

Inspection of Workington Academy

Stainburn Road, Stainburn, Workington, Cumbria CA14 4EB

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 March 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Without exception, pupils, and students in the sixth form, are immensely proud of their school. Pupils are polite and courteous. They are eager to share with visitors all that the school has to offer. The extensive personal development curriculum provides pupils with a plethora of opportunities that enable them to flourish.

Leaders and teachers have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils readily sign the school pledge to demonstrate their commitment to upholding leaders' high standards. Pupils were unanimous in their view that discriminatory behaviour is not tolerated by anyone in the school community. The mantra, 'not in our school' permeates classrooms, the assembly hall and corridors. This helps to ensure that the school is a safe, happy place where pupils are accepted for who they are. Staff deal with rare incidents of bullying swiftly and resolutely.

Teachers expect all pupils to succeed. Pupils and students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), benefit from a well-thought-out curriculum. They achieve well.

Pupils and students spoke passionately about the support that they receive from staff in relation to their mental health and well-being. Pupils said that if they have any concerns, staff tackle these worries quickly.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders' improvements to the curriculum over the past two years have been tangible. Ambitious for all pupils, irrespective of ability or background, leaders have ensured that pupils study a broad range of subjects. The curriculum has been well-thought-out across all three key stages to ensure that pupils can build their knowledge and skills well over time. By the end of key stage 3, pupils, including those with SEND, are well prepared for the demands of key stage 4. Pupils achieve well.

In key stage 4, pupils can choose freely from a wide range of subjects that meet their interests and aspirations. Leaders have acted judiciously to increase the proportion of pupils following the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects. Leaders have thought deeply about the content within the curriculum and the order in which this should be taught. Leaders' diligence in curriculum thinking has meant that by the end of key stage 4, pupils have secured a rich body of knowledge across many subjects. This affords pupils the choice to take advantage of the vast curriculum offer in the sixth form.

The curriculum in the sixth form is highly effective. Teachers present subject matter in a clear and logical way. Students in the sixth form are well prepared for university, employment or apprenticeships.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge for teaching. They select appropriate activities to help pupils to know more and remember more of the curriculum. Pupils and students regularly draw on a range of prior knowledge, applying this to more sophisticated concepts. Consequently, their learning is rich.

Senior leaders have thought carefully about the whole-school approach to assessment. Their new assessment system which has been introduced into Year 7 is closely aligned to the knowledge identified within the curriculum. This enables teachers to ascertain how much of the curriculum that pupils have learned more effectively. This approach is working well. However, in Years 8 and 9, the current approaches to assessment do not always furnish teachers with the information that they need to identify pupils' misconceptions quickly enough. Leaders have clear plans in place to roll out their new assessment system across all of key stage 3 from September 2022.

Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND are identified quickly so that they get the support that they need to access the same curriculum as their peers. Teachers are adept at enabling these pupils, including those in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision), to gain the knowledge that they need. Pupils with SEND achieve as well as other pupils.

Leaders are prioritising reading. They have accurately identified the deficits in pupils' reading knowledge and made this information available to all staff. Well-trained staff support younger pupils to catch up quickly. However, leaders are in the early stages of implementing the reading curriculum across the school. This means that in some subject areas, leaders and teachers do not confidently know how to support pupils who find reading difficult. Consequently, some older pupils do not catch up as quickly as they should.

In lessons, relationships between pupils and their teachers are strong. Pupils and students learn without disruption. They attend school regularly.

Leaders develop pupils' spiritual and moral awareness well through a strong programme. Pupils and students value how well prepared they are for life in modern Britain. They assume many responsibilities, such as sports leaders and school councillors, with pride.

Governors and trustees have supported and challenged leaders effectively to improve the quality of education since the previous inspection. Staff feel well supported. They described how leaders have taken effective steps to reduce their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained in safeguarding arrangements. They provide regular safeguarding briefings to keep staff up to date with pertinent issues.

As a result, staff are fully conversant in the processes for keeping pupils safe. Knowledgeable about local safeguarding concerns, staff are highly alert to the dangers that pupils may face online and in the community. Staff report concerns about pupils and students promptly. When needed, staff make timely referrals to external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families get the help that they need.

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, said that they could approach leaders about a wide range of safeguarding issues in an age-appropriate way. Safeguarding features prominently in form time and assemblies.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In Years 8 and 9, the assessment systems do not give teachers the same quality of information as they do in Year 7. This sometimes makes it more difficult for teachers to identify misconceptions or pinpoint where pupils have missing knowledge. As a result, a small number of pupils do not progress through the curriculums as well as they should. Leaders should roll out their new assessment systems across key stage 3 to ensure that approaches to assessment are linked to the knowledge within the curriculum and that teachers use these approaches consistently well.
- Leaders are in the early stages of implementing their reading curriculum across the school. This means that in some subject areas, leaders and teachers do not confidently know how to address pupils' missing reading knowledge. Consequently, some older pupils continue to find reading difficult. Leaders should ensure that staff are fully trained in how to deliver the reading curriculum effectively.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	141499
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10200825
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,083
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	122
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	George Beveridge
Headteacher	Des Bird
Website	www.workingtonacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	10 and 11 March 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Cumbria Education Trust.
- Leaders make use of alternative provision for a small number of pupils at six providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- There is a specially resourced provision for seven pupils, from Years 7 to 11, with physical and medical difficulties. These pupils attend the provision each morning. They attend most lessons in the main school with their peers. All of these pupils have education, health and care plans.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- The school was last inspected on 10 and 11 March 2020. Publication of the report of that inspection was delayed. It will be published shortly.
- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the senior leadership team, middle leaders and a range of teaching and support staff. An inspector spoke with three members of the local advisory board, including the chair and vice-chair.
- An inspector also met with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in English, modern foreign languages, geography, computing and physical education. Inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss their curriculums, visited some lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils and teachers.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from Years 7 to 11 and groups of students from Years 12 and 13. Inspectors also observed breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding procedures and the checks made on staff. Inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils to evaluate the culture of safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, the school development plans, self-evaluation documents, the curriculum, minutes from meetings of the governing body, and behaviour records.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and the responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors also considered the views of the parents and carers who responded to Ofsted Parent View. This included the comments received via the free-text facility.

Inspection team

Rachel Goodwin, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jonathan Smart	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paul Edmondson	Ofsted Inspector
Annabel Bolt	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022