

# Wardle Academy

Birch Road, Wardle, Rochdale, Lancashire, OL12 9RD

## Inspection dates

23–24 February 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Requires improvement**

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The actions of leaders and governors over the last two years have not been focused enough on ensuring all pupils in the school make the best possible progress.
- In 2015, overall progress and attainment figures were broadly in line with national averages. However, the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers remained.
- Pupils who have special educational needs do not always make as much progress as they could because leaders do not focus enough on their academic achievement.
- There is too much variability in the quality of teaching both within and between subjects. Not enough teachers challenge their pupils to make the best possible progress.
- Too many disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs do not attend regularly. They also receive too many fixed-term exclusions.
- The quality of senior and middle leadership is variable. Too many leaders do not monitor and evaluate the impact of their actions effectively. Strategic leadership of pupils' behaviour and attendance is not strong.
- Governors do not ensure that they have the required information to challenge leaders effectively. Over the last two years, governors and trustees have not provided effective strategic direction and leadership for the school.

### The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed headteacher has a clear vision and determination that the progress of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, is an absolute priority for everyone in the school.
- Although she has only been in post since the beginning of January, the headteacher has wasted no time in taking a range of decisive actions to bring about improvements in pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils behave well around the school. They are polite and friendly. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Pupils respect the school environment.
- The work that the school does to prepare its pupils for progression after Year 11 is strong. Effective careers education, information, advice and guidance are a high priority.

## Full report

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

- Improve outcomes for pupils further by:
  - ensuring pupils make at least good progress in most subjects relative to their starting points
  - building on the improvements to date to make certain that gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others are closed quickly
  - making sure pupils act on teachers' feedback and advice and improve their work
  - ensuring that pupils who have special educational needs are challenged to make the best possible progress.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school by making sure all teachers:
  - have the highest expectations of what their pupils can achieve
  - provide the right level of challenge and support for all pupils
  - use questioning effectively to check and develop pupils' understanding
  
- Reduce further the persistent absence and incidents of poor behaviour from disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that all leaders and governors systematically monitor and evaluate the impact of their actions.
  
- Strengthen strategic leadership across the school, particularly in the area of pupils' behaviour and attendance.

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

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management **requires improvement**

- The previous headteacher, who is now the chief executive designate of the Wardle Trust, accepts that over the last two years he 'took his eye off the ball'. During this period, much of his time was spent outside of the school on Trust business. Senior leaders and governors now understand that his involvement with these wider issues has taken the focus away from the core purpose of ensuring that all pupils in the school make the best possible progress.
- Although the new headteacher has been in post for less than two months, she has already ensured that improving outcomes for all pupils is the absolute priority for every member of staff. They have responded well to her clear vision and blend of resolution and humanity. There was an overwhelmingly positive response in the staff online survey, with several staff commenting on how much they enjoy working at Wardle. Staff spoken to during the inspection commented on how supported they feel.
- The headteacher is well aware that the quality of leadership across the school is variable. Consultation is taking place on a new leadership structure for September 2016. In the meantime, the headteacher is focusing on developing leaders' ability to work more strategically rather than merely 'fire-fighting'. For example, the changes she has made to the systems and structures for managing pupils' behaviour have already had significant impact on reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions. The headteacher has an accurate evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses in subject leadership. She has begun to take action to improve the consistency of middle leadership, but it is too early to see impact in this area.
- The headteacher has an accurate grasp of the challenges that lie ahead if the school is to be judged good at the next inspection. She has a very clear list of priorities for improvement which chime with the inspection findings. The school's development plan provides a clear road map for the journey ahead.
- The top priority in the plan is to close the achievement gaps that exist between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in 2014 and 2015 indicate that leaders have not been using the pupil premium funding effectively. Discussions with senior and middle leaders during the inspection demonstrate that the progress of these pupils is now the highest priority across the school. As a result, the school's achievement tracking information indicates that in 2016 all attainment and progress gaps will narrow significantly.
- Leaders are using the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium effectively. Most of the pupils who entered the school last year with low prior attainment made accelerated progress by the time they reached Year 8.
- Senior leaders constantly review the curriculum to ensure it is appropriate and engaging for all pupils. The curriculum includes a wide range of academic subjects, but senior leaders are aware that current financial and staffing constraints prevent them from offering a wider range of vocational options. In Year 7, more time is allocated to literacy development, particularly for those pupils who have low prior attainment.
- There are high participation rates in extra-curricular activities, particularly in the areas of music and sport. A high proportion of pupils play a musical instrument and members of the various groups are offered opportunities to perform nationally and internationally. Pupils were keen to tell inspectors how much they enjoy participating in the range of sporting activities that are on offer.
- Pupils' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is an important element of the form tutor and assembly programme. The curriculum is audited and reviewed annually to ensure that these aspects are also being developed within subject areas. Preparing pupils effectively for life in modern Britain is at the heart of the Respect curriculum, which merges religious studies; citizenship; personal, social, health and economic education; and careers education. However, conversations with pupils during the inspection indicate that not enough is being done to ensure that everyone respects the sexual diversity of others. Some pupils feel that the school is not a safe and accepting place to be open about one's sexuality.
- The headteacher has brought a renewed focus to improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school. The assistant headteacher who leads on this area is establishing a more systematic approach to developing teaching and learning. She is a very strong practitioner and, as such, is a very effective role model for other teachers. Monitoring procedures are at an early stage of development but planning and review documents are not focused sharply enough on evaluation and impact. That said, senior leaders have a broadly accurate view of strengths and areas for development in teaching across the school.
- There are widespread opportunities for professional development both in-house and through externally accredited programmes. The support for newly qualified teachers and those in the early stages of their

teaching career is particularly effective. They are very appreciative of the time leaders and their colleagues devote to both their professional and their personal development.

- Responses to the online parent survey are overwhelmingly positive, with the vast majority saying that their children feel happy and safe and are progressing well. Many of the comments are positive, particularly about support and extra-curricular activities. There are, however, some issues raised around communication about their children's progress and the lack of parents' evenings. Some concerns are also expressed relating to bullying and homework.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Over the last two years, governors have not ensured that the outcomes for the pupils in the school have always been the top priority for senior leaders. Throughout this period, governors and trustees have not provided effective strategic leadership to ensure that the school continues to improve.
  - Governors do not make sure they have the right information to be able to challenge leaders effectively, particularly around outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. They do challenge heads of department about the outcomes in their subjects at curriculum review meetings. However, they do not monitor the performance of groups of pupils regularly and systematically.
  - Governors realised that the school required a headteacher who was focused solely on getting the best possible outcomes for its pupils. They are confident in the appointment they have made but they now need to ensure that they provide the necessary support for her as she takes the school forward.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Procedures to ensure all staff receive relevant training are strong, as are the protocols and practices for record-keeping. Staff have received a range of training on potential areas of risk for young people, including radicalisation, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. Following 'Prevent' training, staff are confident about making referrals as appropriate. Staff engage effectively and appropriately with parents, carers and other stakeholders to make sure that pupils are supported and safe. Inspectors shared with senior leaders that some lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) pupils had told them that they did not always feel safe in the school. Following this discussion, inspectors were satisfied that senior leaders would respond to this as a matter of urgency. The headteacher is aware that the current level of support for LGBT pupils is not good enough. A newly appointed middle leader is developing training and practice to ensure that this group of young people are cared for effectively.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **requires improvement**

- There is too much variability in the quality of teaching both within and between subjects. While some pupils are benefiting from good and better teaching, this is not consistent across the whole school. Some pupils, particularly low-attaining ones, are not getting enough access to high-quality teaching in their lessons which prevents them from making the best possible progress.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve. The most-able pupils are not always being challenged to attain the highest possible grades. This lack of challenge also prevents some low-ability pupils from making good progress, particularly at Key Stage 3. Too often, teaching, particularly the use of questioning, limits rather than deepens and extends pupils' thinking and understanding.
- The impact of feedback, including marking, is inconsistent within and between subjects. Some teachers give helpful feedback on how to improve work but too many pupils do not act upon the advice given. Consequently, there is limited evidence of teachers' marking and feedback helping pupils to make progress. Too many teachers are willing to accept untidily presented and incomplete work.
- The very positive relationships that exist between staff and pupils clearly make a contribution to the learning in most lessons. However, in a small number of lessons, where these relationships do not exist and teaching fails to engage pupils, low-level disruption hinders progress and learning.
- Where teaching is good or better, teachers use their expertise and passion for their subject, coupled with their knowledge of their pupils, to enthuse and involve them in their learning. They use questioning skilfully to check and extend pupils' understanding. Inspectors observed pupils benefiting from high-quality teaching in art and physical education.
- The literacy policy is underdeveloped and there is little evidence of how this is having an impact on improving pupils' literacy skills across the school. There is no consistent policy on how spelling, punctuation and grammar errors should be marked. Across a range of subjects, inspectors saw evidence of teachers not correcting misspelled key words and, consequently, mistakes being repeated. Inspectors

also saw many missed opportunities in lessons to develop pupils' oracy skills. It is too early to say whether recent strategies introduced to raise the profile of reading for pleasure are having any impact.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare **requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Staff know and care for the vast majority of their pupils well. However, the current level of care and support for LGBT pupils is not good enough. Leaders are aware of this and are responding to these concerns as a matter of urgency.
- Although pupils spoken to during the inspection say that bullying is rare, a small number who responded to the online survey say that when it does happen it is not resolved effectively. The procedure for logging bullying, particularly prejudice-based incidents, is not robust enough. There is a lack of clarity around the difference between bullying and general bad behaviour. There is particular ambiguity about what is recorded as a racist incident. There is little evidence in the records of how, or indeed if, incidents have been resolved. This same lack of clarity is evident in the school's anti-bullying policy, which senior leaders accept is in need of updating. Over a third of the parents who responded to the online survey did not think that the school dealt effectively with incidents of bullying.
- Some pupils were keen to tell inspectors how much they value the support they receive from teachers and other adults in the school. Key Stage 4 pupils say that the pastoral team are particularly helpful. One Year 11 boy spoke very positively about the support he had received since joining the school from another school. He was able to articulate how this had helped him to improve his attitude to learning and work towards achieving high grades. The overwhelming majority of pupils who responded to the online questionnaire, along with those who spoke to inspectors, would recommend their school to others.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In most lessons, pupils show respect to their teachers and each other which creates a positive atmosphere for learning. However, in a small number of lessons this is not always the case and the behaviour of some pupils prevents them, and others in class, from making progress.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and behave well around the school. During break and lunchtime, and when moving between lessons, pupils' behaviour is generally mature and calm. This is particularly impressive as the design of the school means that some areas are very crowded. Pupils respect the school environment which is free from litter and graffiti.
- Until a few months ago, the number of pupils receiving fixed-term exclusions was very high. Of further concern is that a high proportion of these were disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs. The headteacher has made significant changes to systems and structures for dealing with pupils who are having difficulty with their behaviour. This has already led to a big reduction in the number of exclusions.
- For the last three years, overall absence figures have been broadly in line with national averages. However, behind these headline figures there is concern about the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs, particularly the number who are persistently absent. The actions leaders have taken have led to some improvement in the attendance of these groups of pupils this year, but it is still lower than their peers. Overall attendance to date compares favourably to the same time last year, but Year 11 have the lowest attendance in the school.
- Strategic leadership of behaviour and attendance is not strong enough. Senior leaders are not monitoring and evaluating the impact of their actions systematically. Consequently, concerns about the attendance and behaviour of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs have not been addressed urgently enough.

## Outcomes for pupils **require improvement**

- In 2014 and 2015, overall progress and attainment measures by the end of Year 11 were broadly in line with national averages. However, during these two years, progress and attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers have not narrowed.

- From the start of this year, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils has been the highest priority for all leaders. As a result of actions taken, the school's own tracking information indicates that all progress and attainment gaps are set to narrow significantly.
- Senior leaders are confident that their predictions for outcomes at the end of this year are accurate because the tracking system is now more robust. Formal assessments are used more frequently and moderation and standardisation take place both internally and with other schools. These predictions indicate that outcomes in 2016 will represent a significant increase in overall attainment and progress figures.
- In 2015, the most-able pupils made particularly good progress in mathematics. A high proportion of pupils attained high grades in additional and core science but not enough pupils attained A and A\* grades in other subjects. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that not all teachers are challenging pupils effectively to achieve the highest grades.
- Pupils who have special educational needs, including those who attend the resource-based provision, are not always being challenged to make the best possible progress. A highly committed team works hard to meet the needs of these pupils but leaders do not focus enough on securing the best possible academic outcomes for them. That said, achievement gaps between these pupils and their peers are set to narrow at the end of this academic year. Pupils spoken to during the inspection feel very well supported by the team of staff, particularly by the help they receive to overcome personal difficulties. Parents speak highly of the support their children receive from the special educational needs staff.
- The work that the school does to prepare its pupils for progression after Year 11 is strong. Senior leaders see effective careers education, information, advice and guidance as high priorities. The impact of this can be seen in the recent Year 11 destination figures which show that most pupils are being effectively prepared to progress to further education and training or to enter full-time employment.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140055
<b>Local authority</b>	Rochdale
<b>Inspection number</b>	10011072

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,178
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Susan Taylor
<b>Headteacher</b>	Carole Fisher
<b>Telephone number</b>	01706 373911
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.wardleacademy.co.uk">www.wardleacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@wardleacademy.co.uk">info@wardleacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Wardle Academy is a larger than average secondary school. It converted to academy status in September 2013.
- Wardle Academy is part of the small Wardle Trust which comprises the school and one other partner primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and, therefore, supported with additional government funding, known as the pupil premium, is slightly higher than the national average. The pupil premium is funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for looked after children.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- The school does not use any alternative educational provision.
- A new headteacher was appointed in January 2016.
- The school has resource-based provision for disabled pupils, although the funding for this ceases in April 2016. There are currently three pupils on the roll of this resource-based provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons across a range of subjects, including joint observations with senior leaders. They carried out a work scrutiny with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils and talked to others informally during breaks and lunchtimes. Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders, classroom teachers, newly and recently qualified teachers and learning support assistants. A meeting was held with the Chair and one other member of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the 67 responses to the online Parent View survey, the 72 online questionnaires completed by staff and the 15 online questionnaires completed by pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, performance information and a selection of policies.

## Inspection team

Anne Seneviratne, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Pippa Jackson Maitland	Her Majesty's Inspector
Liz Kelly	Ofsted Inspector
Jonathan Smart	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Hollister	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Barbara Dutton	Ofsted Inspector



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