

# University of Chester Academy Northwich

Shipbrook Road, Rudheath, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 7DT

## Inspection dates

10–11 January 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Senior leaders, including those responsible for governance, have acted with rigour to overcome the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. They continue to pursue relentlessly ever-higher standards in teaching and in pupils' outcomes. Consequently, the school now provides a good standard of education for pupils.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Plans to improve the school are precise and effective. For example, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now good. Leaders accurately recognise that some variability remains with the effectiveness of teachers' questioning and have plans in place to resolve this.
- Leaders effectively use the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. These pupils play a full role in school life, including taking up pupils' leadership roles. The current attendance, behaviour, outcomes and prospects for disadvantaged pupils are good.
- Leaders' plans to improve pupils' literacy have been effective and it is now good. Pupils enjoy reading and do so confidently and well. Pupils' writing, including writing at length, is strong across a range of subjects.
- School leaders plan carefully Year 7 pupils' transition from primary school. Consequently, these pupils settle well and are happy. In some areas, however, pupils require more challenging work at the start of Year 7.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are well supported because staff know them well. Most of these pupils attend well and make the progress they should.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders, including those responsible for governance, are vigilant in ensuring that eradicating risks to pupils and supporting their mental well-being are of the highest priority. Consequently, pupils say they feel safe and well supported at school.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is good. They have strong attitudes to learning and attend regularly.
- Pupils' outcomes have improved since the last inspection and are now good. They are broadly in line with the national average across a broad range of subjects. They are especially strong in science. However, they are weaker overall in geography and history.
- Most pupils make good progress from their starting points. Leaders have provided support and training for teachers to ensure that the most able pupils are set work which routinely challenges them. This has led to improved teaching for these pupils recently, but some variability remains.
- Leaders review the curriculum regularly. Consequently, pupils follow an aspirational and broad range of subjects that meet their interests and needs.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes by:
  - eradicating the variation in the quality of teaching in geography and history so all pupils make the progress they should in these subjects
  - further embedding the consistency with which teachers set challenging work for Year 7 pupils, including in mathematics and history
  - removing remaining inconsistencies in teachers' questioning so pupils are routinely provided with opportunities to think deeply and respond clearly and in detail
  - further ensuring that the most able pupils are routinely set work to challenge them to make the progress they should.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- School leaders have acted effectively upon the recommendations made at the previous inspection in December 2015. Pupils now receive a good standard of education.
- Senior leaders, including those responsible for governance, have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. They recognise its strengths and understand clearly what needs to be done to further improve the school. Consequently, leaders' plans are sharply focused on the areas of the school that need additional support. Senior leaders have demonstrated the capacity to make any improvements required quickly and sustainably. For example, pupils' literacy has become a strength of the school's work since the last inspection, because of well-led improvement planning and the actions taken. This has effectively underpinned pupils' improved outcomes, and their engagement in all aspects of school life and more aspirational next steps in education.
- Leaders' plans for the school are underpinned by a clear vision, which places high aspirations for and by pupils at its heart. Pupils say they feel valued by staff and teachers routinely help them to achieve the best they can. This has resulted in improved teaching and stronger outcomes since the last inspection.
- School leaders use effectively the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils. They support disadvantaged pupils to join in a range of creative and academic activities, ensuring that these pupils are confident and aspirational. For example, currently more than half of the pupils who hold leadership positions in the school are disadvantaged, whereas previously this was a rarity. The attendance, behaviour and outcomes of most of these pupils are good. Leaders plan, assess and review actions for these pupils precisely, so are sure of those which have worked well.
- The use of Year 7 catch-up funding for pupils who join the school with lower than average levels of literacy and/or numeracy is effective. School leaders monitor and evaluate the impact of the actions they put in place well. Most of these pupils make good progress in literacy and/or numeracy and catch up with their peers. Inspectors listened to some of those Year 7 pupils, who had joined the school with lower than average levels, read. They enjoyed reading and made strong progress.
- Subject leadership is good. Leaders routinely monitor and effectively manage actions to improve their subjects. For example, in mathematics, senior leaders have sought support from the local authority and other schools to improve teaching and leadership. This has raised expectations and ensures that pupils' work is routinely more challenging in mathematics than it was at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils say they receive a good standard of education at the school and their parents and carers agree.
- School leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching at the school. The plans and actions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the last inspection have been closely matched to the school's needs and monitored regularly and effectively. Leaders have a clear understanding of how and why teaching has improved since the last inspection and provide credible plans of how they will continue to lead improvements in this area. Leaders joined inspectors in lesson

observations and identified precisely strengths and the areas where there is variability. These areas, such as teachers' planning to ensure that the most able pupils consistently make the progress they should, have been a focus for staff training and support from others who have a track record of success. Consequently, this aspect of teaching is beginning to improve. Staff, including those who are newly or recently qualified, are positive about the impact the training has had in improving the quality of teaching.

- The courses pupils follow at key stage 3 and key stage 4 routinely match the needs and interests of all pupils and prepare them well for their next steps in education, employment and/or training. At key stage 4, most pupils choose to follow an academic pathway, which was not previously the case. Most of these pupils choose to complete GCSE courses in arts or technology subjects, which ensures breadth to their curriculum. School leaders, including those responsible for governance, ensure that courses are taught by subject specialists, including in science, dance and drama. The curriculum is effective, aspirational and taught well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Leaders provide and manage the range of initiatives and activities well, which ensures that pupils' development in this area is consistently strong. For example, pupils' involvement in charity fund-raising is firmly established and well supported and provides pupils with good opportunities for leadership development. Pupils' preparation for life in modern Britain, including their rights and responsibilities, is good.
- School leaders provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which provide rich opportunities for pupils. They include sports, arts, and academic and other activities and clubs. Accordingly, they are popular with pupils. For example, 150 pupils participated in the recent Christmas performance and there are more than 40 members of the choir.
- Leadership of careers education, information, advice and guidance is good, because it supports effectively the aspirational vision of school leaders. Pupils are ambitious, and most move on to the next steps that they should, which was not the case previously. Almost all pupils who completed Year 11 in 2017 moved on to education, employment or training. This included a large proportion following level 3 courses or A levels, including subjects which would prepare them for university entrance.
- Staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire at the time of the inspection were overwhelmingly positive about the school's leadership. This picture was matched by the parents who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governance is effective. Governors have challenged and supported successfully school leaders to make the improvements identified at the time of the previous inspection. For example, pupils' outcomes in mathematics are now good. Governors understand the school's strengths. They are sharply focused upon making improvements in weaker areas, such as the consistency with which the most able pupils are challenged. Consequently, the school continues to improve.
- Governors' vision of high aspirations and only the best standards for pupils underpins the school's culture. For example, in mathematics, governors have been instrumental in

ensuring that the support and training teachers have received since the last inspection are from those with a track record of success. This includes support from the strongest practitioners in the school and the trust of which the school is a member, support provided by the local authority and support from other schools. Teaching and pupils' outcomes in mathematics are now good.

- Governors monitor the leadership of the school and the performance of its staff effectively. Teachers and leaders are routinely held to account for pupils' progress, which has resulted in good outcomes.
- Governors are vigilant in their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. They routinely review safeguarding and individual pupils' welfare in their regular meetings. They have commissioned an external review since the last inspection, which has supported them in ensuring that training and practice to support pupils' well-being are robust, up to date and applied consistently and effectively by staff.
- Governors audit their skills and expertise accurately. They have ensured that their knowledge and financial management skills are effective.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff, including non-teaching staff, are trained regularly and are vigilant in identifying potential risks to pupils. These include pupils' mental well-being, bullying, radicalisation and sexual exploitation. Pupils are taught how to recognise risks to themselves and their peers, including signs of depression or deteriorating mental well-being. Concerns are reported, acted upon and resolved robustly. Consequently, there is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school.
- Most pupils, parents and staff say pupils are safe and looked after well. They say pupils' physical and emotional well-being are supported effectively. For example, school leaders have established a strong and effective anti-bullying culture, which is supported by the pupils' anti-bullying ambassadors and well-trained staff.
- Leaders and teachers ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of the risks which might affect them and how to keep safe online. Pupils know to whom to report concerns and how to do this. The school has filters in place to prevent inappropriate internet usage.
- Leaders maintain good-quality safeguarding records. There are systematic procedures for checking the backgrounds of staff when they are appointed. The school's use of safer recruitment training and systems is effective.
- School leaders work effectively with parents, carers and external agencies and act swiftly when required to ensure that pupils are supported and kept safe. Checks made by inspectors demonstrated that referrals are followed up in a robust manner and that record-keeping is good.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teaching, learning and assessment across a broad range of subjects and year groups

are good. Most pupils make the progress they should.

- Leaders' systems to monitor and evaluate the standard of teaching at the school are effective. Consequently, leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. The support and training provided to improve teaching are well matched to school priorities and the needs of individual teachers. Leaders accurately recognise the areas of improvement and strengths such as mathematics and science. Leaders also know where some variability in quality remains, including in geography and history.
- Pupils' reading, writing, speaking and listening have improved since the last inspection and are routinely good. This is because leaders have prioritised improvements in pupils' literacy. Pupils have regular opportunities to read; they enjoy reading and read well. Pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar are good because teachers provide them with opportunities to write and they correct effectively any misconceptions. Pupils write extended pieces of work regularly across a range of subjects, including mathematics, which has supported their progress and good standards of writing. Pupils are supported effectively to access the wider curriculum and make the progress they should across a broad range of subjects.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge, including in science, English and mathematics. In some areas, such as drama, teachers use their subject knowledge to ensure that their questioning is strong. Consequently, pupils have to think deeply about their learning and respond with detail, depth and fluency. Leaders accurately recognise that teachers' planning and use of questioning to support effectively pupils' learning remain variable.
- Teachers assess pupils' work in line with the clear expectations set by school leaders. Pupils are clear where they need to improve their work and are given guidance and time to do so.
- Teachers use the information they have about pupils to regularly plan work at the correct level, especially lower and middle-ability pupils. This has resulted in improved teaching and, consequently, pupils' progress. School leaders accurately identify a few remaining areas where the most able pupils are not provided with the appropriate challenge to enable them to make the progress they should and have plans in place to rectify this.
- Year 7 pupils are making better progress than they did, because school leaders have a sharp focus on pupils' successful transition from primary to secondary school. Subject leaders visit local primary schools to ensure that they are well informed about the standards of which pupils are capable by the start of Year 7 and so generally set pupils work that is appropriately challenging. School leaders say that, despite many pupils now being set work at the right level, some variability remains, including in history and mathematics.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour successfully. They ensure good conduct and attitudes to learning. Pupils take care over the presentation of their work, bring the correct equipment and behave well.
- School leaders monitor and evaluate homework effectively. Leaders' view that homework is set regularly and the work is usually of an appropriate standard matches that of most of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- School leaders have reviewed the reports they send home to parents about pupils'

progress. They provided inspectors with examples of these reports. They are based upon pupils' performance in subject assessments and interviews with staff and include clear information about pupils' recent outcomes and detailed strategies for sustaining strengths and improving progress where it is required. Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said that they receive valuable information from the school about their child's progress.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' learning about British values is well planned and effective. Pupils are aware of their responsibilities as citizens and the school provides a good range of opportunities for their voice to be heard, for example through pupil councils and pupil leadership roles. These positions are regarded highly by pupils, reflecting the school's aspirational culture. Pupils respect differences and tolerate views that are different from their own. Pupils say that racism or homophobia has no place at the school and there is a thriving Rainbow Club which supports pupils of different sexualities.
- Pupils recognise the emphasis that school leaders place on their physical and mental well-being. For example, the healthy options available to pupils in the school's canteen reflect their learning about how to maintain a healthy diet. Staff have a sharp focus on pupils' mental health and report any concerns quickly. Pupils are also trained to support their own mental health and be vigilant in supporting others. They recognise the signs that indicate that their peers may be at risk and know how to report concerns. Consequently, pupils say that they are happy, safe and well cared for.
- Pupils, parents and staff say that bullying is rare at the school. The school's high-profile, anti-bullying systems, supported by the Princess Diana Award anti-bullying campaign and pupils' anti-bullying ambassadors, have created a strong anti-bullying culture. Accordingly, on the rare occasions that bullying happens or is likely to happen, pupils know how to report it. Pupils are confident that it is dealt with by school staff quickly and effectively.
- Pupils whom inspectors met during the inspection spoke very positively about their school. They say that staff know them well and that they do their best to support them consistently. Pupils recognise and value the aspirational vision established by the current senior leaders, which has led to them being more confident and successful learners. Pupils said that they would recommend the school to others.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' attendance overall is consistently in line with the national average, including for disadvantaged pupils. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is also in line with the national average. School leaders have been effective in encouraging pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities who have been persistently absent in the past to attend school more regularly. Consequently, the attendance of these pupils is

improving and getting closer to that of others nationally.

- Pupils behave well in lessons. Disruption to learning is rare and dealt with effectively by teachers. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and take pride in their work.
- Leaders ensure that the school environment is well maintained. The environment promotes leaders' aspirational values consistently and effectively. Pupils treat the school environment with respect. At break- and lunchtime and at change of lessons, pupils move around the school in an orderly manner. They arrive punctually to school in the morning and to lessons.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Good

- Pupils' outcomes have improved since the last inspection and are good. Pupils' examination outcomes have improved and in 2016 and 2017, pupils' progress was in line with the national average across a broad range of subjects.
- Inspectors' analysis of pupils' current work shows that their progress is good and continues to improve. In science, pupils' progress is especially strong. In English, where examination outcomes dipped in 2017, most current pupils are working at the level expected for their age and are making the progress that they should. Leaders' actions to improve outcomes in weaker areas identified at the last inspection have been effective, especially in mathematics. They also recognise that despite improvements, there are variations in outcomes, notably geography and history.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress across a broad range of subjects because the use of the pupil premium funding is effective. Although in 2017, Year 11 disadvantaged pupils' overall progress was below average, the work seen by inspectors across a broad range of subjects shows that current Year 11 disadvantaged pupils' progress is good.
- The progress of most-able pupils is improving. The work seen by inspectors showed that school leaders are accurate in their view that some variability remains in the outcomes for these pupils. School leaders have prioritised the eradication of this variability. Consequently, in some areas, such as drama and science, there are stronger outcomes for the most able pupils. However, school leaders correctly identify subjects, such as geography and history, where teachers do not routinely set the most able pupils work that challenges them.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are known well by leaders, teachers and other adults who support them in their learning. Consequently, their individual requirements are identified and met well. Their outcomes are generally good across a broad range of subjects and they successfully move on to further education or training.
- Since the previous inspection, pupils' outcomes have improved across a broad range of subjects. Consequently, the proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who progress to further education, employment or training has grown and is in line with the national average.



## School details

Unique reference number	137582
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10042448

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	349
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Timothy Boulton
Principal	Catherine Green
Telephone number	01606 42515
Website	<a href="http://www.UCANorthwich.org">www.UCANorthwich.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:CGreen@UCANorthwich.org">CGreen@UCANorthwich.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	1–2 December 2015

## Information about this school

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those supported by the pupil premium funding is in line with the national average.
- The number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities supported by the school is well above the national average. The number of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is well above the national average.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- Meetings took place with school leaders, teachers, those responsible for governance, including from the University of Chester Academy Trust, and a local authority representative.
- Discussions were held with pupils to gather their views on issues including safeguarding, support for their mental well-being, bullying, behaviour, teaching and transition.
- Inspectors examined a range of supporting documentation, such as the school's self-evaluation, the improvement plan, assessment information, the pupil premium plan, bullying records, behaviour records, attendance records and safeguarding documentation.
- Inspectors considered 36 responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire, 29 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire and 35 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors conducted learning walks and lesson observations across a range of subjects and year groups. They were accompanied by school leaders on some of these observations.
- Inspectors scrutinised work in pupils' books by undertaking a work analysis with school leaders.

## Inspection team

Stephen Ruddy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Shakos	Ofsted Inspector
Dawn Farrent	Ofsted Inspector

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