

The Oldershaw Academy

Valkyrie Road, Wallasey, Wirral, CH45 4RJ

Inspection dates

4–5 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The achievement of students, particularly in English, is not good enough. Too few students achieve five or more good GCSEs, including English and mathematics.
- Teaching requires improvement as not enough is consistently good and not enough is outstanding. There remains too much variation in the teaching of English.
- There remains too much inconsistency in the feedback given to students that helps them to improve their work and so make better progress. Likewise, the quality and quantity of work are issues within some subjects.
- The school does not set clear and suitably challenging targets for all groups of students, especially those who are capable of making more than expected progress.
- Leaders do not check rigorously the outcomes of all groups of students.
- Leadership and management require improvement. Leaders at all levels, including governors, do not check robustly how well the school is doing, especially when compared to national expectations. Their expectations for students' academic outcomes are not high enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour and safety are good. This is a fully inclusive school at the heart of its community. The care and support for students are excellent; relationships are positive and students feel highly valued.
- The headteacher is determined, ambitious and passionate about the school and its associated values. Along with governors, he is addressing underperformance in teaching and ensuring all staff are accountable for the outcomes of students.
- There is outstanding teaching in some areas and strengths in several aspects of middle leadership.
- The Learning Centre is outstanding. It is well led and highly valued by students. Staff here provide support that enables students to achieve success, both academically and socially.
- Students achieve well in mathematics, information and communication technology and in vocational subjects within the sixth form.
- The sixth form is good; it is well led and provides a curriculum that caters for the needs of many students, ensuring they are prepared for the next stage of education or employment.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 part-lessons taught by 39 different teachers. Two observations of lessons were also carried out in partnership with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior leaders and heads of subject departments. Inspectors also met with groups of students of differing ages and abilities. A meeting was also held with a representative from the local authority and the academy’s improvement consultant.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including information and work showing students’ progress and attainment, school improvement plans, monitoring documentation and records related to behaviour and safeguarding. Inspectors looked at work in students’ books and conducted a specific work scrutiny of English books with the subject leader.
- Inspectors took into account the views expressed by parents through the school’s own survey of parents, taken in March 2013. Unfortunately, there were insufficient responses registered on the online questionnaire, Parent View, for inspectors to take these into account.
- The academy was last inspected in May 2013. This inspection was carried out following concerns by Ofsted after outcomes from the 2013 summer examinations.

Inspection team

Derek Davies, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Janet Peckett	Additional Inspector
John Ashley	Additional Inspector
Alan Parkinson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Oldershaw Academy converted to an Academy in July 2011. The last inspection took place in May 2013, where it was judged to be good.
- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school and has fewer girls than boys. The sixth form is smaller than average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above the national average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The very large majority of students are of White British heritage.
- The school has a specially resourced provision, The Learning Centre, for students with moderate learning difficulties.
- The academy does not meet the government's floor targets, which set the minimum expected for students' attainment and progress.
- A high proportion of students start at the academy later than Year 7 and some start as late as Year 11.
- Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to staffing within the English department. Likewise, the department has been supported by a specialist Leader of Education from Hawkley Hall High School.
- The school extends its curriculum by providing alternative provision on a part-time basis at Cornerstones Training and the Shaftesbury Centre. Other students follow David Campbell courses (football coaching) and MTEC courses (training in childcare and cookery) which take place on the academy site. The academy has consortium arrangements with other local sixth forms to broaden the choice of options to students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teaching is usually good and increase the proportion of outstanding lessons throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 to improve the rate of progress of all groups of students, especially in English, by:
 - ensuring greater consistency in the expectations of teachers on the quality and quantity of work expected from students
 - using the wealth of information that the school collects on individual students, set appropriate targets and plan activities that engage and challenge all groups of students
 - developing further the way that teachers mark work and provide feedback to students
 - sharing outstanding practice, such as that seen in The Learning Centre, to improve the skills and expertise of all staff across the school.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, so that leaders systematically check how well the academy is doing, paying particular reference to all groups of students and how the academy compares to national expectations.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement is not good because, since the last inspection, the number of students achieving five or more good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, declined in 2013. A significant number of students did not achieve their anticipated grade C in English; likewise, the proportion of students making good progress in this subject was well below average. The number of students making good and better progress is well below the national average in both English and mathematics.
- Students enter the academy with starting points well below the national average; the relatively good progress that they make in mathematics is not replicated in English.
- The achievement of last year's Year 11 in mathematics was good. Students also particularly achieved well in information technology and vocational courses.
- In 2013, 22% of students eligible for support through the pupil premium achieved five or more GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, compared to 34% of others in the academy. However, closing the gap in achievement for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals has been a priority for governors and leaders, with additional funding being appropriately targeted to address any underperformance. Consequently, the progress that these students make has improved in both English and mathematics over the past three years, significantly so in mathematics where GCSE grades are similar to other students. In English, the gap in attainment is almost the equivalent of one GCSE grade.
- Students who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium receive additional support to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, they are making at least similar, and often better, progress to that made by other students, particularly in English, where skills are increasing well.
- For 2014, the academy has secured 32% of students who have already gained a C grade or above in both English and mathematics. The progress that these students have made is better than that made in Year 11 last year, with notable improvements in English. This is a significant improvement from the same time last year and supports the school's predications that students are on track to achieve markedly improved outcomes in GCSE examinations this summer.
- The data made available from the academy show that the rate of progress students make is improving rapidly, particularly in English, in all year groups within Key Stage 3.
- Students who join the school after Year 7 are provided with additional support and a curriculum that enables them to succeed and make good progress.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs supported by a statement, including those who are part of the resourced provision, make particularly good, and sometimes outstanding progress because of the good support they receive from staff in The Learning Centre, as well as teaching assistants in other lessons. This outstanding facility ensures that students are able to integrate fully into the main school, so demonstrating the school's values of promoting equality of opportunity for all. The students who are supported through school action also make stronger progress, particularly in Key Stage 3.
- The academy has reviewed its policy for early entry of students in English and mathematics examinations. Any student who has not achieved their target grade is re-entered for each examination, sometimes at a higher tier. Likewise, students in English, after achieving a GCSE pass, could move on to an alternative English qualification. The academy believes that their early entry policy motivates students and secures achievement, especially for the most able students.
- The most able students make better progress in mathematics than in English. This is because students are expected to rise to the challenge offered from working on more taxing problems and activities in mathematics. This is not so often the case in English because teachers' expectations have not been sufficiently demanding, although this is now improving.
- Many students enter the sixth form with much lower attainment than average. The academy provides a range of courses, both academic and vocational, though fewer numbers complete A and AS level qualifications. As a result of targeted support, and secure knowledge of every individual, students make good progress from their starting points, particularly in vocational

subjects. Students who start their post-16 studies without a grade C in English or mathematics are generally successful in achieving this grade during their time in the sixth form.

- Students following courses in other establishments away from the academy site or alternative courses on the academy site receive good support and achieve well. This alternative provision clearly ensures that students who could be at risk of disengaging from education are well catered for and achieve success, such as developing skills in cooking and childcare.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because not enough lessons are good or better and there is a small minority of inadequate teaching. Planned activities do not regularly challenge and engage students, especially the most able students.
- Whereas it is very clear that teachers have high expectations for the care and support that they provide, this is not always matched to the expectations that they have for students' academic outcomes. Hence, some work seen does not challenge students sufficiently or enable them to find things out for themselves.
- In lessons where students do not learn as much, tasks are mundane and do not provide sufficient opportunities for students to think for themselves. Likewise, the students do not learn quickly enough when work is not suitably challenging, particularly for the most able students.
- Tutor time is not used appropriately by all teachers to make it a worthwhile time of the day for students. There were some good examples seen of private reading, paired reading and some support work; however, for the majority of classes, the time is wasted.
- Marking and feedback in students' workbooks remain inconsistent in quality. Likewise, teachers still do not set high enough expectations for the quantity and quality of students' work. The advice given to students on how to improve their work is variable; there is some good practice, but this is not consistent throughout the academy.
- As a result of staff changes, the quality of teaching in English is improving, with some outstanding features, such as in a Year 8 lesson observed where the teacher captivated students through his passion and enthusiasm for the subject. Students were keen to read aloud and astute questioning was used by the teacher to secure understanding and develop key skills in students' creative writing.
- Teachers have exceptional subject knowledge in the performing arts, physical education, information technology and languages and this enthuses students to do their best in these lessons; teachers skilfully deepen the learning of students by providing high levels of challenge. In these lessons, excellent relationships between teachers and students are established and behaviour is often outstanding.
- Teaching in mathematics is often good and provides opportunities for students to develop their understanding, especially when students have to think for themselves and work out where they have made key mistakes in their work.
- Teaching in The Learning Centre is often outstanding. Teachers and teaching assistants know their students well and cater for their needs and help them to find things out for themselves. Teaching assistants are also very effective within other lessons by the way that they ask questions that challenge and deepen understanding, enabling students who have special educational needs to make good, or even better, progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Students feel extremely safe and well cared for at the academy. They speak with pride about their academy and appreciate the additional support and activities that are provided for them. The academy works extremely hard with parents and other agencies to make sure that the needs of students are met well. The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- There is a good awareness of all types of bullying, which students say is infrequent and is always dealt with by staff. Students believe the academy is very inclusive and tolerant; racist

and homophobic bullying is unheard of. This positive response is supported by parents in the academy's own surveys.

- The behaviour of students is good. Students behave well around the school and are generally polite and extremely friendly. Discussions with students revealed that there is some low-level disruption in lessons which is usually dealt with effectively by teachers or support staff. Information collected by the academy indicates a significant decrease in the amount of inappropriate behaviours recorded during the past three years.
- Behaviour at break and lunchtimes is good; students engage with each other well and there are very positive relationships with students and staff. There were a few occasions when students did not respect the building as much as they should, such as by dropping litter on corridors.
- In a minority of lessons, students are too dependent on the teacher and do not get on with their work quickly enough. Some are easily distracted or spend too much time on tasks that are not helpful to their learning, such as copying overly long text or drawing grids, rather than getting on with the activity that will help them to make good progress. Likewise, not all students demonstrate an eagerness to learn and have less positive attitudes than the majority of students. This could be seen with the way some students moved between lessons or did not involve themselves as well as others in the lesson itself.
- Students look neat and tidy and keep their uniforms to a good standard.
- The academy has its own alternative provision for students who might be at risk of permanent exclusion – The Hub. This provision re-engages students and reintegrates them back into mainstream education. Consequently, the academy is very successful at preventing permanent exclusions.
- Attendance continues to improve, though still remains slightly below the national average. As a result of one-to-one support and additional staffing, the number of students who are persistently absent from the academy has reduced significantly.
- The academy offers many opportunities which contribute to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development but the tracking of who takes advantage of these activities is not sufficiently robust.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because, although leaders are securing improvements in the academy's performance, these are relatively recent. Leaders have put in systems to deal with the improvements recommended at the last inspection in 2013 but, for some of these areas, there has been insufficient time to embed new practice and so they have not yet been addressed fully.
- The leadership is securing improvements in the school's performance but these have not had time to have full or sustained impact. Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain. Outcomes for students at the end of Key Stage 4, especially in English, have remained below average over time. Not enough students have been making good progress, particularly in English, although standards are now rising and rates of progress are improving rapidly.
- The extensive and detailed information that the academy holds on each student clearly identifies their many complex needs; however, leaders do not always analyse well enough the performance of all key groups and relate performance to national expectations. This can sometimes mean that leaders do not have an accurate picture of how well students, and the academy, are actually doing.
- Targets set for students are not always suitably challenging, and are not ensuring that more students make at least good rates of progress.
- Improvement plans identify the key priorities for the academy and show that leaders have a clear awareness of what has to be done to raise the performance of students. Nonetheless, outcomes in these plans are not always specific enough or linked to measurable outcomes for all key groups.
- The headteacher is a great asset and provides a comprehensive vision for the student as being

at the centre of everything that takes place in the academy. He is driven by a deep ambition for the academy and its role within the community. Along with other leaders, there is a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and ensuring better outcomes for all students. This includes dealing with underperformance in teaching.

- Joint observations undertaken as part of the inspection as well as the academy's own checks on teaching confirm that senior leaders accurately judge the quality of teaching. Training, especially for those new to the profession, is comprehensive and closely linked to performance management, though there are missed opportunities to share the good practice that exists within the academy more formally.
- Leaders of The Learning Centre, the academy's resourced provision, and for disabled students or those students with special educational needs have established clear and rigorous mechanisms for ensuring that students receive appropriate and sensitive support. As a result of this support, these students do particularly well. Even so, analysis of outcomes for these students is not yet as robust as it should be.
- There are many strengths among middle leaders, such as the ambition shown by the subject leader of mathematics. All demonstrate a clear awareness of what improvements are required; however, not all middle leaders accurately check how well they are doing, especially in terms of the impact of their work. Likewise, there is no consistent approach to how middle leaders monitor and check the quality of teaching, resulting in inconsistencies between departments.
- The relatively new subject leader of English knows what needs to be done and is now building the right team to make these changes happen.
- The curriculum in all key stages provides students of all abilities with opportunities to succeed. The extra period at the end of the school day enables additional support for students, enrichment activities and extends the curriculum choices for sixth form students. The sixth form curriculum is also enhanced as the academy is part of a consortium with other local secondary schools.
- The local authority has a positive relationship with the academy and continues to provide some aspects of training. Officers recognise the considerable improvements that have been made in the academy since the appointment of the new headteacher, and that there is still much to do in terms of improving outcomes for all students.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors offer a total commitment to the academy and are proud of what it provides to the community. However, they are not complacent and recognise where improvements need to be made; they are robust in dealing with underperformance and making senior leaders accountable for the outcomes of students. Governors are linked to departments and, since September, have restructured their sub-committees so that these reflect the priorities within the inspection framework.
 - Governors are provided with subject reviews that tell them about the quality of teaching. Performance management of staff is clearly based on outcomes for students and is rigorously applied and closely linked to the new Teacher Standards. Governors are fully aware of how the additional funding that supports the progress of students eligible for pupil premium is used, though their knowledge of the exact impact of individual initiatives is less secure. Information presented to governors, by both the academy and its consultant, does not always focus sufficiently on the progress of all groups of students and how well the academy compares to how well other students are doing nationally. Likewise, the degree of challenge provided by governors to senior leaders is not captured in records of governing body meetings.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136895
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	440907

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
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	781
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	124
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr I J Cubbin
Principal	Mr S J Peach
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2013
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