

University Academy Warrington

Insall Road, Padgate, Warrington WA2 0LN

Inspection dates

8–9 November 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Too many pupils do not make good progress across a range of subjects throughout their time in school. This is particularly the case for pupils in key stage 3.
- Differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of others nationally are not diminishing quickly enough. This is particularly the case in mathematics.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving but there remains too much variability within and between subjects. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve, particularly the most able.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not always supported effectively to make the best possible progress.
- The overall absence figure remains higher than the national average despite improvements in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Strategies to improve pupils' literacy have not had enough impact. There is a very limited number of books in school to encourage reading for pleasure.

The school has the following strengths

- Under the principal's effective leadership, the school has travelled a considerable distance in a short time. As a result, there have been clear improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour.
- This is a very inclusive school where all pupils are valued for who they are. Pupils in the designated provision are particularly well cared for and supported to make good progress.
- Pupils benefit from very strong teaching in English. Outcomes in 2016 improved significantly on those in the previous year. Disadvantaged pupils achieve at least as well as others nationally in this subject.
- Pupils behave very well both in lessons and around the school. They are friendly and polite. They respect the school environment and look very smart in their uniforms.
- Strong relationships based on mutual respect exist between staff and pupils. This has a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- The safety, welfare and personal development of all pupils are a high priority for all staff.
- Governors work closely with leaders in school, providing them with effective support and challenge.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for pupils by:
 - ensuring that, in all subjects, pupils make at least good progress relative to their starting points
 - building on the improvements secured so far to make certain that differences in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally diminish quickly, particularly in mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning further by making sure that all teachers:
 - have the highest expectations of what their pupils can achieve, particularly those in key stage 3
 - challenge the most able pupils in order for them to attain the highest possible grades
 - provide the right level of challenge and support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve the overall attendance of pupils and reduce the number who are persistently absent.
- Provide more books for pupils to read for pleasure both in school and at home.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since taking up her post in September 2015, the principal, through strong leadership, has enabled the school to travel a considerable distance on its journey of improvement in a short time. It is particularly impressive that she has managed to take the whole of the school community with her on this journey. Staff, pupils and parents praise the difference she has made. As one pupil said, 'She has changed the school completely in a positive way.'
- The self-evaluation document presents an accurate assessment of the distance travelled so far. It is also very clear about the areas that require further improvement. The statement of action document provides a clear plan for the next stage of the journey as the school moves towards further sustained improvement.
- It is clear that staff and pupils feel valued. They form strong, positive relationships with each other that are based on mutual respect. The responses to the staff online questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive. All those who responded think that the school is well led and managed. They feel supported by leaders and enjoy working at the school.
- The principal's collaborative style of leadership, alongside the support and development opportunities provided by the trust, means that senior and middle leaders are now working more effectively. Senior leaders work together very well as a team. Although they lead on specific areas, they support each other, particularly as some are more experienced.
- The overall quality of middle leadership has improved since the last inspection. Some subject leaders are new to post or have taken on wider responsibilities following a recent staffing restructure. Senior leaders have an accurate assessment of which subject leaders require further development and are providing them with the appropriate support and challenge. Heads of department benefit from being part of the trust's subject networks and working with outstanding practitioners in other schools. The departmental self-evaluation documents and actions plans have sharpened middle leaders' focus on their accountability for overall improvement in the school. The leadership of English is particularly strong.
- This is a very inclusive school. Pupils are valued as individuals and feel safe and supported. Several parents who responded to the online survey commented on how much they appreciate this inclusive ethos and the difference it makes to the happiness of their children. This view is summed up in this parental comment: 'Our son is happy and cared for. He is thriving at UAW and we have no doubt he will achieve his full potential.'
- Leadership of the designated provision is very effective. Pupils who attend this provision benefit enormously from high-quality care and education. Parents' comments show how much they value this and the positive impact it is having on their children. They praise the staff for their willingness to 'go above and beyond' to help their children.

- The leadership of teaching and learning is strong. Senior leaders have an accurate overview of the strengths and the remaining areas requiring improvement in teaching across the school. Appropriate support and challenge for teachers have resulted in an improvement in the quality of teaching across the school. More pupils are now benefiting from good or outstanding teaching.
- Procedures for managing teachers' performance are now effective. Teachers' targets are now more sharply focused and clearly linked to the school's action plan. The new system is only in its first full cycle but there is clear evidence that the principal is using it effectively to manage teachers' performance.
- Senior leaders have developed an appropriate curriculum to meet pupils' needs. Pupils have access to a wide range of subjects despite the small size of the school. Personal, social, health and economic education is delivered via 'thematic curriculum days' throughout the year. A range of relevant and important topics are covered on these days, such as online safety, and sex and relationships education. However, leaders have not thought enough about the implications for those pupils who are absent on these days.
- All departments have audited how their programmes of study contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The high priority that leaders give to this aspect of pupils' development is evident in the thoughtful and respectful way that pupils conduct themselves throughout the school day. This was seen particularly during a Year 9 assembly on the theme of Remembrance Day.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum provides a range of enrichment opportunities for pupils. One of the ways this is done is through 'experience week' in July. Pupils speak very positively about the activities that they engage in during this week, which contribute significantly to the community ethos of the school. Activities such as fund-raising days, a European referendum campaign and vote, and leadership opportunities are some of the ways by which pupils are prepared effectively for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils supported by the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding make accelerated progress in English. The same success is not seen in the progress that they make in mathematics. Leaders recognised that the strategies that were used last year did not have enough impact. A new strategy has been introduced this year to help these pupils to improve their numeracy skills.
- Pupil premium funding is used very effectively to improve outcomes for pupils in English. So successful has this been that in 2016, disadvantaged pupils achieved at least as well as others nationally in this subject. This success has not been seen in other subject areas, where differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of others nationally are not diminishing quickly enough. This is particularly the case in mathematics, where leaders have not had a sharp enough focus on implementing strategies to improve the attainment and progress of these pupils. Every subject teacher knows who the disadvantaged pupils are in their classes, but leaders have not been effective enough in checking what teachers then do to ensure that these pupils achieve well. Leaders have only just begun to focus specifically on ensuring that the most able disadvantaged pupils attain high grades.

- Pupils who are supported by special educational needs funding make generally good progress during their time in school. There is no doubt that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are cared for, valued and supported. However, leaders do not focus sharply enough on tracking the progress that these pupils make.
- The principal and other leaders value the support they receive from the trust. They feel that belonging to a wider network is particularly valuable for such a small school. The impact of the trust's work can be seen in the improved quality of leadership across the school.

Governance of the school

- The local governing body, known as the statement of action committee, is a small group that focuses its attention on the progress of pupils. The chair of this committee is a national leader of governance and has supported the principal effectively through her first year in post. The chair has a clear understanding about what is needed for the school to improve further. As he explained, 'It is about being sustainable, not about quick fixes.' The minutes of meetings provide clear evidence of challenge, particularly to middle leaders. He is also aware that governors need to focus more on the progress of pupils lower down the school rather than just those in Year 11.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The work the school does to keep its pupils safe is of a very high quality. Leadership of this area is very strong. The 'Keep Kids Safe' team comprises a group of staff who are very skilled in supporting and safeguarding pupils. Staff engage very effectively and appropriately with parents and external agencies to make sure that all pupils are supported and safe. Procedures to ensure that all staff receive relevant training are extremely robust, as are the protocols and practices for record-keeping. Leaders ensure that relevant staff training, for example on such areas as radicalisation and extremism, is followed up with assemblies for pupils to raise their awareness.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Leaders' actions have brought about improvements to the quality of teaching, but it still varies too much, both within and between subjects. Many pupils are benefiting from good or better teaching, but this is not consistent throughout the school. Some pupils do not receive high-quality teaching and this prevents them from making the best possible progress.
- Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve. This lack of challenge is preventing some pupils, particularly the most able, from making good progress. Too many pupils are not making enough progress during key stage 3. The targets that pupils are given in Years 7, 8 and 9 are not high enough. This lowers teachers' expectations of what their pupils can achieve, which has a detrimental effect on their rate of progress.

- Leaders ensure that all teachers have information about the particular needs of pupils in their classes. However, not enough teachers are planning learning effectively to meet these individual needs. This is particularly the case for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; some teachers do not ensure that these pupils can access the learning and this hampers their progress. For pupils whose starting points are low, the teaching sometimes starts at too high a level or moves on too quickly before skills are embedded.
- There is variability in the impact that teaching assistants have on the progress of the pupils that they support. In a food technology lesson, it was clear that the teacher and teaching assistant plan together to ensure that the pupils being supported are able to get the most out of the lesson and make good progress. However, this effective practice does not happen in all subjects.
- The quality of teachers' questioning is variable. Some use questioning very skilfully to check and develop pupils' understanding. They often give pupils time to think and reflect before offering responses. However, on other occasions, teachers' questioning limits rather than extends pupils' thinking.
- Strategies to improve pupils' literacy have not had enough impact. Not all teachers are making the most of opportunities to develop pupils' literacy and oracy skills. Not enough attention is given to developing pupils' confidence to use the correct terminology across all subjects. The trust's policy on marking for literacy is not practical, which has contributed to inconsistent practice in this area. Also, when pupils do not correct spellings accurately, some teachers do not follow this up.
- The positive relationships that exist between teachers and their pupils contribute significantly to the quality of learning. Many teachers use their expertise and passion for their subjects, coupled with their knowledge of their pupils, to enthuse and involve them in their learning. In key stage 4, teachers focus on developing the skills that pupils need to be successful in examinations. Alongside this, they focus on building pupils' confidence and deepening their understanding of the subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Staff know and care for their pupils well. The nurturing ethos throughout the school creates an environment in which pupils are happy and can flourish.
- All pupils are cared for well in this school, particularly the vulnerable. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and children looked after are given extremely effective personalised support to help them thrive.
- Leaders have created a culture in school that values individuals, recognising that everyone is different but equal. This creates an environment in which pupils feel safe and comfortable to be themselves. For example, it gives them confidence to be open about their sexual orientation and gender identity.

- Positive relationships based on mutual respect pervade the school. Consequently, incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils who spoke to inspectors feel that on the few occasions where it does occur, it is dealt with effectively.
- Leaders monitor effectively the welfare and emotional well-being of the small number of pupils who attend alternative provision. Robust communication procedures exist between school staff and the providers.
- Leaders support pupils effectively in the transition from primary to secondary school. Several parents who responded to the online survey commented on how well their children have settled into Year 7. These parents are pleased with how effective staff are at dealing with any concerns that may arise. Year 7 pupils who spoke to inspectors were very happy that they had chosen to come to this school.
- Pupils benefit from an effective careers education, information, advice and guidance programme that focuses on raising aspirations, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. For example, all Year 8 pupils were taken on a visit to Chester University to raise their awareness of higher education.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are friendly and polite and behave very well around the school. During breaks and lunchtimes, when they are socialising with each other, their behaviour is calm and mature. They respect the school environment and look very smart in their uniforms.
- Behaviour in lessons has improved since the last inspection. A new behaviour and rewards system that was introduced at the start of last year has had a positive impact. Pupils say that there is still a very small number of their peers whose behaviour disrupts learning, but this does not happen often. This is reflected in the reduction of 'on-call' incidents during lessons.
- There has been a reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions since the last inspection. Leaders are now more likely to use in-house strategies with challenging pupils in order to keep them in school. Working restoratively with pupils has reduced the number of those who demonstrate repeatedly challenging behaviour.
- Strategies to improve pupils' attendance have had some but not a great deal of impact. The rates of overall and persistent absence remain higher than national averages. There has, however, been some improvement in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Too many pupils do not make good progress throughout their time in school. The progress pupils make across a range of subjects by the time they leave school has been below the national average for the last two years.
- While some subjects saw improved outcomes in 2016, this was not the case in mathematics in terms of pupils' attainment and progress. Differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of others nationally are not diminishing quickly in this subject.

- Very strong teaching and leadership in the English department have led to greatly improved outcomes for pupils in this subject in 2016. Disadvantaged pupils achieve at least as well as others nationally in this subject.
- Not enough pupils attain the highest possible grades at GCSE. While some teachers have very high expectations of their most able pupils, this is not consistent throughout the school. The level of challenge for these pupils is too low in some lessons.
- The school's information indicates that the current Year 11 pupils are making better progress than their peers did in the previous two years. However, the same information also shows that pupils are not making consistently good progress in key stage 3. Leaders do not set high enough targets for pupils in key stage 3, which has a detrimental effect on their progress.
- Leaders monitor the progress of children who are looked after rigorously, ensuring that interventions are appropriately targeted. Consequently, these pupils make good progress relative to their starting points.
- The monitoring of the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is less well developed. Leaders collect information but their analysis does not focus rigorously enough on the progress these pupils are making relative to their starting points.
- Strong leadership of the designated provision means that pupils there benefit from very effective teaching and support. As a result, they make very good progress. Highly skilled teaching assistants in this provision contribute significantly to pupils' progress. Pupils speak very highly of the support they receive, as do their parents.
- Strategies to improve pupils' literacy and oracy have not had enough impact. Efforts to develop pupils' habits of reading for pleasure have had limited success as this area of the school is very under-resourced. Funding has not been made available to create a library and purchase enough books for pupils to read at school and at home.
- The small number of pupils who attend alternative provision are making good progress on accredited courses that are appropriate for their abilities and interests. The qualifications they are set to achieve are designed to help them move smoothly on to further education or training.
- Destination information for pupils who left the school this summer shows that they are being well prepared to move into further education, training or employment. This provides evidence of an appropriate curriculum and effective careers education, information, advice and guidance.

School details

Unique reference number	139072
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	10020980

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	411
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Wilson
Principal	Misia Barclay
Telephone number	01925 822632
Website	www.uawarrington.org
Email address	principal@uawarrington.org
Date of previous inspection	25 November 2014

Information about this school

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and therefore supported by the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than the national average.

- At the time of the inspection, six pupils follow alternative educational provision off the school site at the following providers: New Horizons and Cornerstones.
- The school has a designated provision resource unit with 12 places for pupils who have cognition and learning difficulties.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons across a range of subjects, including some joint observations with senior leaders. They carried out a work scrutiny with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils, and talked with others informally during breaks and lunchtimes. Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders. A meeting was held with the chair of the statement of action committee (local governing body) and the chief executive of the trust.
- Inspectors took account of the 30 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey, the 26 online questionnaires completed by staff and the three online questionnaires completed by pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and action plan, information about the school's performance and a selection of policies.

Inspection team

Anne Seneviratne, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Ofsted Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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