

Whitley Academy

Abbey Road, Whitley, Coventry, West Midlands CV3 4BD

Inspection dates

6 to 7 March 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The leadership of the school has not sustained the quality of education evident at the last inspection. The quality of teaching and learning, behaviour and pupils' achievement has declined.
- In 2018, pupils did not make enough progress in the great majority of curriculum areas, including English, science and humanities. Some improvement is evident in the progress of current pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils do less well than other pupils in the school and nationally. Progress towards reducing the differences in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is too slow.
- The majority of pupils behave appropriately, but some pupils need considerable direction from their teachers to behave responsibly and follow the school rules.
- Teachers do not consistently set hard enough work for pupils, and pupils are given too much time to complete these undemanding activities. As a result, pupils make less progress than they should.
- Governors did not recognise the decline in standards quickly enough and, therefore, did not take action to improve the quality of leadership. They have now reviewed their processes, and the principal ensures that they receive more accurate information about the school's performance.
- Pupils' attendance declined in the last academic year, and disadvantaged pupils are significantly more likely to be persistently absent than their peers.

The school has the following strengths

- The new principal has acted quickly to identify the key weaknesses and put in place measures designed to halt the decline in standards.
- Leadership and teaching in mathematics have been consistently stronger than in other subjects. As a result, pupils make good progress.
- The sixth form is good. Teaching is effective because teachers carefully plan lessons with good levels of challenge. Students make good progress in the majority of their subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders should ensure that all pupils make good progress by:
 - providing additional support to departments, particularly science, where outcomes are weaker and showing less sign of improvement
 - implementing the new strategic plan to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, evaluating the impact of current activities and prioritising those that are most likely to bring about rapid improvement
 - encouraging pupils to behave sensibly in lessons and show greater independence and resilience in their work.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by making sure that teachers:
 - are clear about what they want pupils to learn and set tasks that make pupils think hard
 - have high expectations of the quality of pupils' work, and expect pupils to settle to work quickly
 - consistently apply the school's behaviour policy to minimise the impact of low-level disruption on learning
 - use a range of strategies to check that pupils understand their work and encourage them to develop deeper and more complex responses.
- Improve the attendance of all pupils, but particularly disadvantaged pupils, by:
 - building on existing strategies to celebrate and reward good attendance
 - focusing on improving the attendance of those disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The new principal has been in place since September 2018. She describes the school as having 'lost its way' at that time. Standards had deteriorated, the school was not coping well with the rigours of new examinations, the curriculum did not meet the needs of its pupils, behaviour standards were poor and staff development was not effective in improving the quality of teaching. She has rapidly and determinedly begun to rebuild the culture of a school that was previously highly successful, beginning with the vision for all pupils that they must 'be the best they can be'.
- Leaders acknowledge that the leadership of pupil premium funding and strategies to support the achievement of disadvantaged pupils have not been effective. As a result, in 2018 performance measures for disadvantaged pupils were in the bottom 20% compared to other disadvantaged cohorts nationally. The new principal urgently set up an externally led pupil premium review, and the recommendations have led to the recent appointment of a pupil premium coordinator with clear accountability for the delivery of a new strategic plan. In order to ensure that this work remains a high priority, a further review of pupil premium funding should be undertaken in the next academic year.
- Senior leaders have put in place rigorous quality assurance procedures this year to support curriculum leaders in carrying out their roles well. There is a calendar of monitoring activities, and smaller departments work together to reviews aspects of each other's practice. It is too early to see whether these actions have a significant impact on pupils' outcomes.
- There is a sound and developing system to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the school. School leaders use a range of activities to gauge the quality of teaching, including formal lesson observations, shorter informal visits to lessons, analysis of assessment returns and scrutiny of pupils' books. This allows leaders to develop staff training that is carefully targeted to identified areas of individual and whole-school weaknesses. Staff questionnaires indicate that the great majority of staff find this professional development helpful in supporting their improvement. However, considerable variation is still evident in the quality of teaching, and leaders recognise the need for rapid action in this area.
- The school regularly collects information about pupils' progress and shares it with parents. Teachers use the same information to identify pupils at risk of underachieving and adapt their teaching activities to support them. The effectiveness of this varies between subjects but was most notably successful in mathematics, where teachers frequently adapted their teaching to address misconceptions and weaknesses.
- The school works closely with a collaboration of local schools to support improved recruitment of new teachers and to provide support for newly qualified teachers. The support provided to trainees is effective, and trainee teachers within the school felt that they were being well trained and had good support from senior and middle leaders.
- The curriculum is currently being carefully reviewed to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils. Triple science is being examined for the first time this year for pupils who

enjoy and are good at science, opening up a wider range of post-16 pathways. Pupils are offered a broad range of options at the end of Key Stage 3, including GCSE and vocational courses, and many continue to study a language.

- In Year 7, all pupils study a common curriculum, primarily taught by a single teacher, which focuses on delivering a high-quality values and skills-focused transition from primary school into secondary school. Leaders have recognised that there needs to be stronger links between subject knowledge demands and the current course in order to ensure that pupils are fully prepared for the rest of their Key Stage 3 curriculum.
- Pupils have access to an enrichment programme, with opportunities to participate in a variety of sport and arts-based programmes, as well as revision and subject-focused work. All pupils in Year 7 have a compulsory enrichment session after school on Mondays which they value and enjoy.
- School leaders have placed the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding at the heart of the school's work. The rich Key Stage 3 curriculum provides plentiful opportunities for pupils to develop their cultural awareness through trips to galleries and the theatre. The school does not shy away from tackling key social issues that are prevalent in the wider community. In a Year 8 English lesson, pupils were using knife crime as a backdrop to their creative writing.
- Leaders value the external support they receive from local schools and the local authority. The school currently receives a termly visit from a consultant, employed by the local authority, who provides challenge to the principal on school priorities and sources support from the local collaboration of schools. The RSA does not provide specific support for school improvement but does provide resources to help the school develop creativity in their curriculum.

Governance of the school

- Governors know that they were slow to identify that, after a long stable period of successful performance, standards were slipping and the school was no longer providing a good education for its pupils. As a result, there was not enough rigorous challenge to the leadership team.
- Since September, governors have sought a wider evidence base for their understanding of the school, making better use of national performance information and the reports of external advisors. The effectiveness of this approach should be evaluated through an external review of governance.
- Governors ensure that they carry out their statutory responsibilities. They carefully monitor the finances of the school, ensuring a balanced budget. They check the school's safeguarding arrangements and effectively oversee performance management arrangements.
- However, they have accepted weak evaluation of the pupil premium spend and are aware that they allowed spending to happen that was not sharply focused on supporting disadvantaged pupils. They supported the principal in commissioning an independent review of the pupil premium funding in the autumn term and are currently monitoring the implementation of the action plan that it generated.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has well-established procedures to ensure pupils' safety. Records are carefully kept and all staff undergo regular training. Leaders respond to staff requests for training on new issues. For example, staff have recently received training on the 'county lines' concerns about drugs.
- The school works closely with external agencies, including those in the local authority, to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils receive appropriate support. The school is proud of its record as an inclusive school, with a low level of permanent exclusions, reflecting its commitment to look after every child.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- There is too much variation in the quality of teaching. Pupils are not consistently expected to work hard and too many tasks are too easy and pupils are given too long to complete them. As a result, pupils do not make the progress expected of them.
- Teachers' questions do not always help pupils understand their work. Some pupils give up easily and do not try to answer questions or give very short superficial responses. Teachers do not systematically check that pupils understand what they have been taught.
- Pupils and parents raised concerns about the quality of teaching in science. Frequent changes in teaching staff mean that pupils do not have suitable learning activities. They repeat some activities and miss other sections of learning. Books are disorganised and reflect pupils' lack of pride in their science work.
- Pupils are not engaged by activities. They half-heartedly undertake a series of tasks without a deeper understanding of the point or purpose of the work.
- Where teaching is more effective, pupils are interested in their learning. They are challenged through effective questioning or thoughtful tasks to produce good-quality responses and make good progress.
- Teaching is consistently effective in mathematics, where teachers use a common structure to make sure pupils understand what they are learning. Teachers check learning frequently and take time to address pupils' misconceptions.
- Year 7 pupils spend most of their time in their transition lessons. Pupils enjoy the well-sequenced learning activities, with frequent opportunities to work with their peers. Pupils are very clear about what they have to learn and are challenged by the activities.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.

- Older pupils express concerns about the falling standards in the school in recent years. They do not feel as cared for as younger pupils and are not confident that the school listens to their concerns. Some of their wider pastoral curriculum is taught through 'drop down' sessions that they do not remember well.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning vary in different lessons. Although they are generally compliant and follow requests from their teachers, they do not consistently apply themselves to their work.
- Pupils feel safe. They report few incidents of bullying and know who to talk to if they have concerns.
- Younger pupils have a taught pastoral programme that ensures they have a good understanding of sensitive issues like homophobic or racist bullying. They are taught about how to stay healthy, including how to look after their mental health. Their understanding of British values is more secure than that of older students as a result of their taught curriculum.
- Year 7 pupils are consistently positive in their attitude to learning, showing energy and enthusiasm in their lessons and praising their curriculum.
- Pupils are well supported in considering their pathways at the age of 16. The great majority of pupils move on to sixth form, college or training.
- The school carefully monitors the well-being and attendance of the pupils in alternative provision.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement
- Pupils' attendance was below national levels in 2018. Although there has been some improvement in the overall attendance of disadvantaged pupils, they are still more likely to be persistently absent than their peers
- Teachers do not consistently apply the school's behaviour policy for all pupils. As a result, a very small minority of pupils can disrupt the learning of others. Pupils in all year groups believe that some lessons are disturbed by low level disruption.
- There has been a significant improvement in behaviour in the last term, following the introduction of a more rigorous behaviour monitoring system with more consistent use of sanctions. The number of fixed-term exclusions have dropped and teachers report improved behaviour in lessons.
- Leaders carefully monitor the level of rewards and sanctions in lessons to ensure pupils receive more praise than sanctions. This information enables them to target specific groups of students and act on more widespread concerns. For example, when a spike in lateness to lessons was spotted, a specific targeted plan was put in place to improve this.
- Despite the narrow corridors, pupils generally behave sensibly at lesson changeovers, although considerable staff supervision is required to reinforce rules. For example, many pupils do not remove their coats when indoors without prompting from teachers. Pupils behave well in the dining room and playgrounds, chatting with their friends.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In the last three years there has been a considerable decline in standards of attainment and progress in GCSE examinations. Too few pupils achieved a good pass in GCSE English and mathematics.
- In 2018, the Progress 8 score for Year 11 pupils was significantly below the national average and in the bottom 20% nationally. Progress was uniformly poor across almost all subject areas, with only a small group of subjects, including mathematics, sustaining progress for pupils that was broadly average.
- Leaders believe that pupils were poorly prepared for the new GCSE examinations, and high levels of staff vacancies added to the underperformance in several subjects. Extensive staff training, additional intervention and support for underachieving pupils, combined with better levels of staffing, have led to improved progress for current Year 11 pupils in most curriculum areas. However, inspection evidence suggests that their attainment is still likely to be below average.
- Standards in science are improving more slowly than in the rest of the school. Leaders have struggled to recruit suitable permanent staff.
- In 2018, disadvantaged pupils did considerably less well than other pupils in the school, with the gap between them and their peers growing larger despite the additional support from the pupil premium funding. Leaders recognise this and have put in place a number of strategies and focused interventions this year to support better progress for these pupils. It is too soon to comment on the effectiveness of these actions.
- Younger pupils are making good progress in the majority of their lessons. Assessment information and work in pupils' books show that standards are improving. Year 7 pupils develop a range of valuable skills, including in reading and oracy, through their bespoke transition curriculum.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make better progress than many of their peers in the school, which is partly as the result of effective additional support in lessons and careful monitoring by the special educational needs coordinator.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Outcomes in 2018 improved for students taking A-level and vocational courses. In the majority of subjects, pupils made progress in line with national levels. Evidence from lesson observations and students' work suggest that these standards have been maintained with current Year 13 students, although some variation still exists between subjects.
- The sixth form is well led with clear purpose, strategy and direction. The leader of the sixth form provides robust challenge when there are areas of underperformance.
- Although the sixth form is small, it is able to offer a broad curriculum that is well matched to the students' attainment on entry. Leaders work closely with a partnership of local schools to offer a wider range of A-level courses. Students have opportunities

to experience the world of work, and they benefit from a well-embedded careers information programme.

- Learning in the sixth-form lessons is well planned. Students are often expected to prepare by reading in advance about topics and then time is used effectively to deepen understanding and explain the most difficult concepts. Teachers provide students with frequent opportunities to practise examination questions so that they understand the skills required to reach the highest grades.
- Tracking students' progress is a particular strength in the sixth form. Underachieving students are quickly identified and, as a result, meaningful interventions take place swiftly, and lead to improved progress.
- Students receive good careers guidance and feel well prepared for entry to university, work or apprenticeships. A higher-than-average proportion of students move on to education, employment or training.

School details

Unique reference number	136840
Local authority	Coventry
Inspection number	10053258

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 converter
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	900
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	84
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair	Tim Downing
Principal	Kathryn Wright
Telephone number	02476 302 580
Website	www.whitleyacademy.com
Email address	k.wright@whitleyacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	13 December 2013

Information about this school

- Whitley Academy converted to become an academy on 1 July 2011. It is a single academy trust that works closely with the RSA. The RSA has one representative on the governing body. The governing body is responsible for all strategic decision making.
- This is an average-sized secondary school with a small sixth form.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium is well above average.
- The proportion of students with an Education, Health and Care plan or statement of

special educational needs and/or disabilities and the proportion of students receiving support for their SEND is below average.

- Most pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision, generally for one day a week to undertake vocational courses that are not available at the school. The providers used are Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce Training, Central Building and Welding Academy, Henley College, City College and Educ8.
- Although the school is an academy, the local authority has recognised that its performance is a cause for concern and commissions a consultant who visits termly to provide support and challenge to the principal.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning, usually jointly with senior leaders, in most curriculum areas and the sixth form.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, curriculum leaders, and the head of sixth form and trainee teachers. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the governing body and had a telephone conversation with a representative of the RSA Academies Board and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including information about the attainment and progress of all pupils, records relating to SEND, behaviour and safeguarding, and the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons and considered information about pupils' current and recent academic performance.
- Inspectors observed tutor time, assemblies and pupils' behaviour at breaktime and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors took into account the 30 views of parents on the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also considered questionnaires for staff and pupils, organised by the school.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils, including those in the sixth form, informally around the school and in discussion groups.
- Inspectors reviewed information on the school's website.

Inspection team

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Mark Feldman	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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