

The Oldershaw Academy

Valkyrie Road, Wallasey, Merseyside CH45 4RJ

Inspection dates	19–20 April 2016
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
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders have made significant improvements to the school. They have the capacity and expertise to further raise pupils' achievement.
- Governors hold the school to account effectively.
- Leaders' action planning for improvement is rigorous. Staff are held to account for the progress of pupils and accurate assessments are used to challenge underperformance.
- Middle leaders are bringing about changes that make a difference in most subject areas. They are well supported by the senior leaders and participate in regular, helpful training and development, often delivered by their peers.
- The quality of teaching has improved. The school's focus on improving reading and extended writing is enabling pupils to develop good literacy skills.
- The support for the most vulnerable pupils continues to be a real strength of the school. These pupils make good progress due to the individual care and high expectations that every member of staff gives them.
- Outcomes for pupils have improved, particularly in English. The school's data shows that gaps for disadvantaged pupils and girls are closing rapidly.
- Pupils are confident learners who value the changes that have been introduced. The opinions of pupils are regularly sought and used to inform school improvement.
- The sixth form provides a good education. Effective leadership and teaching that challenges learners' thinking ensures their good progress. Learners are provided with a well-planned programme of careers education, advice and guidance. Outcomes for vocational courses are above the national average.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough of the most-able pupils are challenged to achieve the highest grades at GCSE.
- Although improving, attendance levels at the school are below the national average.
- The quality of some pupils' work is reduced by poor presentation.
- Teachers do not consistently use the starting points of pupils to plan learning so that pupils of all abilities achieve their full potential.
- The school's high expectations regarding effective feedback are not consistently applied.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the level of challenge from the school so that more high-ability pupils reach aspirational targets through:
 - increasing the amount of challenge in lessons
 - evaluating success in outcomes by comparing with the most challenging measures
 - continuing to share the good practice already in the school.

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment even further by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently plan learning based on what pupils know and understand
 - consolidating improvements in feedback, in line with the school's policy, so that pupils can make best use of the support given by teachers
 - emphasising the importance of neatly presented work.

- Continue to improve the level of attendance of all pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The senior leaders are an effective team who communicate their vision for the school clearly. Staff speak highly of the support senior leaders give to them in order to achieve their best for pupils. Senior leaders, middle leaders and governors challenge each other to improve constantly. Standards are rising in response to the strong challenge and clear accountability that are now the norm.
- The school's improvement planning is now more tightly focused on what will make a difference to the school, who is responsible, when it will be accomplished and what milestones there will be along the way. The improvement plan is evaluated and updated to measure how much has been achieved. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.
- Leaders at all levels know the pupils well and bring a wealth of varied experiences to focus on the issues that affect the school.
- Performance management is used appropriately to hold all staff to account for the progress pupils make. It focuses on the key priorities of the school and access to pay progression for staff at all levels is dependent on meeting challenging targets.
- Middle leaders effectively drive improvement. They have expertise in their subjects and a passion for pupils' learning. They are challenged and supported by the senior leaders on a regular basis. They in turn challenge and support their staff teams. This level of rigour has been one of the key reasons for success in the last two years. Middle leaders take their responsibilities seriously for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and outcomes of all pupil groups and individuals. They use performance information effectively to evaluate their success.
- The school has a detailed tracking system to monitor pupils' progress. This information is shared with middle leaders and governors in order to direct challenge and actions. However, the school has not used the most aspirational measures to compare its performance, for example the percentage of grades A and A* at GCSE level and the percentage of pupils making more than expected progress. Consequently there has been a lack of focus on the improvement of these outcomes.
- Pupil premium funding has been used in a wide range of activities, which are clearly costed and planned. In some instances the funding should be more carefully targeted. A recently introduced reading programme and one-to-one tuition have had significant impact in raising the confidence and skills of pupils and contributing to the expected improvement in outcomes. Pupil premium funding has also been used to support specific subjects such as physical education (PE) to take all disadvantaged pupils climbing to support their GCSE PE grade. Pupils who are the least able on entry to school have a bespoke intervention programme that supports them in making rapid gains, funded by the school's catch-up funding.
- The restructuring of the school day has allowed for regular staff professional development through which the most effective practice in school is shared between staff at all levels across subjects. This strategy is very well regarded by staff and they say that it has contributed to the increasing aspiration seen at the school. In addition, some staff have received bespoke training according to their individual needs. The impact of training is reviewed by leaders to ensure value for money.
- The school's curriculum has recently been changed to ensure that more pupils take courses that will result in achievement of the English Baccalaureate. This is a core part of the leaders' work to raise aspirations. The proportion of pupils studying for these qualifications has risen sharply as a result of improved guidance, particularly for the most able.
- There is a wide range of taught and extra-curricular activities that develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and contribute well to their learning about British values. These include fund-raising for national charities and an Inspiring Women Day. All pupils can play a part in the school production if they want to. Parents and pupils value the range of opportunities that the school offers, including visits overseas. Such opportunities, together with a broad and balanced curriculum, prepare pupils to be responsible citizens in modern Britain.
- In the past, leaders have not provided enough challenge to ensure that the most-able pupils attain the highest possible standards. For instance, they have not always given sufficient prominence to the analysis of performance at A* and A grades in their self-evaluation. This situation is changing and the proportion of pupils attaining top grades is rising. Leaders recognise the need to keep a sharp focus on this group of pupils.

■ The governance of the school

- The governing body was restructured following a review of its effectiveness. Governors are now well equipped to ask, and record, challenging questions through which they hold leaders to account.
 - The Oldershaw Academy Trust has received a Financial Notice to Improve from the Department for Education. Governors plan for the budget deficit to have been cleared within two years.
 - Governors effectively hold the headteacher to account for the outcomes of the school. They take their responsibility for the strategic direction of the school seriously and can cite examples of when they have insisted that difficult decisions are taken. For instance, appropriate and immediate action was taken when science results were poor in 2014. Teaching and performance in science have improved in response to this action.
 - Many of the governors have a long association with the school and know it well. They are regular visitors to the school. They are accurate in their awareness of the key priorities for the school, although have not, in the past, been given sufficient information to be able to measure the school against A and A* grades and the number of pupils achieving more than expected progress.
 - Governors are linked to departments in the school and are given useful information, which allows them to challenge middle leaders. Middle leaders comment that this has contributed to improving standards. The link governors for departments have become advocates for additional resources to support learning in some areas.
 - Governors have a good understanding of the use and impact of pupil premium funding.
 - Governors have completed safeguarding training and are clear about their responsibilities with regard to the prevention of extremism and radicalisation.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The headteacher has ensured that all staff and governors are trained to the appropriate level in safeguarding. The school works successfully with its key partners to ensure that all pupils are safe and cared for well.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching usually engages and interests pupils. Examples of this are particularly evident in English, humanities, hospitality, art and drama, where teachers have good subject and exam knowledge. Their clear expectations result in good outcomes. Appropriate challenge and good assessment of where pupils are starting mean that progress in learning is rapid in these subjects.
- The school's focus on developing the use of extended writing has had a positive impact in a range of subjects such as English and geography. Pupils are able to communicate effectively and achieve high levels due to their literacy skills.
- Pupils use technical language and show perseverance in writing extended answers.
- In mathematics, pupils say that they make most progress when they can learn from their mistakes, and those who quickly master the skills are moved on to more challenging problems.
- Pupils enjoy the daily programme of 'Thanks', in which they have thought-provoking discussions on philosophical topics, and through which they demonstrate good thinking and speaking skills. Inspectors observed Year 7 pupils discussing the question, 'If we are all unique, then are we the same?' with maturity and insight.
- The quality of teaching in The Learning Centre, for pupils who have special educational needs or disability, is good. Pupils benefit from good-quality individual support, which helps them achieve well and develops their personal skills successfully.
- There are good examples of pupils' thinking being challenged in German, English and history. Pupils were discussing complex ideas articulately. However, on some occasions pupils who are most able are not expected to do any more challenging work than the others. In these instances, teaching does not take enough account of what pupils already know and understand; consequently, some high-attaining pupils make limited progress because they have already mastered skills.
- Good progress over time is evident in many pupils' books in different subjects. Pupils are often given precise points for learning, their skills and understanding are stretched and they have the chance to reflect on this feedback. However, although written feedback to pupils has improved since the last inspection, not all teachers follow the school's marking policy closely enough to ensure that pupils improve their work. There is not enough support for pupils to present work neatly across all areas of the school.

- Homework is set across subjects but not consistently enough to fully develop pupils' independent learning. A small minority of parents feel that homework could be improved.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The school is a very tolerant and harmonious community where everyone is valued, whatever their background.
- All pupils feel very safe in the school as a result of the good programme of personal development the school delivers. They are aware of how to keep safe on the internet and social media as well as managing risky behaviours.
- The school has recently restructured the pastoral support team. This has provided a system where there is always someone to care for any pupil, no matter what the difficulty. The newly appointed progress leaders and assistant progress leaders regularly meet with the heads of department, so that each pupil is considered according to their individual needs. The pupils made a point of saying how much they value the progress leaders' support.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning in lessons are usually good. They are quick to start the tasks given by teachers and do not give up on learning quickly.
- Parents who responded to Ofsted's survey commented that the school provides a very good level of support and 'will always go the extra mile' for pupils to ensure they achieve.
- Pupils have a strong personal development curriculum, which contributes to equality in the school. Recently, they participated in a 'Thinking of ourselves' day to promote self-esteem and tolerance of people of different sexuality, particularly people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. The impact of this was seen in the acceptance of difference of pupils of all ages.
- There is little bullying or racism at the school and the pupils all confirm that this always dealt with. The school actively teaches pupils how to report bullying and instils values of fairness and justice through its curriculum. Pupils report that although homophobic comments are occasionally made, they are always dealt with by members of staff.
- The school has close links with the Wallasey Youth Hub, where a number of pupils are educated off site. Leaders monitor their attendance, safety and well-being closely to make sure that they are safe and their personal skills are developed effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils quickly respond to teachers' instructions. They start tasks promptly when directed to do so. The number of incidents of reported poor behaviour has decreased year on year.
- Occasional off-task behaviour occurs when pupils are not sufficiently engaged in lessons. However, this very rarely leads to disruption of any type.
- Pupils are sensible when not in classrooms and need minimum direction from staff who supervise them between lessons.
- Permanent exclusion is very rare. Where fixed-term exclusion has been used, it has generally been in response to challenging behaviour of pupils who have joined the school during the year from other schools where they have been unsuccessful.
- Attendance levels are lower than the national average and the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school is comparatively high; however, attendance is improving due to the school's assiduous efforts to work with families. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability is now in line with that of other pupils at the school. Many of the poor attenders are pupils who have joined the school during the school year. In many cases, pupils who initially joined the school with a history of disrupted learning or poor attendance have made good progress and their attendance has become more regular.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils start the school with standards that are below the national average. Many pupils have low reading ages and do not join Year 7 equipped with all the skills necessary to start secondary education.
- Outcomes at GCSE improved in 2015 and the upward trend is set to continue. Pupils made much better progress from their starting points in 2015 in English, mathematics, science and languages. The outcomes for boys and pupils who have special educational needs or disability are now close to national averages. Pupils who have special educational needs or disability who are educated in The Learning Centre make just as good progress from their starting points as those in the main school.
- Most pupils make good progress in English due to the concerted efforts of leaders and teachers to make literacy everyone's priority.
- Outcomes in mathematics have been lower than those in English in recent years. The school's performance information shows that pupils are now making much better progress in mathematics and that performance gaps are closing quickly.
- Across other subjects, outcomes have improved, with most performing above the national average for A* to C grades at GCSE. However, the most-able pupils are not provided with work that is challenging enough to enable them to achieve the highest grades at GCSE. Performance at A and A* grades is not high enough, with the exception of information and communication technology, which has over double the number of A and A* grades compared with the national average.
- The school has recognised the low level of literacy skills with which pupils start at the school. It has introduced a programme to improve the reading skills of all pupils to great effect and the school has been recognised by the local authority as a model of good practice because of the success of this work. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, those with low attainment, and those with high attainment, have made impressive gains in their reading skills that mean they can tackle increasingly complex and challenging texts. The pupils say that the programme is one of the best changes they have seen at the school in recent years.
- Five pupils attend off-site provision based at Wallasey Youth Hub where they continue to study their school subjects. There is liaison between the staff at the hub and heads of department who ensure that they follow the same curriculum as their peers.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- Leadership of the sixth form is strong. The provision for learners is wide and varied and caters for their needs effectively.
- The study programmes fully meet the Department for Education's principles.
- Although learners arrive at the sixth form with attainment that is below average, the outcomes they achieve on vocational courses are above average. Academic courses are broadly close to national averages, but the least able learners on A-level courses do less well. The sixth form's own performance information shows that learners' progress is improving.
- All learners taking English and mathematics GCSEs make good progress and improve on their previous grades.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. It ensures that learners are challenged in their thinking and engaged in their learning. Learners use technical language proficiently and can articulate and justify arguments. Many lessons were focused on exam technique, often in an innovative way, which led to learners thoroughly understanding what was expected of them.
- There is highly effective pastoral care that is based on an individual monitoring system with frequent analysis of progress and rapid academic and pastoral intervention when underperformance occurs. The induction programme for new learners emphasises teamwork and employability skills.
- The sixth form goes the extra mile to ensure it removes as many barriers to learning as possible.
- The sixth-form learners are highly positive about the provision. They feel safe, enjoy the opportunities given to work independently, have many extra-curricular opportunities and particularly value the work-related experiences they are given.

- The work experience and enrichment programmes are strengths of the sixth form. All Year 12 learners participate in a week's placement. There is a wide range of work-related activities, including university visits. In preparation for the world of work, they complete personality tests, draft application forms, goal-setting and raising aspiration workshops. All learners attend these sessions.
- Learners move on to a range of settings, including Russell Group universities, other universities and apprenticeships. There have been no learners who are not in education, employment or training after their time at the sixth form.
- The sixth-form learners carry out community work, such as being part of the National Citizen Scheme, supporting charities such as Mencap and working with local older people.

School details

Unique reference number	136895
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10012139

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	611
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	101
Appropriate authority	Oldershaw Academy Trust
Chair	Dr I J Cubbin
Headteacher	Mr S J Peach
Telephone number	0151 638 2800
Website	www.oldershaw.wirral.sch.uk
Email address	schooloffice@oldershaw.wirral.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 February 2014

Information about this school

- The Oldershaw Academy provides for secondary-aged pupils from ages 11 to 19. It has a sixth form and an on-site provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability called The Learning Centre, for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Some pupils are educated off site at Wallasey Youth Hub.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and their first language is English.
- A large majority of pupils (well above the national average) are entitled to support provided by the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority).
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for progress and attainment.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. There are more boys than girls in the school.
- The school has used partnerships with other schools to provide external support; these include Robert Clack School and The Heath Academy.
- There have been significant changes of staff since the previous inspection.
- The school has accepted a considerable number of pupils who have had a disrupted education at other schools.
- The school's website meets statutory requirements.

Information about this inspection

- Observations were made in lessons at the school, including The Learning Centre. Joint work scrutinies took place with a wide range of middle and senior leaders.
- Observations were made in and around the school at breaks and lunchtimes. In addition, groups of pupils were spoken to by inspectors.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, middle leaders, a group of staff from all levels, three governors and a representative of the local authority. A telephone meeting was held with the chair of the governing body.
- There were 13 responses from Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and two free-text responses. A parent also spoke to one of the inspectors while in school on another matter.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, the self-evaluation document, surveys of the opinions of staff and pupils, evaluations of additional curricular activities, the pupil premium funding analysis, safeguarding documents and analyses of progress, behaviour and attendance in the main school and the sixth form.

Inspection team

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