

Wardle Academy

Birch Road, Wardle, Rochdale, Greater Manchester OL12 9RD

Inspection dates

12–13 December 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The strong and ambitious leadership of the headteacher, supported by leaders, governors and members of the trust, has resulted in a noticeable improvement in behaviour, the quality of teaching and outcomes of pupils since the last inspection.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are well supported. Their personal and social development is strong. Many of them make good academic progress.
- Leaders provide disadvantaged pupils with valuable support and their progress is improving.
- Pupils who arrive with low levels of prior attainment, including disadvantaged pupils, make good progress in a wide range of subjects.
- Teaching is good overall. However, the quality of teaching is variable. Weaker teaching in physical education (PE), geography and modern foreign languages has resulted in pupils making less progress in these subjects than others. Some teaching does not allow pupils to develop their ability to think for themselves. Where this is the case pupils, particularly the most able, are insufficiently challenged and they do not make enough progress.
- Leaders have improved pupils' attendance. This is especially true for pupils who are disadvantaged or have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Pupils behave well in classrooms and during the day. They are courteous and polite, and are committed to working hard.
- Provision for the personal development and welfare of pupils is very strong. It is highly enriching and supportive and focuses on mutual respect. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The breadth and challenge of the curriculum are improving. The curriculum provides pupils with a good range of choice and is increasingly demanding. Pupils appreciate the wider opportunities, which enrich their learning experiences.
- Governors understand their role well and carefully scrutinise the information available to them. They bring a wide range of skills, which they use to support improvement.
- Development plans are appropriately focused on priority areas, and subject improvement plans are closely linked to support whole-school priorities.
- Leaders have ensured that a range of performance information is available to support their drive for improvement. At times, however, their evaluation of performance does not take sufficient account of this information. This is because the data is not always in a format that is easy to interpret.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - the assessment information that is produced by leaders and used by leaders and governors to inform their planning is clear and concise
 - new systems and procedures become embedded in day-to-day practice
 - the variability between different subjects is reduced and the rates of pupils' progress are consistently above the national average, with a focus on PE, geography and modern foreign languages
 - the differences in attainment between disadvantaged pupils in the school and that of others nationally continue to narrow
 - the progress made by the most able pupils across the full range of subjects improves.
- Improve the quality of teaching and eliminate the inconsistencies in learning by ensuring that all teachers use all the information they have about individual pupils to plan learning activities that enable pupils to develop their thinking skills, take more responsibility for their own learning and reach the highest levels of which they are capable.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the last inspection, leadership at all levels, including governance, has been strengthened. Expectations of staff and pupils have been raised, systems for evaluating the work of the school and its impact on pupils' outcomes have been established and lines of accountability are much clearer. Despite recent and wide-ranging changes, staff morale is high and parents and pupils are very positive about the changes that have taken place.
- The headteacher, who had only recently taken up post at the time of the last inspection, provides strong leadership. Ably supported by senior leaders and governors, she has taken effective steps towards addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Leaders have tackled, resolutely, weaker teaching where it existed. The quality of teaching is improving and this is resulting in many more pupils making good progress across a wide range of subjects. Where weaker teaching still exists, appropriate support is in place to help teachers to improve their practice.
- There have been some changes at middle leadership level. Articulate and increasingly confident middle leaders are working closely with senior leaders to monitor and evaluate the school's work regularly. As a result, the capacity for continued improvement is strong, as middle leaders build their skills and influence further. Relatively new middle leaders, including those in PE, geography and modern foreign languages, are developing well and contributing to improvements in teaching in these areas.
- Senior and middle leaders have an accurate understanding of strengths and areas that need further work. Priorities for improvement are clearly identified in plans and acted upon. A wide range of information, including pupil tracking information, is used by leaders and governors to evaluate the progress being made against key priorities. Some of the information is unwieldy and leaders would benefit from more concise and clear reports, particularly in relation to the gaps in attainment between different groups of pupils.
- Arrangements to manage staff performance are effective. Reviews of learning, pupils' assessments and individual staff targets inform the next steps staff need to take to meet their pupils' needs and develop their skills further. Training of staff is regular and targeted to meet their professional needs and the school's current priorities. Teachers new to the profession value the support and advice provided. Staff are highly positive about recent improvements, the more rigorous way they are held to account and the support they receive for their professional development.
- Assessment systems are developing effectively. Teachers usually use their regular assessments of pupils' work to identify their starting points and set activities that generally move pupils on well in their learning. In some cases, pupils, including the most able pupils, are insufficiently challenged and are not given enough opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning, which slows down the rate of their learning.
- Senior and middle leaders' regular reviews of learning, pupils' work and tests identify pupils who are at risk of falling behind. Extra support is provided to help pupils catch

up to where they should be, including after-school revision sessions.

- Leaders have prioritised the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Actions being taken are having the desired effect on pupils' learning, particularly for disadvantaged pupils who have low prior attainment on entry to the school. There are still differences between the achievements of disadvantaged pupils and those of other pupils in a few subjects. However, the differences are diminishing successfully and are insignificant in subjects such as English, mathematics and science for the current Year 9.
- Governors accept that they have not fully evaluated the impact of the pupil premium funding on outcomes for pupils. However, some of the funding has been used successfully to improve the attendance and behaviour of this group of pupils.
- The additional Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding has been used to improve the reading ages of pupils who enter school with below-average literacy skills.
- There have been changes to the curriculum since the time of the last inspection to ensure that all pupils are sufficiently challenged to achieve their best. The curriculum provides a good balance of subjects and experiences to meet pupils' needs and interests and to enable them to follow a suitable range of qualifications in Years 10 and 11.
- Staff ensure that pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and the curriculum promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. It is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities with something on offer for everyone: sports, the arts, cultural experiences and extra literacy or numeracy activities to help pupils to practise skills that they have found difficult to acquire. Independent careers advice and guidance are provided to all year groups and are helping to raise aspirations and guide pupils towards their next steps.
- The development of pupils' understanding of the qualities they need to be thoughtful and active citizens in modern Britain is given a high priority by leaders. Work is embedded across the curriculum, assemblies and registration periods. There are discrete lessons where pupils learn about British values such as respect, trust and democracy, and to appreciate and respect the diversity of religions and cultures beyond their local and regional communities.
- The very small number of pupils who attend off-site provision access safe learning spaces. Regular communication between school staff and staff in these provisions ensure that pupils' whereabouts are known. Attendance rates are high, which supports pupils to make good progress in their learning.
- Provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is strong. Training for staff and teaching assistants is of high quality. Pupils in the special resource unit make good progress from their respective starting points. Parents are extremely complimentary about the standard of care and support provided for their children. These pupils told inspectors, during the inspection, that they love coming to school and they appreciate the range of opportunities offered to them.
- Leaders have worked hard to broaden the range of partnership work since the time of the last inspection. They have productive, working relationships with some local schools. The senior executive officer of the trust has provided effective financial management advice to senior leaders and governors. This has helped them to reduce costs and avoid a budget deficit. Support from Hollingworth Academy for mathematics

has supported improvements in teaching. Work with primary schools within the Wardle Multi-Academy Trust is supporting the development of transition from Year 6 to Year 7.

Governance of the school

- Governance has improved since the last inspection. Most governors have been appointed since 2016, including the chair of governors. The trust has been keen to ensure that governors with the right balance of skills, knowledge and experience are recruited to the local governing board of Wardle Academy.
- Governors have been active in seeking training to fulfill their duties, for example in safeguarding. They seek external validation of the quality of their work, for example through the National Governance Association. Governors are committed to self-improvement to ensure that they are effective in supporting and challenging leaders in their work to move the school forward.
- The governing body is ensuring that recommendations from external consultants are acted on. Governors visit regularly and meet with senior and middle leaders to check what is working well and what needs further improvement. Subject leaders are held to account directly by governors during governor reviews of departments.
- Minutes of governing body meetings show the increasing challenge governors are bringing to bear in holding leaders to account for the impact of their work. Governors make themselves known to parents and pupils and this means that they hear first hand how pupils and parents feel about the work of leaders.
- The governing body is reflective and honest in its understanding of the school's work. Governors receive regular information on the progress of pupils and groups of pupils. However, they accept that some of these reports could be more clear and concise, particularly in relation to the impact of pupil premium spending. They accept that their understanding of this information is developing rather than being fully secure.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pastoral care is a real strength and pupils report that they feel safe and well cared for by all staff. Leaders have ensured that child protection and safeguarding training for all staff is up to date and in line with statutory requirements. They make sure that staff receive regular updates and understand how, and to whom, they must report should they have any concerns. Leaders also make sure that all staff working with pupils are suitable to do so. Checks on potential employees are stringent, which contributes to the protection of pupils.
- Referrals to local authority safeguarding teams are timely. Leaders have developed productive relationships with a range of professionals and agencies. They enlist their support promptly to help families and pupils in times of great need or crisis to keep pupils safe. The school's website provides parents and pupils with a range of accessible information on risks to pupils' safety online and in everyday life.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and this supports good learning. During the inspection, many pupils told inspectors how much they appreciate the support they receive from their teachers.
- Teachers use a variety of information about pupils to plan learning activities and resources that increasingly meet the needs of individuals, especially those who are low-prior-attaining pupils. Some of the most effective teaching can be seen in English, where teachers provide activities that stretch and challenge most pupils. Where pupils are appropriately challenged, they make good progress. However, inspectors found that some pupils, particularly the most able, were insufficiently challenged, including in mathematics, science, geography and languages. Teachers did not challenge pupils to think for themselves.
- The school has recently implemented a policy for developing literacy across the curriculum. Many teachers, including in English, design technology and science, place a strong focus on promoting pupils' literacy skills. They provide lists of key words and encourage pupils to use the correct terminology when responding to questions, both written and orally. They provide prompts, including lists of sentence starters and connectives, and insist that pupils correct words they have misspelt. This has yet to become fully embedded across all areas of the curriculum.
- Most parents are extremely satisfied with the quality of teaching their children receive. Many parents who responded to the online questionnaire commented positively about the amount of support children receive from their teachers.
- Teachers use information about pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to plan activities that both challenge and support them to learn well. Because of this, and the excellent care they receive, they are beginning to make good progress.
- Teachers promote reading for pupils of all abilities. The library has been further developed and pupils are encouraged to borrow reading books. Pupils whose reading skills are weak on entry to Year 7 receive support to help them improve. Pupils in Year 8 and Year 9 who need extra support are provided with discrete reading lessons.
- Since the last inspection, a strong focus has been placed by leaders on developing teachers' questioning skills. Some teachers have started to use questioning to encourage deeper thinking and enable pupils to find answers for themselves. This was seen, for example, in English and design technology during the inspection. In Year 11 English, pupils were preparing to write a response to an examination question on the text of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. The teacher's open and probing questioning, targeted at individual pupils, encouraged them to think carefully about their responses and to challenge one another's views. This led directly to pupils being able to write responses that would enable them to access higher marks in the examination. Some teachers are still in the process of developing such skills. Leaders have kept this as a priority on their current improvement plan.
- Teachers are increasingly using information about disadvantaged pupils to plan activities that both challenge and support them to learn well. Disadvantaged pupils with low prior attainment are making good progress because of the intensive support they receive. The progress of middle- and high-prior-attaining disadvantaged pupils,

although improving, is still not in line with the progress of other pupils nationally.

- Teachers set homework regularly in accordance with the school's policy.
- Although teaching continues to improve and is mainly good across the school, there are still some inconsistencies left in PE, geography and modern foreign languages. There are also times when pupils are not fully engaged in their learning and when teaching does not inspire them to find things out for themselves.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- Work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good and underpins everything. Staff and governors told inspectors that they are proud of the focus placed on catering for pupils' personal and individual needs. All staff take their responsibilities in this respect seriously. The care and consideration given to pupils are evident in every aspect of daily interactions, including the meeting and greeting of pupils as they arrive in the morning.
- Pupils told inspectors that one of the things they value most is the care, consideration and support given to them by adults. In response to this, pupils are committed to doing their best, both academically and in personal interactions.
- Pupils unanimously express that they feel safe in the school, and parents agree that staff keep their children safe. Pupils are confident that if problems arise, they know whom to turn to and trust staff to help and support them.
- Pupils show respect for the ideas and point of view of others. Topics covered in respect and citizenship lessons, assemblies and tutor time include anti-bullying, radicalisation, social networking and a range of other topical issues, and equip pupils with the skills and knowledge necessary to keep themselves safe. Pupils also learn to appreciate and understand what constitutes appropriate relationships between individuals of similar and different ages.
- Pupils say that bullying is very rare within the school. Pupils say that they know whom to speak to if they encounter bullying and they are confident that members of staff will resolve any issues effectively.
- Work to promote equality is excellent and pupils of all ages talk easily about respecting and supporting others, whatever their race, background or personal choices in life.
- Leaders have effectively prioritised the promotion of pupils' physical and emotional well-being. They utilise the support of mentors and external agencies to support vulnerable pupils.
- The school works closely with alternative providers to ensure that pupils in alternative provision are safe and well looked after and that they behave in accordance with Wardle expectations.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are courteous and polite to visitors, adults and each other. They conduct themselves in an orderly manner around the school. Pupils arrive on time and are punctual to their lessons.
- The efforts of leaders and teachers to secure high standards of behaviour are paying off. Records of incidents of poor behaviour show a declining trend. The number of fixed-term exclusions has decreased over time, including for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. Pupils who were at the school at the time of the last inspection told inspectors that behaviour had improved vastly over the past two years.
- Staff, parents and pupils who responded to questionnaires during the inspection, and those who took part in discussions with inspectors, told us that behaviour in and around the building is good. They were extremely positive about the school's 'NUHOPE' behaviour management system.
- Pupils like coming to school and this is reflected in high levels of attendance. Attendance has improved over time and is currently just above the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities has also improved.
- Leaders have worked hard to reduce the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent, which is now below the national average.
- In the main, pupils show very positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils arrive ready to take part in the activities teachers set. They respect and listen to one another and work well together.
- On the occasions when teaching does not fully engage pupils in their learning, pupils' concentration wanes. However, pupils rarely exhibit behaviour which disrupts learning for others.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Overall, pupils' GCSE grades in English and mathematics were in line with the national average in 2015 and 2016. They dipped below national average in both subjects in 2017. This was because the average prior attainment of the Year 11 cohort in 2016/17 was significantly below average on entry to the school. Alongside this, subject leaders have identified that, in English, some high-prior-attaining pupils did not reach the levels of which they were capable, and in mathematics, some middle-prior-attaining pupils did not make the progress they should have made. Having identified these issues, leaders have taken appropriate steps to rectify the situation and work in the books of pupils currently in the school, in both subjects, indicates that pupils are making good progress from their respective starting points.
- Pupils make good progress and attain highly in a range of different subjects. Progress is strong in design technology, statistics, art, music, computer science, citizenship and drama.
- Senior leaders are working hard to improve subjects where pupils' progress has not

been good enough or where there has been variability, for example in PE, geography, French and Spanish. Leadership has been strengthened in these subjects and, as a result, the quality of teaching is improving. As these leaders are relatively new in post; appropriate and ongoing support has been put in place to help them develop. While outcomes in these subjects have not been consistently good, they are improving. During the inspection, inspectors saw evidence of good practice in classrooms and good work in pupils' books in each of these subjects.

- In 2016 and in 2017, disadvantaged pupils' progress overall was not as good as that of other pupils nationally. However, the progress of low-prior-attaining disadvantaged pupils was a quarter of a grade above that of pupils of similar prior attainment levels nationally. There is still a gap between the progress made by higher and middle-ability disadvantaged pupils and others nationally. However, the school's current assessment information suggests that disadvantaged pupils' progress, while not yet consistently good, is improving.
- The progress of the many pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is good across a wide range of subjects because of the careful planning that goes into meeting their specific needs by their teachers and other adults.
- The most able pupils have not been making the same progress as similar pupils nationally. Work has not been sufficiently demanding for these pupils in some subjects, so they have not made enough progress. This remains a priority for school leaders and is evident on the current school improvement plan. However, there are green shoots of progress. For example, during the inspection, inspectors saw effective challenge for the most able pupils in English and in art.
- Pupils who arrive in Year 7 with very low levels of literacy and numeracy receive additional support. This support is effective in helping many of them to catch up and so that they can access the curriculum effectively.
- Pupils benefit from extensive careers guidance. They receive valuable information about the different options available to them when they leave school and have individual meetings with a careers adviser. Because of this work, and the wider efforts of the school, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Leaders work in close partnership with alternative providers who work with the small number of pupils that are educated off site. As a result, these pupils are cared for well, gain relevant qualifications and go on to meaningful next steps.

School details

Unique reference number	140055
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10042451

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,171
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Ms Caroline Drysdale
Headteacher	Mrs Carole Fisher
Telephone number	01706 373911
Website	www.wardleacademy.co.uk
Email address	info@wardleacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 February 2016

Information about this school

- The school meets the government’s current floor standards.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- In 2017, the school did not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about how they spend their pupil premium funding and the effect this has had on outcomes and the personal development for eligible pupils.
- Wardle High School converted to become an academy in September 2013 and is part of the Wardle Multi-Academy Trust. There are currently four schools within the multi-academy trust. Alongside Wardle Academy there are three primary schools. These are Kentmere Academy, St James Church of England Primary School and St Andrews Church of England Primary School and Nursery.
- Wardle Academy is much larger than the average-sized 11–16 secondary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is slightly just above that found nationally.
- The number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities that are provided with additional in-school support is below average. The proportion that are supported by an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The school has a specialist resource unit for pupils who have physical disabilities. Five pupils are currently educated within this unit.
- A small number of pupils for whom the normal curriculum is not appropriate attend off-site provision. Pupils in Years 9 and 10 attend St James Church of England Primary School on one afternoon per week and three Year 11 pupils attend Rochdale Training Association on one day per week.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across the school and visited classrooms jointly with senior and middle leaders. They examined pupils' workbooks across a range of subjects during observations. Inspectors also analysed a variety of pupils' workbooks alongside the headteacher and the senior leader who has responsibility for teaching and learning.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, representatives from the governing body and from the trust, a group of staff and two parents.
- Inspectors spoke informally to pupils in classrooms and around the school over the two days of the inspection. They also had meetings with three groups of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the views expressed by 58 parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the written text comments made by 223 parents. They took account of the views of 85 staff who completed the staff questionnaire.
- A range of documents was reviewed. These included safeguarding documents, leaders' evaluation of the work of the school, the improvement plan, a variety of policies and a range of information on the website. In addition, minutes of governing body meetings, assessment information about the progress of groups of pupils across the school and reports of external evaluations were scrutinised.

Inspection team

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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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