

Waterhead Academy

Huddersfield Road, Oldham, OL4 3NY

Inspection dates 10–11 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Recent measures of students' progress are below national expectations.
- A substantial minority of teaching is not yet good. For example, sometimes teachers take insufficient account of the different abilities within the class or they miss opportunities to develop students' communication skills.
- A small minority of students work their hardest only when they are closely monitored.
- Students' attendance is below average. Too many students are not regular attenders.
- While leaders and managers have been successful in improving students' behaviour, examination results do not show consistent improvement. Many initiatives, including some to improve the quality of teaching, are relatively recent and have yet to show a clear impact.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers have successfully managed an extended period of substantial change while maintaining standards in key subjects.
- Teachers use questioning well to assess learning and help students to develop their thinking.
- Many students show good personal qualities. They get on well together and form positive relationships with their teachers.
- Students feel safe in the academy and are very positive about the new accommodation.
- Leaders and managers, supported by governors, form a strong team with a clear plan for improving provision and outcomes for students.

Information about this inspection

- During this inspection, inspectors observed 37 lessons, including six that were observed jointly with senior staff at the academy. They also made shorter visits to several other lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Principal, members of the governing body, a representative of the academy sponsors, staff and students.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including that relating to the work of the governing body and the achievement, behaviour and safety of students. They took account of 19 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View, as well as responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Paul Chambers, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Nell Banfield

Additional Inspector

Lyn Field

Additional Inspector

Chris Griffin

Additional Inspector

Bernard Robinson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Waterhead Academy is large compared with most secondary schools.
- The academy is sponsored by The Oldham College. After its formation in 2010, the academy operated on two sites just over two miles apart until November 2012, when it moved into purpose-built accommodation on a new site.
- The current Principal has been in post since September 2011. Several senior leaders are more recent appointments.
- There are more boys than girls in the academy.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs supported through school action is average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Approximately 45% of the students are of Pakistani heritage, nearly 40% are White British, and most others are from a range of other White backgrounds.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding from the government) is high compared with the national average.
- A small number of students in Year 11 attend off-site provision at The Oldham College for three days per week.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by
 - ensuring that all students experience a suitable level of challenge
 - giving more emphasis to promoting students' communication skills
 - promoting students' skills in independent learning
 - ensuring that teachers apply academy policies more consistently.
- Improve students' achievement by delivering lessons that interest and motivate students.
- Improve attendance through working further with the families of those students who are persistently absent.
- Develop leadership and management further by
 - monitoring closely the impact of initiatives
 - continuing to build links with parents.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' results at GCSE are generally below average. While attainment in 2012 in the key subjects of English and mathematics was broadly similar to 2011, students' overall attainment dropped slightly.
- Measures of progress are inconsistent. While 2011 showed a positive picture, 2012 figures show that students generally achieved less well than similar students in other schools. A range of inspection evidence shows that current students are progressing in line with expectations. Students make better progress in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages than in science and humanities.
- Relative to national figures, girls make more progress than boys. There is little difference between the achievement of different minority ethnic groups or between those who speak English as an additional language and other students. Most disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve in line with other groups; however, in 2012, the students supported at school action plus made less progress than others in the academy and less than similar students nationally.
- The gap between the average point score (a measure of overall attainment) of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium and other students has been less than the gap found nationally for each of the last two years, although wider in 2012 than 2011.
- The academy's leaders identified that students attending off-site provision last year did less well than other students and, as a response, no longer offer the same courses for Year 10 students. Current Year 11 students appreciate the opportunity to study for vocational qualifications in areas such as hair and beauty or business and enterprise and are making the progress expected of them. Leaders and managers monitor students' attendance and progress appropriately.
- The academy has strong links with the two large local providers of post-16 education. These have helped to ensure that the proportion of recent leavers not in education, employment or training is low.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although the majority of teaching seen during the inspection was good or better, a substantial minority was judged to require improvement. Inspectors' judgements broadly match the profile of teaching observed in the academy's most recent analysis. Evidence from joint observations confirms further that managers have an accurate view of teaching and learning and how it can be improved.
- Teachers form positive relationships with students. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to ask probing questions that challenge students to think more deeply and to explain their reasoning. They ensure that teaching assistants understand what is expected of students and that they provide appropriate support.
- Where teaching is strongest, teachers select resources and/or approaches that interest students and promote effective learning. They use a range of methods to assess students' learning during lessons. In an outstanding history lesson, the teacher provided an excellent balance between factual knowledge and generating empathy with slaves and the conditions they endured; students used a range of recording and note-taking techniques that helped to develop their independent study skills.
- In the less effective lessons, teachers take insufficient account of the range of abilities in the class and, as a result, the work is too difficult for some and not challenging enough for others. Sometimes they provide too much structure and guidance so that tasks become mundane; consequently, students lose interest and do not think enough for themselves.
- Teachers are aware of the need to promote students' communication and mathematical skills in subject teaching. Inspectors saw examples of teachers offering good feedback on students'

written work and students benefiting from extended writing tasks. Sometimes, however, teachers miss opportunities to develop communication skills, such as speaking and handwriting, or general literacy skills for less able students.

- Not all teachers apply consistently the academy's policies, such as for setting homework or making the best use of form-tutor time.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- While behaviour in the majority of lessons is good, some students lack the motivation to do their very best when the teaching is not inspiring or they are not closely monitored.
- Leaders have put at the academy's heart the notion of developing students' character and students achieving their personal best, and this is having an impact. Inspectors noted the smart appearance of the students, their pride in the new academy buildings and their good behaviour around the site.
- Students feel safe in the academy. They have a good understanding of bullying and on-line safety, including the possible impact of cyber-bullying. They say that bullying, including racism, is rare and that the academy responds quickly and effectively to any incidents that occur.
- Students say that behaviour has improved and the academy's records show evidence to support this. Different groups of students get on well together. Inspectors saw examples of students respecting differences between different religious views and noted very little bad language around the academy.
- Exclusions have been above average but are reducing.
- Attendance is below average. Too many students do not attend regularly and are classed as persistent absentees. The academy has identified the students in this category and deploys resources to work with parents to encourage regular attendance. Recent improvements in attendance have not yet been sustained over a long period.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Training to improve teaching has not yet resulted in teaching that is consistently good. However, underperformance in teaching is addressed rigorously and salary rises are granted only when teachers' performance merits them. Fewer teachers are on the higher salary scales than in most schools.
- The energetic Principal, supported by a fully focused senior leadership team, has established a clear vision for how the academy can improve. Leaders have managed major changes, such as integrating two school populations and a move to a new site, while maintaining standards in key subjects. Staff are supportive of the academy's leaders and all who responded to the inspection questionnaire said they are proud to work at Waterhead.
- Self-evaluation, including the evaluation of teaching, is accurate and rigorous. The programme for monitoring teaching is comprehensive and is building a greater and wider understanding of what constitutes good teaching. Managers are suitably self-critical in their drive to raise standards and are able to identify suitable priorities. They are using data increasingly well to set challenging targets and monitor students' progress over time.
- The curriculum has undergone considerable change. Changes to the length of a lesson have facilitated greater flexibility in the range of subjects offered for study. Imaginative use of teaching in modern foreign languages is providing an additional focus for developing students' literacy skills. The use of early entry for GCSEs, which may in the past have contributed to more grade Cs but relatively few students gaining the highest A* and A grades, has been significantly reduced and remains under review. The curriculum, supported by additional activities and the school's underlying values, promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.

- Leaders have allocated the pupil premium funding in a range of areas, including additional staffing to reduce class sizes, help with literacy development and provide additional support for students' personal needs. They understand the need to demonstrate how the additional funding has had an impact on narrowing attainment gaps. Similarly, the academy has not evaluated fully the effectiveness of the reading recovery scheme to help relatively weak readers to catch up.
 - Generally, small gaps in outcomes for students in different groups demonstrate the academy's successful application of equal opportunities. Fostering good relations and tackling discrimination are at the heart of the academy's values.
 - The small proportion of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed generally positive views about the academy. Leaders and managers have successfully addressed many anxieties of parents and local residents in the academy's early years. However, they accept the need to continue their efforts to strengthen links with parents, such as through academy events and developing the website.
 - The academy's sponsor continues to offer support for financial management and staffing issues. Regular contact between the Principal and the sponsor helps leaders and managers to keep a focus on long-term aims while managing day-to-day challenges.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are strongly supportive of the academy. They have helped to manage the move to the new site and have addressed some difficult issues robustly. They have a range of expertise and are well informed about students' achievement. Governors hold leaders to account for the academy's financial situation, including the allocation of pupil premium funding. They understand the academy's process for managing performance and recognise the link between additional pay for teachers and students' achievement. Governors recognise that they do not have a full picture of where teaching is strongest and weakest in the academy and that they could do more to establish direct links with parents.
-

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136148
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	399764

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1379
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Shauna Dixon
Headteacher	Nigel McQuoid
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0161 6205859
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	office@waterheadacademy.co.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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 Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012

