

Inspection of a good school: Wardle Academy

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

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 October 2022

Outcome

Wardle Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Wardle Academy feel safe and happy. They value the strong relationships that they have with staff. The 'Wardle Way' mission is lived out through all aspects of school life, supporting pupils both academically and pastorally.

Leaders and trustees have high expectations for what all pupils can and should achieve. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), benefit from an ambitious and well-designed curriculum. Pupils learn well.

Pupils celebrate differences between people. Staff teach pupils not to tolerate discrimination or bullying. Pupils are confident that leaders would act swiftly and effectively to address any incidents of bullying should these happen.

Leaders expect pupils to behave well. Pupils' behaviour has improved. Their conduct increasingly reflects the high standards that leaders have. In lessons, most pupils are attentive and engaged with their learning.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. Leaders strive to capture the interests of every pupil, including those who are disadvantaged, with a variety of different opportunities. These include a virtual reality club and sports and music clubs. The school has a strong tradition in music. The school's brass bands are recognised nationally, and pupils were proud to report that they had been invited to play at the King's proclamation.

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

Leaders, including trustees and governors, have high aspirations for all pupils in the school. They are determined that pupils become successful and lifelong learners.

Leaders have carefully designed the school's curriculum. It is ambitious, broad and balanced. Pupils have access to a suitably wide range of subjects. This prepares them well

for the next stage of their education.

Subject leaders have thought carefully about the essential knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember. This means that pupils build up their knowledge in a logical way. In many subjects, pupils have plenty of opportunities to deepen their learning.

In most subjects, teachers use assessment strategies effectively to identify and address pupils' misconceptions. However, in a small number of subjects, teachers have not used assessment strategies as well to identify the gaps in pupils' learning. This means that pupils' knowledge of these subjects is not as secure.

Leaders accurately identify the needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers use effective strategies to adapt their delivery of the curriculum for these pupils. Staff use their training well to ensure that pupils with SEND, including those pupils who attend the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision), get the help that they need to access the curriculum alongside their peers.

Leaders identify those pupils in Years 7 to 11 who have fallen behind in their reading knowledge. They have put in place an effective programme for the small group of pupils who are still in the early stages of learning to read. This helps these pupils to build their confidence and fluency in reading. As a result, many pupils gain the reading knowledge that they need to access the whole curriculum.

Pupils and staff were full of praise about the recent improvements that leaders have made to behaviour around the school. Leaders are keen to embed these new systems to further improve behaviour across the school. Most pupils said that it is becoming less common for lessons to be interrupted by low-level disruption. However, some pupils reported that in some areas of school, pupils' behaviour is not as strong.

Leaders' extensive personal development programme ensures that pupils learn about healthy relationships and the wider world. For example, pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online. They learn about, and understand the need to respect, protected characteristics such as sexual orientation. A thriving LGBTQ+ club further supports this work. The careers programme is effective in ensuring that all pupils are suitably prepared to make appropriate decisions about their next steps in education or training.

Pupils enjoy the many opportunities that they have to take on leadership roles within the school. For example, pupils from all year groups can apply to be in the pupil parliament. Pupils can also apply to be sports leaders. Pupils appreciate how these opportunities give them a voice for change in school.

Staff feel well supported by the leadership team. They said that leaders are a visible presence in school and that they are approachable. Leaders have made changes to support staff with their workload. Staff feel valued and appreciated.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Leaders are aware of the local safeguarding risks that exist for pupils and use assemblies and form-time activities to alert pupils to these.

Leaders ensure that all staff are trained in how to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Staff are vigilant. They are alert to the signs that a pupil may be vulnerable and need support. Staff respond quickly and appropriately when they have concerns about a pupil.

Leaders work well with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive appropriate support when necessary.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, some teachers do not use assessment strategies effectively to address gaps in pupils' learning. This means that some pupils have not secured the knowledge that they need to learn well. Leaders should ensure that staff are equipped to identify and address pupils' misconceptions before moving on to new learning.
- Leaders' new behaviour policy is starting to have an impact but is not fully embedded across all areas of the school. This means that there is some inconsistency in pupils' behaviour. Leaders should ensure that the policy is understood and implemented by all staff.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 2017.

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.

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	140055
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10240761
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,247
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Colin McKenzie
Headteacher	James Glennie (Interim Headteacher)
Website	www.wardleacademy.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 December 2017

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Watergrove Trust.
- Leaders do not use alternative provision.
- There is a specially resourced provision for up to 12 pupils with SEND. The specially resourced provision is sited in the main body of the school and supports pupils with physical difficulties.
- Since the previous inspection, a new interim headteacher has been appointed.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection 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 spoke with the interim headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and members of staff. Inspectors also met with members of the governing body and trustees, including the chair of governors and the chief executive officer of the Watergrove Trust.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils and students from Years 7 to 10 about their

experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.

- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation document, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and the school's single central record. Inspectors met with leaders, staff, pupils and students to check how effective safeguarding is in the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, geography, history, music and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils and students about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' and students' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subject areas.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Rebecca Sharples, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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