

# Waterhead Academy

Huddersfield Road, Oldham, Greater Manchester OL4 3NY

## Inspection dates

21–22 June 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Requires improvement**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, while improving, is not consistently leading to all groups of pupils making good progress.
- Although the proportion of pupils achieving A\* and A grades at GCSE is rising, some of the most able pupils do not make the progress they should.
- While attendance is improving quickly, it is not yet in line with the national average.
- Some teachers do not provide enough challenge to stretch the most able pupils. They are too slow to move pupils on to more complex work when they are ready for it.
- Too much of teachers' planning results in tasks and activities that are too easy or too hard for different groups of pupils and this slows their progress.
- Teaching does not consistently provide enough opportunities for pupils to build their resilience to persevere with demanding work without support. This prevents some pupils from reaching the highest levels in examinations.
- Teachers of mathematics do not consistently share existing good practice in the school in teaching pupils to solve problems, engage in investigative tasks by themselves and practise their reasoning skills.

### The school has the following strengths

- In the six months since his appointment, the principal has swiftly established a positive culture and ethos and an ambitious vision for the school.
- New appointments to senior and middle leadership teams have greatly increased the school's capacity and drive to improve. Staff fully support their leaders.
- Robust systems are now holding staff to account very strictly for checking pupils' progress. The positive impact on staff morale and pupils' learning is evident across the school.
- Pupils' conduct in and around the school is orderly, polite and respectful. Pupils feel safe at school.
- Gaps in the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils are closing quickly. The progress of most pupils, including those who have special educational needs or disabilities is also improving.
- Leaders make frequent and strong checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, teaching is improving steadily.
- A new, individualised curriculum with a strong focus on careers guidance is in place to improve pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively.

## Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

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

- Improve teaching, so that it swiftly becomes at least good by:
  - ensuring that all teaching meets the learning needs of all pupils more precisely
  - raising the level of challenge and expectations of all pupils, but especially the most able
  - giving pupils more frequent opportunities to develop their resilience in tackling challenging work without support, in order to reach the highest levels in examinations.
  
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - giving teachers more opportunities to share good practice in teaching pupils how to practise solving mathematical problems and their investigative and reasoning skills so that more pupils achieve the higher grades in mathematics
  - building on the school's existing successful strategies in improving pupils' attendance, in order to secure at least good attendance across the school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The executive principal, commissioned by the governors, joined the school in November 2015 in the wake of very poor outcomes in the summer 2015 GCSE examinations. He has ambition and vision for the school's future and in a very short time he has spared no effort in making a range of changes that are turning the school round rapidly.
- The executive principal has swiftly reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team, making strategic changes and appointments which contribute to the school's capacity for further improvement. He and senior leaders, supported by governors, are unafraid to take firm action when staff who have had every support to help them improve their practice, fail to do so. As a result, staff have higher expectations of themselves and their pupils. They are galvanised by a much stronger sense of purpose and belonging and are determined to play their part in improving the school quickly.
- The school's robust systems for checking all aspects of its work ensure that leaders and governors have an open, honest and extremely detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and a shared drive to take the school further. This has resulted in improving trends in achievement and attendance, and better conduct of pupils in class and around the school.
- Leaders have made the quality of teaching, learning and assessment their highest priority. There is now some effective teaching in the school. Strong systems of performance management and a rigorous system to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have all but eradicated weaker teaching. Nevertheless, teaching still requires improvement, at least in part because of inconsistencies of practice caused by a legacy of turbulence in staffing.
- Leaders have established an effective behaviour policy that most pupils who spoke with inspectors found fairer and clearer than previously. They said that behaviour in the school was now better as a result, and this is confirmed in their positive behaviour noted by inspectors.
- Good leadership by the new special educational needs coordinator has resulted in much more accurate identification of pupils' learning, social, emotional, physical and mental needs. Consequently, these pupils are well supported and many more can follow mainstream learning. As a result, some pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities are beginning to make better progress than other pupils in the school.
- The value of the good support that disadvantaged pupils receive is evident in the improving progress and attainment of most pupils in this group. However, the school recognises that the most able disadvantaged pupils should be making better progress, given their starting points.
- Catch-up funding is used to support pupils in Year 7 who have lower reading ages and are struggling with spelling and writing. Pupils in the school who have received this support have rapidly made up their deficits in reading.
- The library now has a higher profile in the school. Pupils are expected to read at key points in the day, for example at the start of assemblies. The library has a wide range of attractive books and other resources that encourage pupils to read for pleasure and information.
- The new curriculum is broad and balanced. It provides a good range of both academic and vocational courses to suit the varying needs and aspirations of pupils. The curriculum is designed to promote better outcomes at the higher GCSE grades and in the English Baccalaureate, for those who can achieve it. Pupils have the opportunity to study three separate sciences and pupils who speak English as an additional language can opt for some courses in their first language.
- The curriculum is also built around a focus on improved and earlier careers information, advice and guidance to ensure that pupils are well prepared for future education, employment or training available locally or further afield. Almost all pupils achieve their preferred destinations on leaving Year 11.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is well catered for, through daily assemblies and tutor periods, as well as through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to attend theatre and sporting trips and have early opportunities for leadership, for example as Year 7 ambassadors who contribute to the smooth transition of Year 7 pupils into the school.
- At the time of this inspection pupils were very engaged in a mock European Union referendum to support their understanding of democratic values in modern Britain. Year 10 pupils have also attended challenging workshops to secure their understanding of the risks of extremism.
- The school places a high value on its role in bringing together its diverse community. Pupils represent the school at many local community events including Remembrance Day services, cultural events and in charity fund-raising.
- School leaders use four providers of alternative provision placements. They make rigorous and regular checks on the progress, attendance and behaviour of the very small number of pupils who are involved in these programmes.

## ■ The governance of the school

- Governors are open and honest. Both the sponsor and governors realised the implications of the decline in progress in the 2015 GCSE examinations. They took appropriate action to harness high-quality support from an academy trust to build the capacity of the leadership and management of the school. New appointments to the governing body have strengthened its effectiveness and governors have become much more capable of challenging senior leaders about, for example, financial matters and outcomes for pupils. Expenditure of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is now clearly having a positive impact on pupils' progress.
  - All these actions have contributed significantly to putting the school back on track, from a low base, on its journey towards the removal of special measures.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's comprehensive policies and procedures for safeguarding and child protection are all met in full. Leaders and governors work closely with the school and a wide range of external partners to ensure that pupils' health, safety and security have a high profile within the school. Appropriate and regular training takes place to keep all staff updated.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies across the school. Teachers' expectations of the quality of work that pupils can and should produce are not consistently high enough. As a result, some activities planned are not routinely well matched to pupils' learning needs and are not sufficiently challenging. Some of the most able pupils therefore do not have to work consistently hard enough or quickly enough to develop the resilience and perseverance that they will need to achieve the highest levels of attainment and progress.
- The most able pupils sometimes have to work at too low a level and have to wait too long for the teacher to move them on to more demanding tasks. This slows their progress and occasionally leads to low-level disruption.
- Many pupils join the school with poor skills in reading, writing, speaking and mathematics. The school has developed, and implemented consistently well, a communication strategy which gives pupils frequent opportunities to challenge each other's views and ideas, or lead part of the lesson. This work is beginning to show an impact on standards in all year groups. Support for low-attaining readers is raising standards in reading as well as pupils' enjoyment of reading for pleasure.
- The school has developed a clear marking and assessment policy, which includes helpful guidance for teachers on how to advise pupils on the next steps in learning. Most teachers comply with the policy but they do not always check, as the policy asks, whether pupils have acted on their guidance. Errors and misunderstandings therefore remain in pupils' work and do not provide a good model for revision.
- Teachers take pride in their classrooms and provide pupils with a calm and motivating atmosphere for learning. This contributes to the positive relationships between teachers and pupils. Pupils are very willing to work and collaborate well together on tasks and activities.
- Some effective teaching is evident in observations of teaching and learning and in samples of pupils' work over the year. Inspectors saw some good levels of challenge in mathematics. Pupils had opportunities to investigate complex mathematical problems for themselves and practise their reasoning skills. This stretched the most able pupils effectively. However, this good practice is not consistently shared across the whole department.
- Teaching and learning in both mathematics and English is variable because these departments are still suffering a lack of continuity in teaching. This is because of a legacy of weak teaching and staffing difficulties. Nevertheless, the school's robust tracking systems point to improving progress across the school in English and clear, if slower, progress in mathematics.
- Senior leaders have appointed a new lead practitioner of English and another in mathematics for September 2016. Two teachers of mathematics will also join the school in September 2016. These appointments are aimed at speeding up improvements in both subjects.
- Some strong teaching was also evident with low-ability pupils in a Year 8 history class. Resources on the evacuation of children during the second world war were designed specifically for pupils' different levels of literacy. This gave them confidence and provoked their interest and concentration on a challenging topic and they enjoyed the progressively harder work as the lesson unfolded.
- A Year 8 drama class showed the teacher's high expectations as pupils discussed with great interest previous work on the foundations of European drama in the time of Aristotle. This led swiftly to an analysis of contrasting film clips: an Afro-Caribbean cartoon and a scene from a popular detective series. This contributed much to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are clear that all forms of bullying, including racist or homophobic bullying, are unacceptable. Pupils say that any such instances are uncommon and dealt with effectively by adults if they occur. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe from risk, including when using the internet and social media.
- Pupils and parents agree that the school is a safe and secure place in which to learn. The school has strong links with a wide range of outside agencies to provide good support for pupils' well-being. Outcomes for pupils are improving, because of this high level of care and support.
- The school's leaders keep a careful check on the curriculum and learning of the very small number of pupils who are educated in off-site provision. They make sure pupils are safe, attending regularly and making progress both in English and mathematics, and sometimes in their social and emotional development.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Senior leaders recognise that good behaviour for learning, such as the ability to take the initiative and persevere with difficult tasks unsupported by adults, is not yet routine across the school. This hampers pupils' progress, especially that of the most able pupils. There is little disruption to lessons but when teaching fails to interest and challenge pupils, their progress slows.
- Pupils report that typically behaviour around the school is improving. Their behaviour as they move between lessons and at breaks and lunchtimes is orderly and well mannered. The number of exclusions is declining steadily, as pupils adapt to the uncompromising stance senior leaders take on poor behaviour.
- Senior leaders have worked determinedly to improve attendance since the last inspection. The school has put many successful strategies in place to promote overall attendance, and the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent has improved dramatically from a low base. The school knows that more work is needed to ensure that attendance rates are at least in line with national averages.

## Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils enter the school with standards that are significantly below average. The school's GCSE results in 2015 were below the government's floor standards. Only 31% of pupils gained five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics.
- Very few pupils succeeded in gaining the higher grades or achieved the English Baccalaureate. Pupils currently in Year 11 are on track to make faster progress, particularly in English. Smaller improvements are also evident in mathematics and in the proportion of higher grades at GCSE.
- Low-ability pupils are making considerable gains in progress in both English and mathematics. The most able pupils are making better progress than previously. Nevertheless, senior leaders know that there is more work to be done to improve the performance of the most able pupils generally.
- Historically, the most able pupils who are also disadvantaged have not achieved well enough at the higher GCSE grades and in the achievement of the English Baccalaureate. The school has put effective measures in place to remedy this and Year 11 pupils currently in the school are set to make faster progress towards this qualification.
- The progress of other disadvantaged pupils is broadly similar to that of other pupils in the school and gaps with others nationally are narrowing substantially, reflecting the school's effective use of pupil premium funding to support these pupils.
- In Year 11 there is only a small number of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities, making analysis of their progress as a group difficult. Individual case studies presented by the school show that the academic and personal development of these pupils across the school is carefully planned and on some measures they outperform their peers.
- The high quality of support for pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is confirmed by the fact that almost all these pupils move on to meaningful further education, training or employment when they leave Year 11.
- Senior leaders have taken the opportunity presented by national changes in assessment to put in place equally rigorous systems for tracking pupils' progress and moderating teachers' assessments in key stage 3 as in key stage 4. Assessment information for these pupils points to improving progress across most year groups and subjects.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136148
<b>Local authority</b>	Oldham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10013068

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
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,219
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Shauna Dixon
<b>Principal</b>	James Haseldine
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 620 5859
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.waterheadacademy.co.uk">http://www.waterheadacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@waterheadacademy.co.uk">office@waterheadacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	18–19 November 2014

## Information about this school

- Waterhead Academy is currently sponsored by Oldham FE College but, at the time of this inspection, consultations were underway for new sponsorship by September 2016.
- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is around twice the national average. The pupil premium is funding to help overcome disadvantage and is for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is approximately three times the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities has previously been high but is now reducing.
- The school uses four local alternative providers for a very small number of pupils: The Work Experience Team, Kingsland Pupil Referral Unit, the Latics Zone and Raise the Youth.
- The school is compliant with government requirements concerning the content of the school's website.
- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards in the 2015 GCSE examinations. The floor standards set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The executive principal will become principal on 1 August 2016.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in most subjects and in all year groups. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work in many subjects across the school during observations of teaching and learning. They also considered a separate sample of pupils' written work across the school to look at their progress over time.
- Meetings were held with the principal, other senior leaders, and leaders in charge of subjects or other aspects of the school's work. Inspectors spoke formally and informally to pupils across the whole age range of the school. The lead inspector met governors, including the chair of the governing body, a representative of the school's sponsors and the executive officer of the Dean Trust, which has been providing support for the school's improvement.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and action plans, information about pupils' attainment and progress, records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, the school's safeguarding and other policies, and records on checking the quality of teaching and learning and of governance.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school site at breaks and lunchtimes, and attended breakfast club, one assembly and several tutor periods. Inspectors also observed pupils behaviour at the start of the school day. Inspectors considered 29 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, for the current year and also from the school's recent parent and pupil surveys.
- The views of staff were gathered from discussions with individual teachers, as it was not possible to access the electronic questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Susan Wareing, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Fiona Burke-Jackson	Ofsted Inspector
Clive Hurren	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Ofsted Inspector



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