

# Warden Park Academy

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	137416
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	386089
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 February 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Christopher Wood HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,466
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jonathan Ash-Edwards
<b>Headteacher</b>	Stephen Johnson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6–7 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Broad Street Cuckfield West Sussex RH17 5DP
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Christopher Wood	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Howley	Additional inspector
Andrew Lyons	Additional inspector
Howard Jones	Additional inspector
Lesley Leak	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors spent the majority of their time looking at learning in lessons. They observed parts of 52 lessons taught across a range of subjects and key stages. In addition, they looked specifically at the learning of 24 middle-ability students in Years 10 and 11 across a series of 12 lessons. Several lesson observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.

Meetings were held with school staff, members of the governing body and six groups of students representing the school's diversity. Inspectors also looked at a range of school documentation including its self-evaluation, development planning and tracking of student achievement. Inspectors considered the responses made to questionnaires from 152 parents and carers, 301 students and 86 staff.

## Information about the school

Warden Park Academy is larger than the average size secondary school. Students choose to come to the academy from a wide geographical area. They are mainly from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds or for whom English is an additional language is lower than seen nationally. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is also lower than the national average. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is broadly similar to the national average. Typically, around 56% of students are boys. This is a higher proportion than seen in other schools nationally. The academy meets the current floor standards.

The academy has held designated specialist status for mathematics, computing and modern foreign languages since 2004. It gained high performing specialist school status in 2009 and acquired additional specialisms in special educational needs and gifted and talented education. It also has a resourced unit for up to 18 students with specific learning difficulties and additional learning needs. The academy holds both the Investors in People and International School awards.

Warden Park became an academy in September 2011 and was given powers to sponsor primary schools through the academy conversion process. In January 2012, a local primary school joined the Warden Park Academy Trust.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- Warden Park Academy is a good school that has improved since its last inspection. The ethos of 'best from all' permeates its work. Students achieve well academically and develop into outward-looking and resilient young people. Students with special educational needs and students with disabilities, including those who join the resourced unit, also achieve well. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is fostered strongly in lessons and by often exceptional opportunities throughout the wider curriculum.
- Academic attainment is consistently above average and often high. Students make good progress during their time at the academy. The more-able students often make exceptional progress. Middle-ability students achieve well but, over time, their progress has not been as rapid as their high-ability peers. This is now changing as a result of ongoing improvements to the curriculum, approaches to cross-curricular literacy and a closer tracking of students' progress.
- Teaching is typically good and some is outstanding. The best teaching is closely tailored to the students' needs and abilities; it is underpinned by the teachers' expert knowledge and high expectations. In a minority of lessons, activities do not stretch students sufficiently and there is limited time for independent working, reflection or consolidation of learning.
- Students are welcoming and courteous. Frequently, they conduct themselves in a manner which is exemplary. They feel very safe and say that bullying is rare. A small number of students, parents, carers, and staff expressed concerns about low-level disruption in a minority of lessons. Inspectors found that behaviour over time was consistently good. However, where teaching was satisfactory and the pace of learning slow, students tended to become restless or go off task.
- The headteacher has led the academy during a period of continuing success

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and there is capacity to improve further. Leaders work collaboratively and are often innovative. Self-evaluation accurately identifies the academy's strengths and its priorities for improvement. However, judgements on the quality of teaching are slightly generous. At times, monitoring of lessons is not sufficiently focused on the students' progress in learning.

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

- Continue to raise achievement for middle-ability students so that they make progress at a similar rate to their peers by:
  - ensuring that the school's systems for tracking students' progress enable even more rapid intervention and support
  - monitoring closely the impact of changes to the curriculum on outcomes for middle-ability students
  - ensuring that cross-curricular approaches to literacy and other core skills are well embedded across the full range of subjects.
  
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by:
  - ensuring that teachers plan lessons that are sufficiently challenging, encourage independence and provide opportunities for students to consolidate and reflect on their learning
  - ensuring that the monitoring of teaching focuses more closely on the progress that students make in their learning.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Students enter the academy with attainment that is typically above average. By the end of Key Stage 4, they attain examination results that are significantly above the national average. Ninety-four per cent of parents who responded to the questionnaire said that their children were making good progress. Inspectors endorse this view. Students achieve well across a range of subjects including the academy's specialisms. Achievement in English and mathematics has been strong over a long period of time. In 2011, students in Year 11 made excellent progress in science and modern foreign languages. Nevertheless, leaders are vigilant and take decisive action to remedy any dips in performance in a small minority of subjects.

In lessons, students are keen to learn and collaborate productively with their peers. When given opportunities to develop their skills of independent working, or challenged to deepen their responses to teachers' good questioning, they often make quick progress. They benefit from a firm foundation in the core skills of English, mathematics, and information and communication technology. This equips them well for their future education and careers.

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Overall, disabled students and those who have special educational needs, including those who join the academy's resourced provision, make good progress. Nevertheless, leaders have rightly identified that middle-ability students, particularly boys, have not always achieved at the same rapid rate as their high-ability peers. The academy has already made changes to the curriculum and this is closing the gap successfully. These improvements are underpinned by strengthening systems for monitoring students' progress and re-energised approaches to literacy across the curriculum.

### **Quality of teaching**

Students benefit from teaching that is typically good and sometimes outstanding. The best teaching is imaginative, purposeful and underpinned by the teachers' secure subject knowledge and high expectations. In the best lessons, innovative activities are well planned; they are based on the teachers' accurate knowledge of the students' needs and abilities, alongside a confident understanding of progression in skills and/or examination requirements. Students also make good progress because the feedback they receive orally and through marking is generally detailed and identifies how they can improve their work. This works particularly well when students also have opportunities to evaluate their own work and the work of others based on clearly shared criteria.

Inspectors endorse the view expressed by parents, carers and students, that while teaching is mostly good, a minority of teaching is satisfactory. In some lessons, the rate of progress made by students in their learning is slower than elsewhere. Commonly, this is because activities are not closely tailored to the abilities of different students or lack sufficient challenge. In these lessons, students do not always have enough time to reflect on their learning between each activity. While inspectors found that teaching was consistently good for students of all abilities, instances of satisfactory teaching tended to slow the progress of middle-ability students more than their peers. These students do not have enough regular and systematically planned opportunities to check and consolidate their progress in learning.

Teaching and the planned curriculum foster students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development strongly. For example, in a memorable electronics lesson, students experienced awe and excitement when building circuits. This fostered their interest in becoming technologists of the future. In modern foreign languages, the students' socio-political and historical understanding had been enhanced by their exposure to films about the Berlin Wall and life in the former East Germany. In a BTEC dance lesson, studying the work of Akram Kahn had raised the artistic and cultural awareness of students and improved the quality of their own performance.

A recent reorganisation of provision for disabled students and those who have special educational needs, including those who join the resourced provision, means that students are now even better supported. Teaching assistants work effectively to

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support learning in close partnership with teachers. As one parental comment stated, 'I am regularly invited to school for updates on the progress of my child and SEN (special educational needs) issues in general...my child is engaged and looks forward to going to school where his daily support is first class.'

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

At least 94% of the students, parents and carers, and staff who responded to the questionnaires said that the academy is a safe place to learn. Inspectors endorse this view. Students enjoy positive relationships with each other and the adults with whom they work. They are able to develop their leadership skills and demonstrate a mature concern for others through their roles as mentors, prefects and sports leaders.

Behaviour is typically good and often exemplary. Over time, the proportion of students who are excluded for a fixed period is much lower than the national average. The academy's tracking of poor behaviour shows that such incidents are infrequent and have fallen over the past few years. Nevertheless, a small number of parents, carers, students and staff reported that low-level disruption affected learning in a minority of lessons. Inspectors observed consistently good behaviour in most classes but noted that where teaching was satisfactory students often became restless or went off task. Leaders are not complacent. They have made recent changes to the school's behaviour management systems and are ensuring that these are applied consistently and effectively.

Students, parents and carers report that bullying is rare and is commonly dealt with quickly by caring staff. Most students talked about the academy's friendly ethos or 'feel good factor' and 'never not wanting to come to school'. A small number of students were concerned about occasional unkind name calling. The academy's records and meetings with students confirm that incidents of racist behaviour are also very rare. The impact of the academy's successful work on promoting equalities was demonstrated in the mature and thoughtful way that one group of students discussed why homophobic bullying was not encountered or tolerated.

Attendance is broadly average for all major groups but is improving. Current attendance is slightly above the national average while persistent absence is lower than average. Nevertheless, the academy has identified a small number of students, generally with special educational needs, who find it harder to attend school regularly. Consequently, the school has strengthened its systems for working with these students and their families.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher has ensured that the academy has consolidated good achievement and improved provision during a time of significant organisational change. Accurate self-evaluation means that leaders have a shared view of the school's strengths and priorities for development. Consequently, time and effort is spent tackling the most pressing issues and there is discernible capacity to improve further. Staff are

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dedicated and proud to work at Warden Park. Leaders at all levels are fully involved in monitoring teaching and use this information to plan an effective programme of professional development. Nevertheless, judgments on the quality of teaching are currently slightly generous and do not always focus closely on the rate of students' progress in lessons. Leadership of the resourced unit is good.

The curriculum is good. It is broad and well matched to the needs of students. It is constantly developing to meet the needs and aspirations of students. For example, the school has recently introduced academic courses such as Latin and classics alongside vocational subjects such as construction. The many sporting and aesthetic opportunities that students enjoy through the wider curriculum play a central role in fostering their strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students told inspectors that there were 'lots of opportunities' at Warden Park and that the school 'makes you an all-round student – you can try anything'.

The academy has addressed the requirements noted during the previous inspection with regard to religious education at Key Stage 4. Exciting partnerships, such as those with the nearby primary academy, enable increased opportunities for students and staff in both schools. They are encouraging the sharing of effective practice across the whole curriculum. Strong transition arrangements between Warden Park and all of its feeder primary schools enable students in Year 7 to make a good start. The academy actively promotes equality of opportunity; it is a cohesive place to learn where difference is celebrated. Variations in the relative performance of students of different abilities are being successfully addressed through changes to provision.

The academy has been very successful in addressing the need to improve relationships between the leadership team and governing body noted in the previous inspection. The governing body is skilled, supportive and actively involved in the day-to-day work of the school. It challenges leaders confidently in those areas where further improvement is required. There is clear communication between the headteacher and the governing body. The academy's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements and are monitored effectively by the governing body.

Parents and carers are strongly supportive of the work of the academy. At least 92% of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire stated that their children's needs were well met, that they felt well informed about their children's good progress and were helped by the academy to support their children's learning. One parent echoed the views of others when commenting: 'Warden Park offers a wide range of opportunities. It has very supportive teachers and I would have no hesitation in recommending it to other parents.' These findings are consistent with the academy's own regular surveys of the views of larger samples of parents and carers.



## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**

3 February 2012

Dear Students



### **Inspection of Warden Park Academy, Cuckfield RH17 5DP**

You may remember that I visited your school recently with a team of inspectors. We enjoyed meeting you and were grateful for the help you gave us. We are pleased to tell you that you go to a good school that is well led and continuously improving.

You achieve well and your examination results at the end of Year 11 are well above those gained by other students nationally. While some of you make exceptional progress, others find it harder to learn at the same pace. Nevertheless, your progress is good and changes to the curriculum are helping even more of you to achieve your potential.

At least 90% of you told us that you felt safe and happy at school and learnt a lot in lessons. You told us that bullying was rare, and most of you felt that when it did happen, it was dealt with well. Inspectors judged your behaviour to be good. Sometimes, it is exemplary. The inspectors agreed with you that teaching was good. Some is excellent. In the best lessons, your knowledgeable teachers plan challenging activities that help you to work independently and learn at a good pace. Some teaching is satisfactory. In a minority of lessons, the pace of learning is slower and some of you get restless or go off task. Leaders in the school are determined to make sure that even more of your teaching is of the same quality as the best. There are already suitable plans in place for this to happen.

One of the things that impressed the team most was how you take advantage of opportunities to extend your talents in sport, drama and the arts as well as taking on responsibilities that develop your skills of leadership. These make you into very well-rounded young people.

Your headteacher and I agree that there are some things that could be even better. Staff at the school are going to make sure that:

- all of you make progress quickly so that you can achieve your ambitious personal targets
- even more of the teaching you receive is good or outstanding.

All of you can play your part by attending school regularly and continuing to participate enthusiastically in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Chris Wood  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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