

West Lakes Academy

Main Street, Egremont, Cumbria, CA22 2DQ

Inspection dates 19–20 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders, well supported by governors and sponsors, have been well focused and successful in bringing about improvements in teaching and students' achievement. More rigorous checks on teaching and a well-targeted programme of staff training are helping to improve teaching and, consequently, students' achievement.
- Teaching is mostly good and some is outstanding. Teachers establish a positive atmosphere for learning in most lessons and students are challenged to do their best.
- As a result of improved teaching, better behaviour, and a well-planned curriculum, students' achievement has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Most students make good progress from their starting points, including in English, mathematics and science. Different groups of students do equally well.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning. They are keen to do well. As they move through the academy they develop high aspirations for their futures.
- Students' behaviour is good. Students feel safe and secure and appreciate and respect the new building. They are courteous and respectful. Students are increasingly proud to be a part of the academy.
- The sixth form is good. The range of subjects provided is broadening and meeting students' needs well. Achievement in vocational courses is outstanding. Achievement at A level is more variable between subjects. It is improving rapidly as the curriculum provides a wider range of subjects to study and students receive better guidance when choosing the subjects that best meet their needs.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet consistently good and not enough is outstanding. Some features of teaching, including marking, are not yet consistently effective.
- Leaders are not fully effective in ensuring that academic targets are challenging in all subjects and for all students. Checks on whether plans to help students catch up when they have fallen behind are not always followed up systematically enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 43 part-lessons, three of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with staff, students from each year group, members of the governing body and representatives of the sponsors.
- Documents looked at included the school self-evaluation, the improvement plan, information on the progress and attainment of students and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and the effectiveness of teaching.
- Parents' views were taken into account through the 77 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and a small number of phone calls from parents.

Inspection team

Gillian Salter-Smith, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Peter Eeva	Additional Inspector
Janet Peckett	Additional Inspector
Peter William Harrison	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- West Lakes Academy opened in September 2008. It is sponsored by Sellafield Limited, The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and the University of Central Lancashire. The academy moved into a new building in March 2012.
- The academy specialises in science and the arts.
- The academy is average in size compared with other secondary schools.
- Education is provided off the school site for a small proportion of students at West Lakes College, West Cumbria Achievement Zone and West Lakes Learning Centre.
- The academy works in collaboration with secondary schools in Whitehaven to provide a small number of courses for sixth form students.
- Since the previous inspection there have been many changes in staffing.
- An average proportion of students are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding. (Pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and the children of service families.)
- The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average. An average proportion of students are supported by school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards. These set the minimum standards expected for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of some features of teaching so that more is outstanding and students' progress is accelerated further by:
 - ensuring that teachers' marking is more consistent in giving students clear guidance on what they need to do to improve, and that students are given the opportunity to respond and improve their work
 - providing tasks that challenge more-able students at earlier points in lessons
 - giving students more opportunities to develop their ability to manage their own learning by finding things out for themselves, sharing ideas and discussing their work with each other.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers further by:
 - ensuring that the academic targets given to every student in all subjects are challenging and match their aspirations
 - making sure that there are systematic and rigorous checks on whether plans put in place by class teachers to help students catch up when they have fallen behind are working.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' achievement has improved considerably since the previous inspection both in the main school and in the sixth form. Most students make good progress from their starting points across a wide range of subjects. Achievement in the arts is particularly strong.
- Some indicators show that students' overall attainment by Year 11 was above average in 2012. Attainment and progress in mathematics and English have improved significantly since the previous inspection and the 2012 GCSE results in these subjects were close to average. The academy's accurate information shows that attainment and progress are on track to improve further, including in English and mathematics. Inspection evidence confirms this.
- Where progress has been weaker in a very few subjects, both in the main academy and the sixth form, leaders have been rigorous in making improvements to teaching and to the curriculum that are resulting in better achievement.
- The academy ensures that students make good progress in acquiring secure skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology. Reading is widely encouraged and students who fall behind in their reading get the support they need to catch up. Writing is often well structured and carefully presented. Most students become articulate and confident communicators. In a few lessons, students lacked confidence when talking about their work with others.
- Students known to be eligible for free school meals have improved their achievement as quickly as others. The gap between their standards in English and mathematics and national averages for all students is closing. Pupil premium funding has been used wisely to support these students and the few looked after students. Additional staffing and resources provide well-targeted personal and academic support.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress across subjects because staff know their needs well and additional adult support is well managed.
- The academy's commitment to equality of opportunity is seen in the close attention it generally gives to checking the progress of all groups of students and individuals and the effective support usually provided if students start to fall behind. However, arrangements to help students catch up are not always monitored effectively.
- Students taking part in education courses provided off the academy site achieve well because the courses are well chosen and provide a successful route into further education, training or employment.
- More-able students often make good progress, though they are not always sufficiently challenged in lessons. The proportion of students gaining the highest A* and A grades in GCSE is improving year-on-year, including in mathematics. The academy policy for early entry to GCSE examinations does not hold students back from gaining the higher grades.
- Achievement in the sixth form is improving and is good overall. Achievement in vocational courses is outstanding. The number of students who retain their commitment to courses is better than the national average. Over the past three years all students have moved on to education, training or employment. The sixth form is rapidly increasing in popularity. A wider range of courses and better guidance in selecting courses are improving students' results.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most of the teaching is good and some is outstanding. Good teaching is leading to rapidly improving achievement. A few features of teaching are not yet consistently good, such as the marking of students' work. Teaching is good and improving in the sixth form.
- Supportive relationships between teachers and students are well established. Classrooms are usually settled and students are eager to learn. Students appreciate the extra support that they

often receive.

- Teachers generally expect a great deal of students. In most lessons, they plan tasks that take good account of what students already know and get the most out of them. Tasks in lessons are mostly varied, well timed and structured so that students are fully involved in discussions, practical tasks and finding things out for themselves. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects is picked up by students so that most are keen to do well and enjoy learning. Teachers' secure knowledge of their subjects enables them to give clear explanations and use questioning skilfully to encourage students' deeper thinking and to check their learning. However, this is not yet consistent. More-able students are not always challenged enough, particularly at an early stage in lessons.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are well supported both in classrooms and through additional well-targeted support. Teaching assistants are well managed so that they support students and encourage them to develop independence in their learning.
- Regular assessment of students' progress and tracking of progress against students' targets help staff to plan relevant learning. However, academic targets for some students in some subjects are not challenging enough. The way targets are set for students is not fully understood by all staff.
- Most marking gives students useful guidance on how to improve and is valued by them. Students often make good use of the advice to improve their work. They often check their own and each other's work, which they find very helpful. This good practice is not yet consistent within and across subjects.
- In outstanding lessons, teachers create a very purposeful business-like atmosphere. Students relish the high-level challenges and manage much of their own learning, working together and supportively in pairs and groups. Examples of outstanding teaching were seen in many subjects including in English, mathematics and science.
- Occasionally, students listen to teachers for too long, which in turn reduces considerably the time for them to find things out for themselves, share ideas or work in pairs and small groups.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Most students have positive attitudes to learning and develop high aspirations for their futures. They enjoy learning, especially when carrying out practical, challenging tasks.
- Students are considerate of others and the academy is calm and orderly. Students are courteous and polite to adults and supportive of each other in lessons. Students feel safe and secure in the academy and recognise that much has improved, including students' attitudes and behaviour, since moving to the new building. They show much respect for the new building.
- The academy has effective policies and systems to manage students' behaviour. These are used effectively by most staff. Occasionally, behaviour is not managed well but disruption to learning in lessons is uncommon. The rewards and sanctions are respected by the vast majority of students. There have been no permanent exclusions since the academy opened and the number of fixed-period exclusions is falling. Students are encouraged to reflect on their actions and take responsibility for their behaviour.
- Bullying is rare and, when it does occur, students and most parents are confident that staff will sort it out quickly. Students are well briefed on the different types of bullying and know what to do should it occur. Students understand how to keep themselves safe in many different situations.
- Sixth form students are especially committed to their studies. They appreciate the individual encouragement they receive from subject teachers and form tutors. They are excellent role models for younger students and make a good contribution to the overall aims of the academy and its smooth running, for example, through their involvement in paired reading with younger students, and in interviews for new staff.

- Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is broadly in line with national averages. The academy has worked well with students and their families to encourage better attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal has been determined and successful in improving students' achievement, attendance and behaviour as well as improving the quality of staffing and teaching in both the main academy and the sixth form. She is well supported by a strong senior team, governing body and sponsors. Staff morale is good.
- Leaders' evaluation of the academy's work is accurate. It is based on rigorous checks on students' progress and more frequent checks on the quality of teaching.
- Improvements to teaching are well managed. Appraisal systems are rigorous and ensure that staff who perform well are rewarded and that any underperformance is tackled rigorously and given appropriate support.
- Staff training is leading to more effective teaching. It is well directed towards the academy's priorities and individual staff needs. Effective systems ensure that what works well in teaching is shared among staff.
- Target-setting for students and checks on plans to help some catch up could be more firmly managed.
- The curriculum meets students' needs well in both the main academy and the sixth form. It has broadened considerably since the previous inspection. Good attention is paid to developing students' skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. The curriculum promotes students' spiritual, moral and social development well. Students have very good opportunities to develop interest in music, arts and sport but their awareness of the diversity of society in the United Kingdom is underdeveloped.
- The academy has worked well to involve more parents in supporting their children's education. This has led to better attendance and higher aspirations and ambition among students.
- The sponsors provide good support for the academy through their role on the governing body. They also provide key resources and facilities for the arts and steer the curriculum towards a wider range of science and engineering opportunities.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body includes representatives of the three sponsors. Governors are as determined as the Principal to secure improvements. They hold leaders, including subject leaders, very closely to account for students' success. They are fully aware of how students perform in relation to national averages. They are well informed about the quality of teaching in the academy. They fully support leaders in rewarding effective staff performance and tackling and supporting underperformance. Although not fully aware of how pupil premium funding is spent, they check the progress of these students. They ensure that safeguarding procedures meet requirements. They receive training to help fulfil their roles appropriately.

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	135632
Local authority	Not applicable
Inspection number	406615

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	979
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adrian Thompson
Principal	Vanessa Ray
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2011
Telephone number	01946 820356
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	contactus@westlakesacademy.org.uk

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