

Waterhead Academy

Huddersfield Road, Oldham, Greater Manchester, OL4 3NY

Inspection dates 18–19 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- The quality of education provided by the academy has declined since the previous inspection.
- Students' achievement is inadequate. The most-able students make slow progress and do not attain high enough GCSE grades.
- Disadvantaged students have low attendance, are excluded frequently, and make much less progress than other students.
- Students who are known to have special educational needs underachieve and have a high level of exclusion and low attendance.
- Students' inadequate behaviour and attitudes disrupt the teaching in many lessons. Some teachers tackle unacceptable behaviour whereas some do not.
- Around the academy, students are too boisterous. Many swear and show a lack of respect for adults and for each other and a lack of pride in their work.
- Attendance remains too low, and there is some poor punctuality.
- The academy's work to keep students safe requires improvement because there is a high level of exclusion and there is too much homophobic derogatory language.
- Teaching is inadequate. The issues raised at the previous inspection still exist. There is a lack of challenge, lack of student engagement in lessons, and teachers do not extend students' communication skills well enough.
- Leaders and governors have not ensured that the large amount of money provided to support disadvantaged students has been effective in raising achievement.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured there are accurate and effective assessment and marking systems to increase students' achievement.
- Too many teachers who lead subjects have not been effective in improving teaching or students' learning and behaviour in their subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- The proportion of students not in education, training or employment at the end of Year 11 is low and has reduced in each year since the academy opened. The aspirations of students have been raised.
- The reading programme to enable students to catch up and be ready for the curriculum in Year 7 is effective.
- The Regain Centre has reduced exclusions for those attending alternative provision and increased targeted students' attendance.
- Recent improvements to senior leadership and governance have enabled the academy to have a more accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. The Principal has a clear view of what needs to be improved.
- Students of different gender, ethnic heritage and faith, or no faith, mix well together. The sponsor and leaders have been effective in bringing communities together.
- Students achieve well in physical education (PE), religious studies (RE), and creative media.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in a wide range of subjects and classes, including form time. In addition, they looked at a sample of books and students' work and spoke to students and teachers about their lessons. They also heard a few students read.
- Inspectors held meetings with the academy sponsor, members of the governing body, senior leaders and teachers who lead subjects.
- Inspectors surveyed students' views by holding discussions with four groups of students and speaking with students in and around school.
- Inspectors considered the views of 25 parents who completed Ofsted's online survey through Parent View.
- Inspectors considered the views of 62 members of staff who returned an Ofsted questionnaire.

Inspection team

Allan Torr, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Denis Oliver	Additional Inspector
Liam Trippier	Additional Inspector
Clive Hurren	Additional Inspector
Anthony Billings	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Waterhead Academy is sponsored by Oldham College and is much larger than the average-sized secondary school. Boys typically outnumber girls in the student population. The proportion of students whose circumstances are known to make them disadvantaged is well above the national average. Disadvantaged students are those known to be eligible for free schools meals or in local authority care. These pupils are entitled to support from pupil premium funding.
- More than 60% of students have a minority ethnic heritage; this is significantly higher than the national average.
- The proportion of students receiving support because they are known to have special educational needs or a disability is slightly lower than the national average.
- The Principal started at the school in the first week of September 2014.
- A small number of students attend the off-site provision at Oldham College or the provision in the Regain Centre in the academy's grounds.
- The academy did not meet the government's current floor standards in 2014; these are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the impact of leadership and management by:
 - making sure that teachers' marking is effective and their assessments are accurate and that both are used effectively to plan lessons and to increase students' rate of progress
 - making sure all leaders and governors have accurate data from which they can make decisions that lead to improvements in students' achievement
 - improving the impact middle leaders have on the quality of teaching and on making sure classrooms are orderly.
- Improve students' behaviour, safety and attitudes by:
 - making sure all adults apply the academy's behaviour rules and codes consistently
 - eliminating disruption to learning in lessons
 - combating all types of swearing and homophobic derogatory language
 - further increasing attendance, particularly for disadvantaged students and those who have special educational needs.
- Improve the impact of teaching on students' progress by:
 - developing students' communication skills and their ability to explain clearly their reasoning, thinking and ideas
 - making sure all students are engaged and interested in their work
 - increasing the level of challenge in lessons, particularly for the most-able students.
- Quicken students' progress, with a particular focus on:
 - students who are disadvantaged, so that the attainment gap between them and their peers closes rapidly
 - students who are known to have special educational needs, so that more achieve their potential
 - the most-able students, so that far more attain A* and A grades at GCSE.

Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leaders and managers have not been effective in halting a three-year decline in students' achievement. The most-able students and those whose circumstances make them disadvantaged underachieve. Leaders failed to prevent early entry into mathematics examinations in 2013/4 which has significantly affected the academy's reported GCSE results.
- Leaders and managers have not improved teaching since the previous inspection and the aspects raised remain as issues for the academy to improve. In particular, many of the teachers who lead subjects have not taken the necessary action to improve teaching or to make sure students achieve and behave well. This is particularly the case in mathematics, languages, design technology and music.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured that all adults tackle behaviour consistently or made sure they tackle students' lack of respect, bad language and disruptive behaviour in lessons.
- The recently appointed Principal has the confidence of the vast majority of staff. She is highly visible around the academy and, according to the responses in staff questionnaires, has improved staff morale. She has clear and well-formed improvement plans to raise the quality of teaching and quicken students' progress. Some well-designed improvements have already been made and more are due in January, including changes to the academy timetable. It is too early to see any impact of the changes on improving teaching or increasing students' progress.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of the academy's strengths and what it needs to do to improve. Their judgements about the impact of teaching on students' learning are accurate.
- Most middle leaders have been ineffective. Although they have good ideas and intentions, they have not made sure teaching is consistent or good enough. Similarly, they have had no impact on making sure students behave.
- The assessment systems are dysfunctional and ineffective. They do not lead to accurate judgements of students' attainment and do not help governors and leaders to improve teaching or students' progress.
- The curriculum has improved and more changes are planned to improve it further, so that it caters for the needs of the most-able students and those with special educational needs. The curriculum is not planned well enough to teach all of the necessary aspects of citizenship and personal and social education, or to make sure students have good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. However the pastoral team is high quality and has taken action to make sure students gain a good understanding of British values and tackle any signs of extremist behaviour.
- The curriculum in the off-site provision meets the needs of students. It has enabled students to be on courses that allow them to succeed and encouraged them to be integrated back into the academy.
- Leaders and managers have taken effective action to reduce, year-on-year, the proportion of students who are not in education, training or employment. There is an effective transition system in place to provide individual support to help students with special educational needs into courses at college. There has been a positive impact of the academy's work to help young people to make informed choices about their next steps.
- The academy's sponsor has established a clear vision for the future and has successfully appointed a Principal and additional senior leaders, some of whom start in January 2015. There is a focus on improving outcomes for students. The sponsor has commissioned its own external review of governance and a specialist committee to review students' achievement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has been successful in overseeing two schools and different communities in Oldham coming together into one academy and tackling racial and faith-based discrimination. As a consequence, students learn and mix well together, regardless of gender, ethnicity, faith or belief. While governors have ensured that the academy now does more to promote equality of opportunity, it has not been effective in reducing the achievement gaps between different groups of students.
 - The governing body has not made sure the academy meets all of its statutory duties. The website, for example, on the first day of inspection, did not meet statutory regulations. The staff took action on the second day of the inspection to make the necessary amendments. In addition, the academy has not taken the action it should under the public sector equality duty to foster good relations between people of different sexualities and those who are transgender.
 - Despite having over a half a million pounds in the last year from the government's pupil premium grant, the governing body has not checked well enough that it is having the impact it should on raising the achievement of disadvantaged students.
 - Governors have ensured that there are good systems in place to safeguard students and statutory

regulations are met in this respect. Governors have been trained in the safer recruitment of staff and make sure teachers are properly vetted to work with children safely.

- Over time, the governing body has not had the accurate information it has needed to make effective decisions. This is because teachers' predictions and targets for students have been much higher than the actual results in the GCSE examinations, indicating inaccurate assessments.
- Under the new Principal's guidance, the governing body has started to take action to tackle underperformance of teachers and to improve systems for staff performance management.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is inadequate. In many lessons learning is disrupted because students call out, talk over their teachers as they try to teach, carry on writing instead of listening or throw equipment. In addition, in many lessons, students are disengaged, particularly boys, which leads to them turning around and chatting, staring into mid air, putting on their bags, rocking loudly on chairs or refusing to work.
- Some teachers tackle poor behaviour and attitudes well, but others fail to follow the academy's rules and systems and let poor behaviour and attitudes persist without being addressed.
- Around school students are boisterous. During the inspection there were incidents which showed a lack of respect for adults and for each other, for example swearing loudly within earshot of inspectors, running down corridors, and generally failing to comply with rules of the academy.
- Students show a similar lack of respect and pride in producing their best work. In mathematics books there are examples of scribbled out work and careless presentation.
- Over time, the number of exclusions has been too high. Since September there have been fewer exclusions, but the number of incidents of 'call outs' because of poor behaviour has increased. The level of exclusion for boys and minority ethnic students has fallen significantly compared with the same period in the previous year. Disadvantaged students have the highest exclusion rate. The number of exclusions of students with special educational needs is declining, but is still too high.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement.
- Attendance is below average but has improved in the last two years. However, the attendance of some key groups, such as the disadvantaged students in Years 10 and 11 and students who have special educational needs, remains a significant concern. The attendance team has been successful in reducing the number of students who are persistently absent through a mix of measures such as early targeted calls to parents, fixed-penalty notices, home visits, rewards and a visible league table for attendance. There are a small number of students on part-time timetables who come into school at different times of the day. This is helping to re-integrate students into the academy and has reduced exclusions. However, the attendance team is not always aware of where these students are before they come into the academy.
- There are striking examples where the attendance, behaviour and safety of students in the alternative provision in the Regain Centre have improved. Oldham College sends frequent updates to the academy about students who are on full-time and part-time courses. This information allows the attendance team to track students' whereabouts in order to maintain their safety and react to non-attendance.
- Students are frequently late to lessons, which means valuable teaching time is lost.
- Parents, students and staff agree that students are safe in the academy. The academy has taken effective action to reduce cyber-bullying by, for example, making sure mobile telephones are not used during the day. The academy has not done enough to eradicate homophobic language such as 'that's so gay' to ensure that all students in the academy feel safe and secure.
- The site is secure and there are 24-hour security service and internal camera systems to maintain safety for adults and students. The academy is aware of potential risks and has ensured that there is a secure system to vet adults who work with students. An alert system to identify risks of forced marriage or extremist behaviour has been shown to be effective. Joint working with police, social services, school nurses and other agencies has enabled the academy to protect students increasingly from potential dangers such as crime, gangs and weapons.

The quality of teaching**is inadequate**

- In lessons, there are not enough opportunities for teachers to develop students' thinking, to impart the necessary knowledge and skills for students to work through examples or for students to respond to the teachers' marking. The new Principal had already taken action to extend lesson times from January 2015.
- There are examples of students' work unmarked by teachers for the whole of September, or with very minimal marking, particularly in mathematics. As a result, students have not had enough guidance about how to improve their work and students' errors and misconceptions have gone unchecked. In addition, teachers often do not build on or use students' errors as teaching points. The new Principal has taken action to improve marking. In English for instance, there are examples of teachers clearly identifying what students need to do to improve and, occasionally, students respond to this guidance.
- In many lessons, the level of challenge is too low. Inspectors' checks on Year 10 students' work in mathematics, for example, found that the class had carried out very low-level activities which were similar in difficulty to those found in primary schools. Then, a few weeks later, they repeated similar activities that were even easier.
- In most subjects, the most-able students are not challenged enough to make connections in their work, to deepen their thinking, or to extend their knowledge. Students' communication skills are not good enough because teachers do not do enough to develop students' written or oral skills.
- Teaching in mathematics is not good enough to make sure students make the progress they should. Teachers do not do enough to develop students' thinking and reasoning so that they understand and can apply their knowledge in different ways. As a result, some students could not find their way to solve some very easy mathematical problems.
- Part of the reason for students' poor behaviour is because they are not engaged or interested enough in their work. This issue was reported at the academy's previous inspection. Inspectors commonly observed bored and disengaged students in lessons. There are, however, examples of more effective teaching. In a creative media lesson, students used and applied technical language very well, using cameras to make films. They were involved and motivated throughout the lesson and the teacher's very good use of feedback and assessment made sure students made rapid progress.
- Teachers move around the class checking students' answers and responses and, in the most effective learning, teachers adapt their teaching depending on students' responses. In physical education, students make rapid progress because the teachers frequently check students' skills and understanding and tackle errors or weaker skills. In a hockey lesson, for example, the teacher identified that the ball was frequently passing by, or under, the hockey stick. He stopped the lesson, demonstrated a better stance for students to take and then monitored the class to check that this guidance had resolved the problem.
- A relatively large proportion of parents disagreed that homework was appropriate and students agreed there were some problems, such as not having a working pass code to get online to complete mathematics homework.

The achievement of pupils**is inadequate**

- Too many students make less than expected progress from when they start at the academy. The proportion of students attaining five good GCSEs is much lower than the national average and has not risen in the last three years.
- Disadvantaged students make very slow progress compared with other students and compared with non-disadvantaged students nationally. This means that by the end of Year 11 they are over a grade behind other students in the academy in English and mathematics. In 2013, disadvantaged students from the academy achieved results that were one-and-a-half grades lower than those of non-disadvantaged students nationally in English and mathematics.
- The most-able students make less than expected progress and underachieve; this is because they are not challenged enough, and are not given frequent feedback to improve their thinking and their understanding. Against the sponsor's wishes, the academy used early entry into mathematics GCSEs in 2014, but this did not restrict students from attaining higher GCSEs later in the year.
- Students who are known to have a disability are integrated well into the academy and some make at least expected progress. Those students who are known to have special educational needs underachieve. This is, in part, because they have high rates of absence compared with other students, they are excluded more often and not all teachers know how to meet their needs. In addition, the curriculum has not met the needs of some students, which has resulted in underperformance. In Year 10, for example, only 4% of students are making expected progress in mathematics, 10% in information and communication

technology (ICT) and only 15 % in history. In Year 8 and Year 10 students with special educational needs lag around a grade below their peers in the academy.

- Leaders have used government catch-up funding well to make sure students are ready for the secondary school curriculum. As a result, students have improved their reading skills and are supported well in Year 7.
- Students underachieve in a range of subjects, including mathematics, languages and music.
- The achievement of students in alternative provision is improving, however, the lack of continuity between the curriculum in the academy and in the Regain Centre is slowing progress.

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	442420

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,290
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Shauna Dixon
Headteacher	Colette Macklin
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2013
Telephone number	0161 6205859
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	office@waterheadacademy.co.uk

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