

# Westlands Academy

Eltham Crescent, Stockton-on-Tees TS17 9RA

## Inspection dates

6–7 December 2016

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                 | <b>Good</b>              |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | <b>Good</b>              |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | <b>Good</b>              |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | <b>Good</b>              |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | <b>Good</b>              |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Senior leaders set high expectations for all pupils. Despite the social, emotional and mental health difficulties they experience, pupils make strong progress and leave the school well prepared for the next stage of education, training or employment.
- Senior leaders have a detailed and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to be done to improve the school further. There is a strong and determined drive to secure the very best outcomes for pupils.
- Academy trust directors make an important contribution to the school's leadership and management. They are knowledgeable about the school's effectiveness and, crucially, they challenge senior leaders systematically, and in doing so, hold them robustly to account.
- Additional funding, including the pupil premium and the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium, is used effectively. Disadvantaged pupils and those who need to catch up make increasingly fast progress as a result of well-targeted and carefully-planned additional help.
- Teachers plan learning activities which interest and motivate pupils. They pitch work at the right level so that the most able pupils are challenged and those working at lower levels receive the extra help and support they need.
- Teachers explain ideas and concepts clearly and question pupils skilfully about their work. As a result, the most able pupils develop and deepen their knowledge and understanding and gain confidence in explaining their ideas.
- Pupils develop the positive attitudes they need to be increasingly successful learners. The values of tolerance and respect for other people are taught systematically and well. This helps pupils to be well-prepared for their lives as citizens in modern Britain.
- Pupils receive high-quality guidance about further education, training and employment. Increasingly, pupils are knowledgeable about their post-16 options and, as a result, make better, more informed choices.
- Pupils' views are given a high value at Westlands Academy. The school's strong emphasis on encouraging pupils to face up to the consequences of their actions is helping them to take greater responsibility for their behaviour.
- There is a sustained upward trend in the qualifications achieved by Year 11 pupils. The progress current pupils make in English and mathematics is improving. Pupils are on track to achieve outcomes which are closer to the high standards they achieve in other subjects.

## **Full report**

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

- Further improve the outcomes achieved by pupils by making sure that:
  - pupils always receive the timely and effective help they need to secure their understanding before moving on to new or different work
  - pupils' learning and progress is not held back by poor or irregular attendance.
- Further strengthen leadership, management and governance by making sure that:
  - senior leaders and academy directors identify clear, step-by-step measures of success which are used systematically to evaluate the impact of their actions on outcomes for pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal, senior leaders and the academy trust set high expectations for pupils. There is a strong and shared determination for pupils to leave the school with the qualifications, skills and positive attitudes needed to be successful in the next stage of their education or training. As a result, outcomes for pupils are improving quickly, and notably, almost all pupils move onto further education, training or employment at the end of Year 11.
- Leaders and the academy trust have an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the school's performance. This is because they check the effectiveness of the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make systematically and well. Importantly, leaders make sure that pupils' learning and progress is assessed accurately and that all pupils are set challenging, but achievable targets in English, mathematics and a wide range of other subjects. As a result, leaders know how well pupils are doing and, crucially, whether they are on track to achieve their end of year and end of key stage targets.
- Leaders and the academy trust use the monitoring information they collect to identify the areas of the school's work which can be improved further. They know, for example, that the progress some pupils make is hindered by poor or irregular attendance. Much has been done to tackle this significant barrier and, as a result, there is a sustained upward trend in levels of attendance. Although overall attendance remains below the national average for secondary schools, records show that there is a marked improvement in the attendance of pupils with previously high levels of absence.
- Senior leaders manage the performance of teachers and other adults robustly and well. Similarly, the academy trust holds senior leaders rigorously to account for all aspects of the school's performance. There is a comprehensive programme of professional development and training for leaders and staff. This includes opportunities for staff to work and learn with colleagues from other schools within the trust. Staff value these opportunities to develop their knowledge and improve their practice.
- The school's development plan provides a strong starting point for securing further improvement in the quality of education and the outcomes pupils achieve. Actions are sharply focused, for example, on the aspects of teaching and the curriculum which need further work. Crucially, however, the development plan does not have the clear and measurable step-by-step targets needed for leaders and the academy trust to check whether their actions are having the impact they intend. This is also the case for some performance management plans. Again, this makes it difficult for leaders to check whether the intended impact on pupils is in fact being secured.
- The curriculum has been developed and refined in response to pupils' complex and sometimes changing social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of the values of tolerance and respect are promoted consistently and well. Over time, and as a result of high-quality support, pupils respond in an increasingly positive way to the school's guidelines and expectations for their conduct and behaviour. Equally, pupils are challenged skilfully and sensitively to think about and reflect on difficult and sometimes controversial issues in the world around them. This, importantly, is helping them to learn how to be

more responsible citizens in modern Britain.

- Additional funding, including the pupil premium and the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium is used well to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and to help pupils who need additional support in English and mathematics. Although almost all pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, leaders and the academy trust make sure that this additional funding is used to tackle the barriers individual pupils face and, in doing so, that their progress and attainment improves. The school's new approach to supporting pupils who need additional help to catch up in English and mathematics is especially effective. As a result of well-targeted and carefully planned support, these pupils are making faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

## **Governance of the school**

- The governance of the school is good.
- Senior leaders and the academy trust's chief executive give directors detailed reports on all aspects of the school's performance. Directors question and challenge the chief executive and the school's senior leaders about the information they receive. Critically, they do not accept the accuracy or reliability of this information without seeking external and objective assurance. This means that they have a clear and accurate view of what is working well and what could be improved further.
- The academy trust's directors have strong and effective oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements. Directors have made sure that safeguarding policies and procedures are up to date and effective.
- Similarly, directors have made sure that additional funding is used well to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those who need additional help to catch up. They have not, however, checked the impact of this additional funding with the thoroughness and precision seen in other areas of directors' work.
- Directors have not made sure that the school meets requirements on the publication of information or complies with the Department for Education's guidance on the publication of information.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong and deeply embedded culture of helping pupils and protecting them from harm. Oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements is strong and, as a result, leaders and staff are well trained and systems are robust. The most vulnerable pupils are proactively supported through well-coordinated multi-agency work. Parents and carers value the high-quality support their children and families receive.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers plan learning activities which interest, motivate and challenge pupils. As a result, they work productively, learn well and make increasingly strong progress in English, mathematics and a wide range of other subjects. Importantly, teachers pitch the work at the right level so that pupils can make step-by-step progress in their learning. Pupils say that this is helping them to feel more confident about tackling new or more difficult work.
- Teachers use an increasingly wide range of assessment information to inform their planning and teaching. New assessments in English and mathematics are helping teachers to identify pupils who need additional help to catch up. These pupils receive effective additional help and support. As a result, many lower-attaining pupils are improving their phonics knowledge, confidence in reading and their accuracy and fluency in basic calculations.
- Equally, teachers are using assessment information to make sure that they set work which develops and extends the knowledge and skills of the most able pupils. The work in Year 11 English books, for example, shows that the most able pupils are challenged to read, analyse and understand more demanding texts by a range of different authors.
- Teachers explain ideas and model methods clearly and well because they have strong subject knowledge. Similarly, teachers question pupils skilfully and challenge them to explain what they are thinking. This helps pupils to sustain their interest and, crucially, to secure and deepen their knowledge and understanding. In a digital photography lesson, for example, pupils gave thoughtful and extended responses to the teacher's effective questions about using 'the rule of thirds' to compose digital images.
- Pupils develop increasingly positive attitudes to learning as a result of the effective feedback, praise and the encouragement they are given by teachers and teaching assistants. The work in books from a wide range of subjects shows that, increasingly, pupils value this feedback and use it to improve the standard of their work.
- Pupils' confidence and independence is promoted effectively in creative subjects such as art and design, design technology, and catering. Teachers expect pupils to learn how to use equipment and resources safely and confidently in these subjects and, as a result of carefully structured and well-supported learning activities, they learn exceptionally well. One of the parents who spoke to the inspector said that her son enjoyed catering so much that he had asked for a food processor for Christmas. It is not surprising that a number of pupils go on to study catering and other creative subjects at college at the end of Year 11.
- Although teachers spot errors and misconceptions in pupils' work quickly, pupils are not always given the time or additional help they need to secure their knowledge and understanding before moving on to new or different work. Teaching assistants help pupils to engage with learning activities, maintain their interest and concentrate well. Occasionally, however, their contribution to pupils' learning is less effective because they do not know how to help pupils make progress, for example, by questioning them about their work.

## Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils make strong progress in acquiring and developing the positive attitudes they need to be successful, confident and independent learners. The work in pupils' books and folders, including pupils attending the new vocational centre, shows that they are increasingly proud of their achievements. As a result of effective information, advice and guidance, Year 11 pupils are knowledgeable about their post-16 options and, importantly, want to progress onto further education, training or employment. Year 11 pupils who spoke to the inspector have clear plans for the future and are determined to achieve the qualifications needed for their chosen post-16 course.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and well supported in school. They say that adults listen to them and that their views are valued. The school's strong emphasis on 'restorative approaches' is helping pupils learn how to face up to the consequences of their actions in a positive way. This, in turn, is helping them to develop the confidence, skills and qualities needed to be responsible young adults.
- Pupils have a developing understanding of how to stay healthy and keep safe. Pupils learn about the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise. Similarly, they learn about personal safety and how to use computers, the internet and mobile phones safely. Year 11 pupils, for example, are knowledgeable about the risks associated with social media and 'sexting'. Parents spoke highly about this essential aspect of the school's work.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good because, over time, there is a marked improvement in the behaviour of pupils who have complex social, emotional and mental health needs.
- In general, pupils respond positively to the firm but reassuring guidance they receive from adults and conduct themselves well. The school's expectations are communicated clearly and reinforced consistently. Sometimes, pupils do and say things which are more challenging. This is managed skilfully and well by leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. On occasion, physical restraints are used to guide and help pupils. These incidents are recorded and followed up consistently well and, rightly, pupils are given the opportunity to 'have their say' about how adults should support them. Importantly, this builds their confidence and trust in the adults who care for them and help them.
- Incidents of bullying are recorded and followed up systematically. Pupils know about different types of bullying and, although they say that it happens, they are confident in the school's 'zero tolerance' stance on bullying.
- There is a sustained upward trend in levels of attendance. Almost all pupils have high levels of absence prior to joining the school and some pupils did not attend their previous schools for long periods of time. Many pupils have been repeatedly excluded from schools prior to attending Westlands Academy. Records show that, over time, almost all pupils improve their attendance and some improve their attendance

significantly. However, the poor or irregular attendance of a small group of pupils continues to have a profoundly negative impact on their learning and progress.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- In 2016, Year 11 pupils achieved GCSE, level 1 and entry level qualifications in a wide range of academic and vocational subjects. Levels of attainment were highest in art and design, catering and digital photography. There is a sustained improving trend in these outcomes which is preparing pupils increasingly well for the next stage of their education or training.
- The progress that current pupils make, including those who are disadvantaged, in English, mathematics and a wide range of other subjects is improving quickly. Rates of progress in English and mathematics are accelerating as a result of consistently good teaching in these subjects.
- Lower-attaining pupils are making strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics as a result of effective teaching and well-targeted, sharply-focused intervention and support. Gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge are being tackled systematically and, as a result of effective support, lower-attaining pupils are reading with greater confidence. The work in pupils' books shows that, occasionally, their progress is held back because pupils are not given time, or the timely support they need, to secure their knowledge and understanding before moving on to new work.
- The most able pupils achieve well in a wide range of subjects. Many achieve high grade GCSE qualifications and move onto higher level study at the end of Year 11. The most able pupils are making stronger progress in English and mathematics because the work they are set challenges them to develop, deepen, use and apply their knowledge and skills. In English, for example, they are challenged to read complex texts. Their analysis shows an increasingly sophisticated understanding of these texts.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next phase of their education, training or employment because they have the qualifications and positive attitudes needed to take this crucially important next step.

## School details

|                         |                  |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Unique reference number | 141385           |
| Local authority         | Stockton-on-Tees |
| Inspection number       | 10025593         |

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

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Type of school                      | Special  |
| School category                     | Academy special converter  |
| Age range of pupils                 | 11 to 16   |
| Gender of pupils                    | Mixed  |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 71   |
| Appropriate authority               | The academy trust  |
| Chair                               | Colin Whittaker  |
| Principal                           | Pete Ewart   |
| Telephone number                    | 01642 883030   |
| Website                             | <a href="http://www.horizonstrust.org.uk/westlands-academy">www.horizonstrust.org.uk/westlands-academy</a> |
| Email address                       | <a href="mailto:pete.ewart@horizonstrust.org.uk">pete.ewart@horizonstrust.org.uk</a>                       |
| Date of previous inspection         | Not previously inspected   |

## Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the pupil premium and the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium.
- Westlands is an average-sized special academy for pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- Westlands is part of the Horizons Specialist Academy Trust. The school has residential provision for up to 15 pupils which was inspected by Ofsted in March 2016. This report is available on Ofsted's website.



- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. Almost all pupils are eligible for the pupil premium.
- There are many more boys than girls in all classes and in all year groups.
- The school runs a vocational centre and works in partnership with Phoenix Youth Training and Stockton Learning Centre.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning on both days, spoke to pupils and examined the work in their books and folders. Seven lessons were visited jointly with the principal and vice-principal.
- Meetings were held with pupils, parents, senior leaders and subject coordinators, three academy trust directors and the school's development partner. The inspector also met with the academy trust's chief executive officer and professional learning leader.
- There were no responses recorded on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, and there were no responses to the online pupil and staff surveys.
- The inspector examined documents relating to governance, school development planning, self-evaluation, pupils' progress, attendance, behaviour, the curriculum and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Nick Whittaker, lead inspector

Her Majesty's 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](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

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