

# West Lakes Academy

Main Street, Egremont, Cumbria CA22 2DQ

## Inspection dates

14–15 March 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Outstanding</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- The principal, governors and senior leaders are highly ambitious for every pupil and student in the school; they have communicated a clear vision that makes high-quality teaching and learning the number one priority.
- Governors and leaders have a meticulous understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is underpinned by rigorous monitoring at every level of the school.
- The plans used by senior and middle leaders are highly effective and promote rapid improvement. Additional funding is used effectively to tackle barriers to learning faced by disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils currently in the school are making rapid and sustained progress across all subject areas. Outcomes in sciences, English, art and design and performing arts are particularly impressive.
- Attendance has risen significantly and is now high, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, these groups of pupils are currently making strong progress.
- Governors have an exceptional oversight of the school which enables them to hold senior and middle leaders firmly to account. Their wealth of professional expertise adds value to pupils' learning.
- Teaching is outstanding because teachers receive excellent training, they know their pupils extremely well and work collaboratively with teaching assistants to make sure that no pupils are left behind.
- Teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve. They use questioning techniques skilfully to make sure that students think more deeply about their learning.
- Sixth-form students are a credit to the school and their families. The excellent progression rates to university and apprenticeships are testimony to their outstanding achievements at school.
- Pupils feel safe and are very well cared for. The school works in partnership with a wide range of external agencies to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils achieve their potential.
- The quality of careers information, advice and guidance is outstanding. Pupils and students make choices that are well informed because of the contribution made by employers, governors and other professionals at key points.
- The school is highly successful in developing pupils' skills in reading, especially when this is from a very low base. However, errors in pupils' spelling are not systematically picked up in all subjects.

## **Full report**

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

- Improve achievement still further by ensuring that teachers in subject areas draw on the good practice in English where there is a rigorous approach to checking spelling.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- Senior leaders and governors have high ambitions for their school. They have successfully communicated these through the school's aspirational culture which enables pupils to flourish and succeed. They leave no stone unturned in making sure that pupils, regardless of their level of prior attainment or background, have every opportunity to be the very best.
- Since taking up post in January 2016, the principal has wasted no time in identifying a talented team of senior leaders with the drive and enthusiasm to deliver his vision for the school. The senior team is outward facing and committed to supporting improvements in schools in other parts of the region.
- Leaders and managers at all levels are relentless in the pursuit of improvement and proactive in tackling any barriers to learning. Additional funding, including pupil premium and special educational needs funding, has been targeted astutely to ensure that pupils currently at school make excellent progress. Pupils particularly like the 'revision bus' that doubles as an after-school revision club and makes sure that they get home safely. Not only does this encourage them to attend regularly, it also adds value to their learning.
- A rigorous cycle of monitoring of both staff's and pupils' performance means that leaders can spot where intervention is needed and provide the necessary support and resources quickly to turn things around. Teachers have measurable performance targets linked to whole-school priorities as well as the performance of their pupils.
- The plans that result from leaders' monitoring are of high quality and effective. These plans have already led to significant improvements in the current year in terms of raising the achievement and attendance of pupils currently on roll. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders have had similar success in raising the quality of teaching so that the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of others nationally has diminished substantially across all year groups. In addition, the areas identified as weaknesses at the last inspection have been turned into strengths.
- There has been a strong emphasis on developing the role of middle managers who have eagerly taken on increased levels of accountability. Humanities and modern languages, which were once weaker areas, have been re-energised. As a result, pupils are making at least good progress in these subjects across the school.
- Teachers speak very positively about the wealth of opportunities for their continuing professional development. As part of their performance management review, teachers and teaching assistants undertake academic research that links to a school priority. They use their findings to consider how teaching can be improved in their own subjects. This creates a buzz about teaching and learning across the entire school as staff eagerly share effective practice and relate their findings across subject areas. The willingness to share expertise and learn from each other has resulted in consistently high-quality teaching across the school.

- Teachers and pupils are proud to belong to the school. Staff morale is extremely high. Almost all the staff who responded to the online questionnaire agreed that the school is well led and managed. Everyone works together extremely well in the pursuit of excellence. This is illustrated through the school's 'open classroom door' policy. Teachers and leaders visit classrooms regularly, not only to monitor improvement, but to learn from each other and share good practice.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and is sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of all pupils. The school's subject specialisms in science and arts feature strongly from key stage 3 through to key stage 5. The curriculum is successful in encouraging a high proportion of girls to take up science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects.
- The key stage 4 curriculum commences in Year 9 and the majority of pupils continue to study a modern language, a humanities subject and both English language and literature. A much higher than average proportion of pupils achieve the English Baccalaureate.
- Changes in the current year to the curriculum offer for lower ability pupils in key stage 4 have resulted in this group making significantly improved progress across all their subjects. The school provides a rich and varied range of extra-curricular activities. Leaders ensure that financial barriers do not prevent any pupil from taking part in trips and events.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have been more proactive in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A senior member of staff has been appointed with responsibility for coordinating a personal development curriculum across the school. The teaching of British values is a core part of the whole school and therefore pupils develop a well-rounded understanding of what it means to be tolerant and respectful of difference.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection generally showed a mature understanding of how things work in British society and how they could challenge and change things for the better. Form tutors are well supported and trained to tackle controversial and sensitive topics in tutorial time, which is of consistently high quality throughout the school.
- The school is popular and highly regarded in the community it serves; demand for places in the main school and the sixth form is very high. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and value greatly the opportunities it provides for their children. Parental engagement is strong and this is evident in the high attendance rate at parents' evenings.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors are highly experienced and know the school well. They have an in-depth knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is because they have clear oversight of the school's self-evaluation process.
  
- Governors receive updates on the previous year's results at the start of the academic

year directly from subject leaders. This enables them to test out their own evaluation of the school's performance data. As a consequence, they are highly effective in holding senior leaders to account. They have a firm grip of the school's strategies to improve, and they ask penetrating questions when they feel that things are not improving quickly enough.

- The school benefits enormously from the skills and knowledge that governors bring from their professional, commercial and industrial backgrounds. Governors have initiated industry-led projects that have enabled pupils and students to understand the link between doing well at school and having good career prospects.
- Governors have a tight grip on the school's budget. They monitor whether they are getting good value for money from the additional funding the school receives for pupils eligible for Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium funding.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils overwhelmingly report that they feel safe in school. This was echoed by parents and staff in their responses to the online questionnaires they completed during the inspection.
- Clear and thorough systems are in place to ensure that staff suitability is appropriately checked and recorded. Training for staff and governors is excellent and is regularly followed up by quizzes, briefings and newsletter items to keep their knowledge fresh and up to date. All staff have received thorough training on the 'Prevent' duty.
- Governors ensure that safeguarding is a priority throughout the school and they recently commissioned an in-depth review to make sure that the school is doing everything it can to safeguard its pupils. Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils do not access inappropriate websites either on school premises or on their own devices.
- The school's pastoral staff are well trained and experienced. They work collaboratively with a wide range of external partners to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are nurtured and enabled to remain in school. The school nurse attends one day each week to support pupils' physical and mental health. She also supports the school in following up any unexplained absences.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Outstanding

- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and pupils currently in the school make outstanding progress because they receive consistently high-quality teaching across all subjects.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and talented. Their passion for their subjects pervades their teaching. This is often infectious for pupils who are then eager to immerse themselves

in learning. Teachers want nothing but the best for their pupils who are equally aware of their teachers' high expectations. This is particularly evident in the quality of teachers' planning, which shows a thorough understanding of pupils' starting points and the extent of progress being made.

- Teachers are adept at using questioning techniques to maximise pupils' engagement and to deepen their knowledge and understanding. Questions are used very effectively to clarify misconceptions, challenge pupils' thinking, demonstrate the use of specialist terminology and to probe and check pupils' understanding. Questions are crafted carefully and pitched at the right level so that pupils of all abilities are able to respond and contribute their ideas during lessons.
- Adults who support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities work collaboratively with teachers to ensure that this group of pupils maximises every opportunity for learning. Teaching assistants and learning support assistants play an active role in planning teaching and learning with class teachers. They say that they feel valued, as teachers readily take on board their suggestions and ideas.
- Teaching assistants have a clear understanding of their pupils' targets and what they need to do to improve. As a consequence, individual pupils supported by teaching assistants make rapid progress.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are making more rapid progress than in previous years because they have been a particular focus for improvement this academic year. Teachers draw on a wide range of resources and varied tasks to ensure that pupils of all abilities are fully engaged. Lesson materials are carefully planned so that the most able pupils have the opportunity to extend their learning through further research and enquiry.
- The quality of work seen in pupils' workbooks was exemplary. Homework is given regularly and the work set provides plenty of opportunity for extended and purposeful writing. The school's marking and assessment policy is applied consistently across all subjects. Pupils are highly motivated by the meaningful and specific feedback they receive from their teachers. This feedback galvanises them to reflect on their achievements and consider how they can improve with the next piece of work.
- Despite the strong focus on literacy across the school, in some subjects such as mathematics, pupils misspell key terms and their mistakes are not consistently identified. This often results in them repeating the same error, which mars what is otherwise a high standard of presentation.
- The well-resourced library exemplifies the high priority the school gives to reading. Pupils love using this library, in particular to take out a range of books that help them to monitor their own progress in reading. The very high rate of book loans shows that this resource is particularly well used.

## Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school's five core values: appreciation, respect, resilience, freedom and achievement, pervade all aspects of school life. These values bind pupils together and give them a strong sense of belonging and pride in their school. Pupils arrive at school resolute to work hard and as a result they flourish in a caring and inclusive culture.
- The school takes good care of its pupils. The vast majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire agreed. Many cited the extent to which teachers go above and beyond the call of duty to make sure that their child fulfils their potential. The view expressed by one parent that, 'it is an absolute privilege to tell people that my child attends West Lakes Academy,' is a sentiment expressed by many others.
- Links with external agencies are strong and contribute positively to pupils' overall well-being, in particular that of the most vulnerable. Links with primary feeder schools are particularly effective and mean that pupils settle in quickly and seamlessly when they start in Year 7. Pupils get off to a particularly good start. This is because the work that teachers do with their counterparts in primary schools makes sure that the Year 7 curriculum builds on and advances the knowledge, skills and aptitudes that pupils bring with them.
- A significant strength across the school is the trusting and respectful relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils' responses to the online survey indicated that although bullying sometimes happens, on the whole they feel that staff deal with it effectively. Pupils that inspectors spoke with, as well as responses to the online survey, were overwhelmingly positive about arrangements for pastoral support.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school. They have a clear understanding of e-safety and know about cyber bullying and potential dangers when using social media. Responses to the pupil survey were highly positive. Pupils know that they can turn to an adult they trust if needed. Appropriate checks are in place to ensure that the small number of pupils attending alternative provision are properly looked after and are making progress.
- Pupil voice is given a high priority and is well integrated into the school's consultative processes. As a consequence, pupils and students feel that they are listened to and that their views make a positive contribution to improving school life.
- Pupils have a well-developed understanding of individual difference, fairness and equality. Pupils who have established a group for others who may be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ) feel safe to explore their own identities without fear of reprisal or intimidation. As a consequence, they flourish, achieve their potential and develop as well-rounded individuals.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Behaviour is exemplary both around the school and in lessons. Pupils' conduct in practical lessons and laboratories is safe and considerate. Pupils move around the school in a calm and orderly way and very rarely leave litter behind them. Pupils show a high level of respect for each other and are polite and well mannered to adults and visitors to the school.
- The high standard of presentation of work in pupils' books shows that they care about and have pride in their work. Behaviour in lessons is purposeful and collaborative; pupils move with ease between different activities whether directed by adults or by groups they are working with. Learning is very rarely disrupted.
- The overall attendance rate has increased year on year since the last inspection and was well above average in 2016. Senior leaders recognised that more could be done to support the individual needs of pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder because they were more likely to be absent or excluded temporarily from school. Following specialist training for all teachers, as well as targeted support from a specialist advisory teacher, exclusion rates have declined and attendance rates have increased significantly for this group of pupils. Attendance rates for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in the current year are high.
- Disadvantaged pupils' attendance in the past has typically been below that of other pupils and some were often absent. The focused work of the attendance officer and home tutor, as well as assiduous monitoring, have equally had a significant impact on raising the attendance of this group of pupils throughout the school. Leaders can demonstrate not only significantly improved rates of attendance for these pupils, but also improvements in their progress over time.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Outstanding

- In 2016, outcomes for pupils in Year 11 demonstrated that overall the majority of pupils had made at least good progress. Girls and pupils of middle ability made outstanding progress. Pass rates were high in the majority of GCSE subjects. Pupils achieved extremely well in art and design, business, performing arts and science. In English literature, almost half of the year group attained A\* or A grades. Outcomes in languages and humanities were relatively weaker.
- Although in 2016 the school's headline figure for the rate of pupils' progress was positive overall, there was some variation in the progress made by different groups of pupils. Disadvantaged pupils with low prior attainment and a small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities did not make as rapid progress as other groups of pupils.
- Leaders are ensuring that the use of the additional pupil premium funding addresses this variation. The focused work since September 2016 to improve outcomes for these specific groups of pupils has had a marked impact on accelerating their progress and



diminishing any differences, compared with outcomes for other pupils. The most able pupils have also responded well to the highly ambitious targets that they have been given. With raised expectations and more challenging teaching, this group of pupils now make strong progress across all year groups.

- Leaders were quick to identify where there were gaps in the achievement of specific groups of pupils. They took swift and highly effective action to rectify the situation. The key stage 4 curriculum was adapted to provide greater flexibility for lower ability pupils. Stringent measures were put in place to secure improvement in behaviour and attendance for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special education needs and/or disabilities. Leadership in humanities and languages was strengthened and inspectors saw consistently good and outstanding teaching across these subjects.
- Pupils' progress is monitored meticulously by teachers and subject leaders. The validity of teachers' assessment of pupils' work is moderated with rigour, both internally and externally. Leaders track trends and patterns in pupils' progress over time and take the necessary steps to get pupils back on track if their progress falters.
- The school's tracking of pupils' progress shows that across every year group, standards are high and pupils make rapid and sustained progress. The predicted progress for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has rapidly improved. The school's predictions of pupils' achievement have been accurate in the past.
- Observation in lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and other inspection evidence confirm the school's own judgements that pupils currently in the school make outstanding progress.
- The school makes excellent use of the Year 7 catch-up funding to support pupils who lag behind in their reading age. Inspectors were impressed by how confidently and articulately these pupils read and the love of reading they have developed since joining the school. School data shows that every pupil who received support has improved their reading age; in many cases, they have caught up by a full year. Sixth-form students have contributed significantly to this improvement. The school has invested in training for sixth-form students to undertake paired reading with younger pupils. Pupils told inspectors how they enjoy reading with sixth formers and how this has helped them to make faster progress.
- The leadership of careers education, advice and guidance is highly effective. Pupils are prepared exceptionally well for the world of work or further academic study. This is underpinned by impartial guidance, a high level of engagement with modern technology and high standards of literacy and numeracy. Therefore, a much higher than average proportion of pupils progress to a sustained destination in post-16 education or an apprenticeship.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

**Outstanding**

- Leadership of the sixth form is outstanding. The head of sixth form maintains a strong grip on provision and is quick to intervene where there is any sense of students lagging

behind and at risk of not achieving their ambitious targets.

- Students make rapid and sustained progress across all aspects of academic and applied study programmes. In 2016, standards were exceptionally high for A levels in English language, fine art and art and design, all of which had some of the highest entries. In applied qualifications, standards are particularly high in business, health studies and performing arts.
- Relatively few students enter the sixth form without GCSEs at grades A\*–C in English and mathematics. The majority of students who do re-sit these qualifications are successful in attaining a higher grade. The sixth form also offers a qualification in mathematics designed for students who wish to progress beyond GCSE, but who choose not to continue with AS- or A level in mathematics. This is a popular course in the sixth form.
- There are no gaps in the achievement of different groups of students on either academic or applied courses. This is because teachers plan carefully to ensure that all students participate fully in lessons and are equally well equipped with the skills to explore their subjects more widely through independent research outside lessons. Teaching and learning resources are used creatively to make learning stimulating and challenging; this secures excellent progress both within lessons and over time.
- Students benefit from a broad curriculum that enables them to combine academic and vocational qualifications within their study programme. The strong focus on science, technology and mathematics subjects means that the curriculum provides an excellent match to local labour market skills needs.
- In addition to regular tutorials that are used to facilitate high-quality debate about current affairs and matters relating to the global community, students also benefit from a wide range of activities that develop their skills and expertise. Almost three quarters of students take on meaningful leadership roles within the school, such as coordinating pupils' views across the school about the quality of teaching and learning. They analyse and evaluate this information and feed back to senior leaders so that their recommendations can contribute to improvements in teaching. Other such roles include providing subject coaching for younger learners who are disaffected, running homework clubs and organising summer school events.
- Students make a major contribution to the positive ethos of the school. They are charismatic, engaging and confident young people and therefore excellent role models for younger pupils. Students feel safe in school and work placements are equally well vetted to ensure their security. Attendance rates are high and behaviour impeccable.
- Arrangements for careers information, advice and guidance are highly effective and start the minute that students commence their study programmes. There is very thorough initial assessment of individual needs and aspirations and ongoing advice and guidance is built around this information. Links with employers and universities are strong. Students speak highly of the specialist software that they use to research the full range of opportunities open to them beyond sixth form.
- Substantial and meaningful work placements are built into students' programmes wherever possible. Students explain that this enables them to dip their toes in the water and test out whether this is the right career option for them.
- The high quality of support and guidance means that very few students leave their

programme early, and therefore retention rates over two years are consistently high. The small number of students that choose to take a gap year invariably return to the sixth form for advice and guidance when they are ready to take the next step into employment, training or university. This is testimony to the high quality of guidance they are offered.

- Progression rates post-16 are very strong. In 2016, 60% of students progressed to higher education on a very diverse range of degree courses. Of these, 18% went to Russell Group universities. In the same year, 33% of students progressed to a range of apprenticeship programmes. Students typically move into highly specialised apprenticeships relating to mechanical or design engineering and project controls.

## School details

Unique reference number	135632
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10024326

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.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,159
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adrian Thompson
Principal	Jonathan Johnson
Telephone number	01946 820356
Website	<a href="http://www.westlakesacademy.org.uk">www.westlakesacademy.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:johnsonj@westlakesacademy.org.uk">johnsonj@westlakesacademy.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	19–20 February 2013

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- West Lakes Academy is larger than the average secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and therefore supported by the pupil premium is lower than average. Some pupils are also eligible for the Year 7 catch-up

premium.

- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is very low, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is much lower than average. However, the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is higher than average. The school supports a relatively high number of pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at West Cumbria Learning Centre – Richmond House. This is registered provision.
- 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 in the sixth form. A number of observations were carried out jointly with senior school leaders. Inspectors also carried out work scrutiny of pupils' books across different year groups and subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school during breaktimes and lunchtimes, in assembly and during other activities.
- Inspectors met with different groups of pupils and students as well as talking to them informally during observations and breaktimes. An inspector also met with representatives of the student council and members of the LGBTQ group.
- Discussions were held with governors, senior and middle leaders, classroom teachers and the head of sixth form.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation including: information about pupils' and students' current levels of attainment and progress; the school's self-evaluation and development plan; minutes of meetings; records of the school's monitoring of the quality of teaching; records of attendance and behaviour logs; and the school's monitoring of safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors took account of the views expressed by parents in the 96 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey, as well as the many comments received via the free-text facility on Parent View. Inspectors also considered the 75 responses to a questionnaire for staff and the 287 responses to a questionnaire for pupils and students.

## Inspection team

Vincent Ashworth, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jackie Cahalin	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Ruddy	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Sibson	Ofsted Inspector
Emma Gregory	Ofsted Inspector
Tim Long	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](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

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