

Waterhead Academy

Huddersfield Road, Oldham, Greater Manchester OL4 3NY

Inspection dates

3–4 April 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the new school opened in 2016, the actions of senior leaders, including trustees and governors, have not ensured that all pupils receive a good quality of education.
- Leaders have an overgenerous view of the school's performance. So, in the past two and a half years, the pace of improvement has been too slow. Leaders' actions have not had enough impact on improving pupils' outcomes.
- In the past two years, pupils have not made the progress of which they are capable. This is particularly the case for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged pupils and boys.
- Current pupils are making better progress in a range of subjects, including English and science. However, this is not as evident in mathematics.
- The quality of teaching across the school is variable. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve. They do not set work at the right level, which prevents pupils from making good progress.
- Leaders have not ensured that all pupils, particularly boys, conduct themselves well and show respect for others.
- Leaders and teachers do not manage behaviour consistently well. Consequently, some pupils, mainly boys, disrupt the learning of others.
- Too many pupils with SEND do not attend school regularly. They are also more likely than other pupils to be excluded from school.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders' actions have brought about significant improvements in the overall attendance rate of pupils. The overall persistent absence rate and that of disadvantaged pupils has also reduced significantly.
- Leaders have now designed a curriculum that is focused on developing pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills across a range of subjects.
- Pupils receive very effective careers education, advice, information and guidance (CEAIG) that support their progression into further education, training and employment.
- Pupils benefit from strong teaching in art, graphics and Spanish. Outcomes for pupils are consistently high in these subjects.
- Leaders have created a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Pupils' welfare is a very high priority.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that leaders, including trustees and governors:
 - have a more accurate understanding of the quality of education at the school
 - make sure that their actions are having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes
 - have higher expectations of and for their pupils
 - set higher standards for pupils' behaviour.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by making sure that all teachers:
 - have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve
 - provide the right level of challenge for their pupils to enable them to make good progress
 - insist that all pupils, particularly boys, complete their work and take pride in its presentation
 - do not tolerate poor behaviour in lessons
 - tackle basic literacy errors in pupils' work.
- Improve outcomes by ensuring that pupils in all year groups, particularly those with SEND, those who are disadvantaged and boys, make good progress in all subjects, especially mathematics.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - ensuring that all pupils, particularly boys, conduct themselves well and show respect for others
 - ensuring that leaders and teachers use effective behaviour management strategies to eliminate any disruption to learning
 - reducing the proportion of pupils with SEND who are regularly absent from school
 - reducing the proportion of pupils with SEND who are excluded from school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- In the two and a half years since the new school opened, the pace of improvement has been too slow. This means that not all pupils are benefiting from a good quality of education. Leaders' actions have not had the required impact on pupils' outcomes. This means that many of them have left the school without attaining the GCSE grades of which they were capable.
- Leaders, trustees and governors have an overgenerous view of where the school is at. This is particularly the case in relation to the impact of their own actions and the standard of behaviour in the school. This has contributed to the sluggish pace of improvement.
- Senior leaders recognised that the curriculum in place when the new academy opened was not enabling pupils to learn and achieve as well as they could. They have made some significant changes, such as moving back to a three-year key stage 3. This means that the current Year 8 will continue to benefit from a broad curriculum before making their key stage 4 option choices. Leaders have also introduced a wider range of creative subjects to give pupils more opportunities to study courses in which they are interested.
- Leaders have ensured that middle leaders and teachers are focusing more on what pupils need to know and remember to be successful in their subjects. Scrutiny of pupils' work and observations of learning show that, currently, the impact of this is variable across the school. Some subject leaders and teachers have really grasped what this means in terms of what pupils need to learn and how this is sequenced. However, for others, this understanding is only at a superficial level.
- Changes to personnel and support for individuals mean that the overall quality of subject leadership has improved in the past two years. However, a significant number of subjects are led by what the principal describes as 'emerging leaders'. This means that, at the time of the inspection, the impact of their actions on pupils' outcomes is not evident. There is settled leadership in English and science, which is leading to improved learning and progress in these subjects. Leaders' efforts to improve the subject leadership in mathematics have not been successful. However, the senior leader who has been temporarily leading the department for the past two months has stabilised the situation in this subject.
- Leaders understand the importance of providing enrichment opportunities for pupils. As well as the 'elective' programme within the curriculum which gives pupils the chance to experience more subjects, they can also take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The list of clubs in the school is extensive and varied, including drama, music, art, computing, chess and sports. These opportunities, alongside the school's willingness to be involved in various community and charity events, contribute to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Pupils are encouraged to make the most of these opportunities, but leaders do not monitor participation rates or evaluate the overall provision effectively.
- Senior leaders believe that the actions that they have taken to improve the quality of teaching mean that more pupils are currently benefiting from strong teaching than in

the past two years. However, inspection evidence indicates that significant variations remain in the quality of teaching across the school. Leaders' rationale and strategy for improving teaching and learning are clear and have had some impact. However, scrutiny of pupils' work shows that leaders' quality assurance systems are not thorough enough to give an accurate picture of the quality of teaching, particularly in key stage 3.

- Staff have confidence in the leadership of the school. They have a clear understanding of the school's vision and are proud to be a part of it. Newly and recently qualified teachers speak highly of the support and development that they receive.
- Leadership of CEAIG is strong. During their time in the school, pupils benefit from a very effective CEAIG programme that comprises a range of events, speakers and visits, as well as help and guidance for individual pupils. This contributes to the high proportion of pupils who progress to further education, training or employment. In 2018, this figure, including for disadvantaged pupils, was well above the national average.
- In the past two years, leaders have not used the considerable amount of pupil premium funding effectively. The funding has had no impact on improving disadvantaged pupils' achievement. Indeed, from an already very weak position, there was a deterioration in the progress that disadvantaged pupils made from 2017 to 2018. The strategic leadership of this area is now much improved. Rigorous systems are now in place to evaluate whether the way that leaders are using this funding is having a positive impact on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes. Leaders have clearly identified the barriers that are preventing pupils from achieving well. Leaders were able to share with inspectors how this new approach was helping disadvantaged pupils to make better progress in a range of subjects and year groups.
- Leadership of the Year 7 catch-up funding is strong. Using research effectively, leaders constantly review how best to spend this funding to support pupils who are behind with their literacy and/or numeracy when they join the school. Leaders monitor pupils' progress closely. In this academic year, their actions have had a significant impact on helping pupils to catch up.
- A recent change of leadership has given new impetus and brought a clarity of vision in relation to provision for pupils with SEND. The senior leader responsible for inclusion has a clear insight into the issues that prevent pupils with SEND making good progress in the school and a plan is now in place to address these. While there are some signs of improvement, these are inconsistent. A high proportion of pupils with SEND have poor attendance and exclusion records which have a significant negative impact on their progress.

Governance of the school

- There is a very clear scheme of delegation that enables the trustees and governors (members of the local academy board) to work together to support and challenge leaders. That said, the challenge has not been effective enough to ensure that leaders' actions have had the necessary impact on pupils' outcomes. Like senior leaders, trustees' and governors' assessment of the quality of education in the school, including standards of behaviour, is overgenerous. Minutes of the local academy board meetings demonstrate that governors do ask challenging questions, but they have been too

willing to accept leaders' responses without probing further.

- Governors have benefited from the training provided by the trust and have sharpened their practice. For example, the work that they have done in relation to health and safety has had a significant impact in reducing the number of accidents and incidents in the school.
- Trustees have ensured that the school is now in a financially secure position. The trust's 'academy effectiveness team' provides an ongoing programme of support to school leaders. The trust is currently providing specialist subject support to the mathematics department.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leadership of this aspect of the school is strong. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, including protocols and practices for record-keeping. Systems to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work with pupils are secure. Staff receive regular training on potential areas of risk for young people, including radicalisation.
- The overarching themes that underpin the school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme reflect the strong safeguarding culture of the school. The PSHE programme focuses on ensuring that pupils have the knowledge and understanding of a wide range of different types of abuse and risks so that they are better equipped to manage their own safety and well-being. The programme is complemented by a series of focus weeks throughout the year that emphasise different issues, such as mental health, domestic violence and healthy relationships.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Leaders assert that the quality of teaching has improved since the new school opened in 2016. While it is evident that there are considerable strengths in teaching, the overall quality across the school still varies too much. Many pupils do benefit from effective teaching, but this is not consistent throughout the school. Some pupils do not receive high-quality teaching in their lessons, which prevents them from making good progress.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve. They do not ensure that the learning is challenging enough. This means that pupils are not able to make the best possible progress and gain the grades of which they are capable.
- This variation in teachers' expectations is evident in the quality of pupils' work. Some teachers do not challenge incomplete or poor-quality work, or encourage pupils to take pride in their presentation. This is particularly prevalent in boys' work. Some teachers do not address basic literacy errors in pupils' work and, as a result, pupils go on making the same mistakes.
- Leadership and staffing issues in the mathematics department mean that this is the subject where pupils are least likely to benefit from good teaching. Teaching has not ensured that pupils have the required mathematical knowledge to succeed in this subject. Leaders' recent actions mean that some pupils are having a better experience

in their mathematics lessons. However, a lack of appropriate challenge remains a concern. Indeed, several pupils told inspectors that their work was too easy.

- Pupils respond very positively when teachers have high expectations of them. The difference that this makes to the quality of the work that they produce is marked. Some teachers really challenge their pupils to think deeply and extend their knowledge and understanding. An example of this was seen in a Year 10 English literature lesson where pupils are clearly given the knowledge to think deeply about texts. On this occasion, it meant that they were able to express their understanding of the psychological effects of 'unnatural ambition' when discussing 'Macbeth'. Pupils benefit from routinely strong teaching in art and graphics. Consequently, outcomes for pupils in these subjects are strong.
- Pupils value the strong relationships that they have with their teachers and these make a positive contribution to the quality of learning. This is evident in many classrooms throughout the school, but it is not consistent. For some pupils, their experience is very different. Some teachers do not manage pupils' poor behaviour in an effective way and this has a detrimental effect on the quality of learning that takes place. Pupils who spoke with inspectors shared their concerns about how poor behaviour disrupts their learning in some lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Leaders have ensured that the welfare of their pupils is a high priority. Leaders are caring and responsive to the needs of their pupils. That said, pupils who spoke with inspectors, and parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, had mixed opinions about how effectively bullying was dealt with when it occurred in school. As one pupil stated: 'Some staff are better at dealing with it than others.'
- The PSHE programme is strong and covers a wide range of areas related to pupils' personal development and welfare. There is plenty of evidence to show that leaders understand the importance of pupils' well-being and ensure that appropriate time is allocated to this within the curriculum.
- The focus on personal development is reflected in the school's 'team laws' and 'team habits'. While many pupils demonstrate these qualities, some do not. A significant number of pupils, predominantly boys, do not conduct themselves in a mature and respectful manner. Nor do they demonstrate the right attitudes to be successful learners.
- During the inspection, the attitudes of some boys were disrespectful to staff, their peers and, on occasion, to inspectors. Some pupils showed a lack of respect for the school environment by leaving litter and dirty plates around at the end of breaktime and lunchtime.
- Leaders are proactive in checking on the personal development, behaviour and

attendance of those pupils who attend alternative provision. Staff in the school have regular and frequent contact with providers. This ensures that the provision for each pupil is effective.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Many pupils conduct themselves well around school. These pupils are polite, friendly and behave in a sensible and mature manner. However, this is not consistent throughout the school population. The behaviour of a significant number of pupils, predominantly boys, is not good.
- During breaktimes and lunchtimes, and in the transitions between lessons, these pupils do not conduct themselves well. Leaders' expectations of standards of behaviour on the corridors and in social areas are not high enough. This means that the immature, disrespectful and rowdy conduct of a significant minority is not routinely challenged.
- Many pupils have positive attitudes to learning and want to do well in their studies. However, some pupils, again mainly boys, do not exhibit good attitudes in lessons and this has a detrimental impact on their progress and that of their peers. Poor behaviour in lessons is not always managed well. Some teachers are too willing to tolerate rude and disrespectful attitudes. Leaders have not done enough to ensure that pupils do not have their learning disrupted by the poor behaviour of a minority. Of the 77 members of staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, only half agreed that pupils' behaviour is at least good at the school.
- As a result of concerted actions across the whole school, the previously high overall absence and persistent absence figures have decreased significantly and are now broadly in line with national averages. Leaders' actions have also brought about an improvement in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. However, leaders' actions have not had enough impact on improving the attendance of pupils with SEND. Too many of these pupils are still not attending school regularly, which is having a negative impact on their progress.
- A similar pattern can be seen in relation to fixed-term exclusions. There has been a significant reduction in the proportion of pupils who have received fixed-term exclusions, including for those who are disadvantaged. However, as with absence, leaders have not had the same success in reducing the proportion of pupils with SEND who receive fixed-term exclusions. In the past two years, the number of permanent exclusions has been higher than in other secondary schools nationally. Leaders could explain the circumstances that led up to each of these permanent exclusions and appropriate procedures were followed. The number of permanent exclusions has decreased this year but pupils with SEND are disproportionately represented in this small group.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The published performance data indicates that the progress of pupils, particularly boys, those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND, has been well below average in the two years since the new school opened. The data for 2018 shows that by the end

of Year 11, boys and disadvantaged pupils achieved approximately a grade lower across their subjects than other pupils nationally with the same starting points. For pupils with SEND it was approximately two grades lower.

- These headline performance figures are very concerning but they do not tell the whole story. Leaders shared with inspectors the details of a small group of pupils who, for valid reasons, did not take a full suite of examinations. This had a negative impact on the school's performance data. However, it is important to note that these pupils gained some qualifications that enabled them to embark on college courses or further training.
- Despite the overall headline figures declining from 2017 to 2018, there was improvement in some areas. In English, girls' progress improved to slightly above the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining grades 9 to 7 in their GCSEs increased. Pupils also performed better in the separate sciences, particularly in physics. Leaders shared information with inspectors to show that despite the most able pupils not making the progress of which they were capable, this has not prevented them from embarking on advanced-level courses at sixth-form college.
- The changes that senior leaders have made to the curriculum are providing better opportunities for pupils to achieve well during their time in the school. The wider range of creative courses in key stage 4 is proving successful in terms of pupils' engagement and progress. For example, the high level of commitment in the Year 11 dance group is leading to a very high standard of performance. Across the curriculum, from Years 7 to 11, there is now a much higher priority given to ensuring that pupils have the required knowledge to succeed. Middle leaders and teachers are also thinking more carefully about how learning is sequenced.
- These curriculum improvements and the actions that leaders are taking to improve the quality of teaching mean that many pupils, particularly girls, are making better progress than their peers did in the previous two years. This is happening across a range of subjects, including in English and science. In graphics and art, pupils continue to make the same consistently good progress that has led to strong outcomes in the past two years. Current Year 11 pupils are making particularly strong progress in history, food technology, design technology, business studies, photography and music.
- Leaders are acutely aware that improving pupils' progress in mathematics remains their biggest challenge. The new temporary leader has wasted no time in acting to improve pupils' outcomes in this subject, including introducing new schemes of work. Staff are now working together to plan the learning more effectively. Quality assurance systems in the department have also been improved. This means that some pupils are now making better progress in this subject, but this is not consistent.
- Recent changes to the leadership of provision for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils with SEND are beginning to have a positive impact on the progress that these pupils are making. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported well at Waterhead Academy. This means that, during their time in the school, they often make better progress than their peers who speak English as a first language.
- Reading is a high priority in the school and the leadership of this area is strong. Leaders understand the importance of reading for widening pupils' vocabulary, increasing their knowledge and developing their own writing and speaking fluency. Pupils are encouraged to read for pleasure and, in key stage 3, curriculum time is

allocated to this activity. Leaders ensure that pupils have access to a wide range of books that they can take home.

School details

Unique reference number	144508
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	10087798

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	1,254
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Phil Wheeliker
Principal	James Haseldine
Telephone number	01616 205859
Website	www.waterheadacademy.co.uk
Email address	office@waterheadacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is larger than the average-sized secondary school. In September 2016, Waterhead Academy was re-brokered and became part of the South Pennine Academies Trust.
- South Pennine Academy's trustees are responsible for the core governance functions of setting the school's direction, holding the principal to account and ensuring financial probity. The members of the local academy board are appointed by the trustees. The scheme of delegation sets out clearly what powers have been delegated to the local academy board and executive officers.
- Just under half of the pupils who attend the school are disadvantaged and just over half speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with SEND, including those with an education, health and care plan, is broadly in line with the national average.
- Where it is appropriate, the school uses alternative provision for some pupils. The school works with the following providers: Teenage Works, Saddleworth Environmental

Education, Works4U, Mahdlo and the Oldham well-being team.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons across a range of subjects, including joint observations with leaders. Inspectors looked at pupils' work during their observations. Inspectors carried out a work scrutiny with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils. They also talked with others informally during breaktimes and lunchtimes. Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders, and newly and recently qualified teachers. The lead inspector met with the chief executive of the multi-academy trust who is also a trustee. She also held a telephone conversation with the chair of trustees. She met with three members of the local academy board, including the chair.
- Inspectors took account of the 23 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey. There were no parental free-text responses. Inspectors also took account of the views of the very small number of parents who contacted Ofsted or who asked to speak with a member of the inspection team during the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of the 77 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. Senior leaders took the decision to print copies of this questionnaire for staff to complete rather than passing on the link for them to complete this online. There were no responses to the pupils' online questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and information about the school's performance.

Inspection team

Anne Seneviratne, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sheldon Logue	Ofsted Inspector
Annette Patterson	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Stott	Ofsted Inspector
Craig Yates	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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