcomes for pupils. Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a curriculum that has an academic focus, while also providing pupils with a broad cultural entitlement.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have plenty of opportunities to develop socially, morally, spiritually and culturally. For example, pupils in Year 8 learn about Islam and Hinduism in religious education. Pupils in all year groups celebrate diversity through a wide range of assemblies and days devoted to raising awareness. For instance, leaders recently organised a full day of activities to raise pupils' awareness of the negative effects of homophobia, transphobia and biphobia.
- Pupils develop their understanding of the importance of democracy through the student council. Representatives on the student council regularly meet with senior leaders to share pupils' suggestions and any concerns that pupils may have. Pupils develop morally by learning about local charities. They raise money for a number of good causes. For example, pupils have recently raised money in order to provide Easter hampers for elderly residents of the local community.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. As a result, they ensure that staff benefit from bespoke training. Teachers value the training that they receive. They particularly appreciate the support they receive through their work with subject specialists. This includes opportunities both within the trust and through links with other local secondary schools. Those teachers who are new to the profession feel that they benefit particularly well from working alongside experienced staff in their own subject areas.
- Leaders have invested heavily in training for staff focused on supporting pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This is securing further improvements in this area. The differences in the progress made by pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and pupils nationally with similar starting points are beginning to diminish. Leaders use additional funding appropriately to ensure that pupils who attend the specialist educational needs unit have the same opportunities as other pupils.

Governance of the school

- The chair of the local advisory board is committed to raising aspirations in the local community and to securing better outcomes for pupils. With the support of the trust,

the local advisory board has worked to establish a positive culture of learning. This is despite considerable turbulence in both the leadership of the school and changes in staffing.

- The members of the board bring to their roles a range of skills from a wide variety of sectors. They have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are under no illusion that outcomes for pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, are not yet good enough. To this end, they ask challenging questions of leaders to ensure that improvements are realised. This high level of challenge is having a positive effect on pupils' outcomes.
- The members of the local advisory board check that leaders use additional funding effectively. This is securing improvements in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The systems to check that adults in the school are safe to work with children are secure.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They are confident that they can talk to a member of staff if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils value the support they receive.
- Leaders' records of work with external agencies are meticulous. They have developed strong links with a number of organisations. This means that pupils receive appropriate help and support. Leaders are alert to the safeguarding challenges most prevalent in the local area. They ensure that staff receive relevant and regular safeguarding training. The work of all staff to keep pupils safe from harm is exemplary.
- Pupils have plenty of opportunities to learn about keeping themselves safe. For example, leaders ensure that pupils are alert to the dangers of radicalisation and extreme views.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and they are taking appropriate action to improve teaching across the school. Nonetheless, there is still some less effective teaching within subjects and year groups.
- Leaders have focused on teachers' use of questioning during learning. This is securing improvements in this area. When teaching is most effective, teachers use their strong subject knowledge and questioning skills to demand sophisticated responses from pupils. Pupils are able to apply their knowledge and, as a result, they make good progress. Teaching assistants use effective questioning to support those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities during their learning.
- Teachers' increasing expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning continue to secure improvements in the progress that pupils make across the school. As a result, the vast majority of pupils follow teachers' instructions and display positive attitudes to their learning. However, there are still times when the behaviour of a small minority of pupils has a detrimental effect on learning.

- Teachers' improved use of assessment information allows them to meet the needs of pupils more effectively. As a result, an increasing proportion of teachers are using assessment information to plan learning that challenges pupils. This is particularly evident in pupils' work in English at key stage 3. Nonetheless, there are times when pupils complete activities that do not stretch their thinking. Consequently, pupils lose interest in their work.
- Teachers' heightened awareness of pupils' prior learning means that teachers are able to identify more accurately the gaps in pupils' knowledge. This is particularly important at key stage 4, where staff work to help pupils to catch up following a legacy of weak teaching.
- Teachers have fostered supportive relationships with pupils. Consequently, pupils are confident to ask teachers for help and they appreciate the support they receive from staff. This is having a positive effect on rates of pupils' progress across the school. In particular, current Year 11 pupils have benefited from additional help in the run-up to their GCSE examinations.
- Pupils are beginning to read more widely and often at school, following the introduction of a number of effective initiatives by leaders to promote reading. The proportion of pupils who are reading books from the school library is increasing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to develop their self-confidence and resilience through a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Leaders' work to promote equality and diversity across the school is exemplary. They work to embed the core values of respect, responsibility and resilience across the school. As a result, the school is highly inclusive. Pupils demonstrate respect and tolerance for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. For example, during a recent assembly, pupils learned about the challenges faced by pupils who have genetic conditions. Following this, pupils helped to raise money for a local charity. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities feel safe and happy in school.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of cyber, homophobic and other forms of bullying. This is because they benefit from a range of external speakers as well as assemblies to raise awareness, some of which are led by sixth-form students. Pupils also learn about bullying as part of the wider curriculum. Pupils recently learned about the negative effects of homophobic bullying during a day organised by leaders. Pupils who are members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community feel they can be open about their sexual identity.
- Pupils report that incidents of bullying are extremely rare and they are confident that teachers will deal effectively with any incidents. Pupils explained to inspectors how to stay safe online.

- Pupils value highly the support they receive about mental health from staff. Leaders have created a culture where pupils feel they can raise their concerns and speak to an adult in school if they have any worries.
- Staff do not shy away from tackling sensitive issues. A theatre company recently performed 'Chelsea's Choice' to raise pupils' awareness of the signs and dangers of child sexual exploitation. Pupils found this highly informative.
- Leaders ensure that pupils receive advice and guidance that help them move on to the next stage of their education. Staff are committed to ensuring that pupils aim high. They work to ensure that pupils are aware of the breadth of opportunities on offer, both within the local area and beyond.
- Leaders monitor the personal development and welfare of those pupils who attend alternative provision. For instance, leaders have robust procedures in place to check on the welfare of those pupils who are absent.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. The overwhelming majority of pupils behave well during learning because leaders ensure that staff and pupils understand the behaviour policy. Nonetheless, there are occasions where pupils' behaviour during learning does not support good progress.
- Pupils explained to inspectors how there has been a positive change in the school's culture. The vast majority of pupils want to do well at school. However, pupils also report that standards of behaviour vary across year groups and subjects. This is because some teachers do not apply the behaviour policy consistently.
- The vast majority of pupils move around the school in a calm and orderly manner. However, a small minority of pupils are unable to regulate their own behaviour. Too many pupils are reliant on high levels of staff supervision. Some younger pupils explained to inspectors how, at times, they find boisterous behaviour on the corridors and stairwells a concern.
- The majority of staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and pupils understand the consequences of negative behaviour. Leaders ensure that pupils who are unable to regulate their own behaviour receive support to improve their conduct. As a result, the proportion of pupils excluded for a fixed period has decreased.
- Although leaders have secured considerable improvements in pupils' rates of attendance, the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school remains above the national average. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Outcomes for pupils

Require improvement

- In 2016, the school did not meet the government's floor standards. This was because of considerable turbulence in leadership, ongoing changes to staffing, poor teaching and a legacy of low expectations and aspirations.
- Pupils' GCSE results show that rates of pupils' progress and levels of pupil attainment improved in 2017. This was particularly the case for English and mathematics, where

pupils' rates of progress were broadly in line with national averages. The school met the government's floor standards in 2017.

- Nonetheless, in 2017, rates of pupils' progress at key stage 4, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils, remained well below the national average in a number of subjects. For example, the rates of progress made by the most able pupils in science and humanities were in the bottom 20% of schools nationally.
- Outcomes for pupils are on an upward trajectory. Leaders' assessment information and work in pupils' books show that current pupils are making better rates of progress at key stage 4.
- Leaders' own assessment information for current Year 11 pupils shows that differences in the progress made by groups of pupils are diminishing. Disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils are making better progress than they have done in the past. However, disadvantaged pupils still do not make the progress of which they are capable at key stage 4. For example, in both English and mathematics, differences remain between the rates of progress of disadvantaged pupils and of other pupils.
- School assessment information shows that pupils at key stage 3 are making good progress. This is because pupils at key stage 3 have been able to benefit from the improvements in teaching.
- There are fewer differences in the rates of progress made by groups of pupils at key stage 3. For example, in Year 8, disadvantaged pupils make better rates of progress in English than their peers. This is because of improvements in the quality of teaching alongside leaders' effective use of additional funding.
- The rates of progress made by the most able pupils remain a concern in some year groups and some subjects. This is because there are times when teachers do not use assessment information effectively to challenge pupils in their learning. Evidence in pupils' books shows that there are some occasions where rates of pupils' progress over time remain slow.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance are passionate and committed to raising aspirations and broadening pupils' horizons. Leaders have secured considerable improvements in the careers education, advice and guidance that pupils receive. Staff work to ensure that pupils receive appropriate help and support to prepare them for the next stage in their education. As a result, the proportion of pupils who continue in further education, employment or training is above the national average.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders have a clear and strong vision for the sixth form. Students value the individualised study programmes that the sixth form offers. There is a comprehensive personal development programme and students have the opportunity to benefit from work experience. Leaders have taken action to allow students to engage in independent research. For example, they have recently introduced the extended project qualification.
- Students value the range of sporting opportunities and leadership roles on offer in the sixth form. These include supporting younger pupils with their reading and leading

assemblies on anti-bullying. Rates of attendance in the sixth form are strong. Students in the sixth form have consistently positive attitudes to learning.

- Safeguarding in the sixth form is effective and students feel safe.
- Leaders ensure that students who do not achieve a standard pass in English or mathematics at key stage 4 receive appropriate help and support from teachers. The proportion of students who achieve a standard pass in English and mathematics in the sixth form is well above the national average.
- In academic qualifications, students in the sixth form make progress that is in line with students' rates of progress nationally. Leaders' assessment information and students' work show that current students are making improved rates of progress in their academic qualifications. This is particularly the case in mathematics. In applied qualifications, students' rates of progress are above national averages.
- In the sixth form, teachers use their knowledge of curriculum content and accurate assessment information to plan learning that challenges students. Strong, supportive relationships between teachers and students mean that students benefit from teachers' help and support.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge allows them to provide clear explanations for pupils about how to improve their work. This allows pupils to make good progress.
- More recently, leaders have increased the availability and strengthened quality of impartial careers guidance. Leaders ensure that students in the sixth form are on the correct courses. As a result, the proportion of students who remain on their study programmes has increased considerably.
- Students in the sixth form appreciate leaders' improvements to the support they receive to make choices about the next stage of their education. In 2017, effective careers guidance and support ensured that all Year 13 students continued onto higher education, employment or training.

School details

Unique reference number	141499
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10046080

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	797
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	100
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Tracy Stainton
Headteacher	Des Bird
Telephone number	01900 873926
Website	www.workingtonacademy.org
Email address	office@workingtonacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Workington Academy is a secondary school with a sixth-form provision.
- The school opened in September 2015 and is part of the Cumbria Education Trust. The merging of two former schools, Southfield Technology College and Stainburn School, formed the new school. In March 2017, the school moved to a new building.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who attend the school is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is well below the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who speak English as a second language is well below the national average.
- The school has a special educational needs unit for up to seven pupils with physical and medical difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The school uses a number of alternative providers. These are West Cumbria Learning Centre, Upcycle, Lakes College, EDUCLA and Home Hospital.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a range of subjects and year groups. Some observations of learning were undertaken alongside senior leaders. During learning, inspectors scrutinised pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally from all year groups. Inspectors also spoke with pupils informally during social times, before and after school as well as between lessons.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff, including senior leaders, a group of subject leaders, a group of pastoral leaders and a group of newly qualified teachers. An inspector also spoke with the chair and vice-chair of the local advisory board as well as the chief executive officer of the trust. An inspector spoke on the telephone with some of the school's alternative providers.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation and the school improvement plan. Inspectors took into account documentation relating to the safeguarding of pupils, pupil attendance information and documentation relating to governance. Inspectors also checked on the school's website.
- Inspectors took into account 74 staff survey responses, 59 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, 'Parent View', and 54 written responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text facility. Inspectors also considered 203 pupil survey responses.

Inspection team

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Naomi Taylor	Her Majesty's Inspector

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