

Washington Academy

Spout Lane, Washington, Tyne and Wear NE37 2AA

Inspection dates

2–3 April 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The school suffered a significant breakdown in leadership and management in summer 2018. Relationships between leaders and the staff became severely strained, resulting in strike action. The legacy of this period means that some parents still have little confidence in the school.
- Last year, Year 11 pupils made significantly less progress across a broad range of subjects than seen nationally. High levels of absence continue to have an adverse impact on pupils' progress.
- The progress of current pupils remains variable. Although there are signs of improvement in key stage 4, progress rates remain poor in other year groups.
- The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is weak.
- The quality of teaching is very variable. Although some teaching results in good pupil progress, much is typified by low expectations and low challenge.
- Attendance has declined considerably in recent years. One in four pupils is persistently absent. Low attendance is undermining teachers' efforts to improve pupils' learning and progress.
- Although the general atmosphere around school is improving, a small minority of pupils exhibit antisocial behaviour. School records show incidents of boisterous behaviour causing injury and peer-on-peer assaults happen too often.
- Bullying is too frequent and not all pupils are confident that if they report bullying it will be dealt with by staff.
- Leaders acknowledge that the curriculum does not ensure that pupils develop a deep understanding of essential knowledge within a broad range of subjects.
- There is a lack of improvement planning and some aspects of the school's work are not monitored closely.

The school has the following strengths

- New leaders have done much to repair damaged relationships. They have fostered a more collaborative culture and have begun to improve the quality of teaching.
- Teachers back the current leadership. They feel supported and that they are getting the development opportunities they need. There is some strong teaching that engages pupils effectively.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management, by;
 - writing and communicating a school improvement plan that sets an appropriate timescale for planned changes to be made and how the effect of these changes will be monitored and evaluated
 - implementing strategies for the use of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding and checking that they have a positive effect
 - reviewing the quality of provision for pupils with SEND, including reviewing the quality of the additionally resourced provision on pupils' progress and development
 - adopting the revised safeguarding policy and delivering associated training to all staff.
- Improve the standard of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, by:
 - working with families to rapidly improve attendance and reduce the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent
 - taking further steps to reduce bullying and increase pupils' confidence that bullying will be dealt with effectively
 - eliminating the low-level disruption and antisocial or boisterous behaviour that continues to undermine the school culture in some lessons and at social times
 - reducing the overall level of exclusions from the school
 - extending the provision for pupils' personal development across all year groups, so that pupils' appreciation of personal safety and citizenship strengthens.
- Improve rates of progress and levels of attainment, by;
 - introducing a more carefully planned and sequenced curriculum, which ensures that important content within each subject is covered in enough depth and detail
 - ensuring that assessments are used more appropriately to gauge pupils' grasp of topics and to support pupils' recall of the content covered
 - checking more closely on the quality of work to support pupils with lower levels of attainment in reading
 - providing more support for pupils with SEND, both in mainstream lessons and within the additionally resourced provision.
 - ensuring that the work set for pupils is pitched correctly and is not too easy for the most able.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken, in

order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- In the summer of 2018, the school experienced a serious breakdown in leadership and management. Relationships between school leaders and the staff deteriorated, resulting in the staff taking strike action. The staff were concerned about behaviour in the school and the pace of change that leaders were trying to implement. The Consilium trustees acted decisively and changed the leadership of the school. They appointed an executive principal and, in January 2019, brought in an associate principal to add capacity.
- The new leadership team has worked hard to repair relationships between leaders and staff and to improve the culture and climate in the school. Much has been achieved this year. In school, relationships are now positive, and most teachers feel well supported. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving. Leaders and the trust are demonstrating the capacity to improve the school.
- In the community, some parents have lost confidence and continue to be critical of the school. Over two thirds of the respondents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would not recommend the school because of concerns with behaviour and bullying. The dissatisfaction of some parents is also reflected in the falling level of pupils' attendance. Leaders are restructuring the pastoral team to bring more capacity to supporting pupils' personal and social needs and, crucially, to improving attendance.
- Leadership and management have, out of necessity, been reactive this year. Leaders and representatives of the trust say their priorities have been to focus on stabilising the school, changing the culture, and improving the behaviour and welfare of pupils. Work on these priorities has delayed some strategic aspects of leadership. For example, there is no up-to-date self-evaluation or improvement planning in place. There is no published pupil premium strategy for this year and leaders are not closely monitoring some aspects of the school's work, such as the use of Year 7 catch-up funding.
- Leaders do, however, have a good understanding of what needs to improve. They know that the quality of teaching and learning is variable, and that the curriculum is not providing a secure foundation for pupils at key stage 3. The trust is providing support in English and mathematics and is developing a new curriculum model, which will be implemented in the school in September 2019. This change is needed because learning is not always well sequenced and, in some subjects, the curriculum does not cover content in enough depth.
- At key stage 4, the curriculum to support pupils' personal development is underdeveloped. This means that pupils' awareness of British values and personal safety is not as strong as it should be.
- The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. However, leaders do not monitor the uptake of these opportunities.
- Leaders and the staff now cooperate effectively. Leaders are monitoring the quality of teaching and managing the performance of teachers appropriately. There are some new approaches to sharing good practice and better training opportunities available. For example, some teachers have benefited from learning visits to other trust schools.

- Leaders introduced a new behaviour policy in September 2018. Teachers and pastoral staff now use a restorative justice approach to try to help misbehaving pupils understand the consequences of their actions. Some teachers and pupils feel the approach has begun to improve behaviour. However, other pupils told inspectors that some pupils continue to disrupt lessons. Inspectors found the standard of behaviour to be variable across the school and that a small minority of pupils are disaffected and negative about their education.
- Provision for pupils with SEND is very inconsistent. In the main school, sometimes there is little additional support for pupils to help them access the curriculum. In other cases, teachers do adapt the work they provide to meet the differing needs of pupils. The school's own assessment information indicates that pupils with SEND make less progress than other pupils. Some pupils who attend the additionally resourced curriculum access provision (CAP) have made very limited progress because the quality of teaching does not always meet their needs. Leaders are aware that this provision is not meeting the needs of all pupils well enough and intend to review it and make changes soon.
- Over half of the pupils who attend the school are disadvantaged. These pupils make similar progress and attain similar standards to other pupils in the school. However, their progress is well below that made by other pupils nationally. Leaders are developing a new pupil premium strategy. They have completed an audit and identified the need to focus more on improving teaching and learning. However, the new strategy is still to be finalised and shared with the staff.

Governance of the school

- The trust board currently provides all governance functions. The local governing body is in the process of being re-established following a series of changes to personnel.
- The trust board fully accept that the breakdown in leadership and management last summer significantly set back their efforts to improve the school. The decision to change the leadership has helped to stabilise a very challenging situation.
- The chief executive visits the school frequently to hold leaders to account. He systematically checks on the school's progress and ensures that the trust board is kept informed of developments.
- Representatives of the trust have sound ideas about what is needed to improve the school. Representatives of the trust are working with leaders to produce a school improvement plan that can be shared with the staff and used to guide leadership and management work over the next year.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school makes all necessary checks on adults who work in, or visit, the school.
- The designated safeguarding leader ensures that members of staff are trained and fully understand their responsibilities to protect pupils at risk. Although the school's current safeguarding policy is out of date, the staff and leaders follow correct procedures and

work effectively with colleagues in social care and the police to protect pupils. There is a positive culture in which pupils at risk are actively protected. A revised policy is due to be adopted by the school imminently, with further training planned to support its implementation.

- Leaders record all incidents of bullying. Records show appropriate actions are taken to try to resolve bullying, drawing on restorative justice practices and using sanctions where appropriate.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The work done this year by senior leaders to improve the training and development of teachers has begun to improve teaching, learning and assessment. However, standards of teaching remain variable across subjects and key stages. Leaders know that there is still much to do.
- Some teaching is typified by low expectations and does not challenge pupils to think deeply. In part, this is because leaders have not considered carefully enough the content pupils need to learn or how best to sequence the topics covered. Sometimes, content is not covered in enough depth or detail for pupils to develop a good understanding. The most able pupils are not routinely challenged enough to make the progress they should.
- In some subjects, such as science and mathematics, pupils are tested frequently. Their folders contain many GCSE past papers. Inspectors found many pupils had not attempted to answer test questions, showing gaps in their knowledge or an inability to recall content covered. Inspectors found little evidence that the frequent testing is improving pupils' general understanding of topics. Some older pupils told inspectors that they feel teachers spend a lot of time preparing them for tests and examinations, rather than helping them to develop a deep understanding of topics.
- Some teachers do not move pupils on with their work with enough urgency. Inspectors saw lessons which progressed very slowly in subjects such as physical education, English and personal development. When teachers fail to move lessons on at the right pace, or set tasks that do not challenge pupils, some pupils drift off-task and begin to disrupt learning.
- Some teachers do not follow the school's behaviour management policy. They do not challenge the antisocial behaviours of the small minority of pupils who make learning difficult for others.
- Most teachers work hard to engage pupils in the topics being covered. They prepare some useful resources to help structure learning. Where teaching is most effective, pupils engage enthusiastically and make good progress over time.
- The quality of teaching in the additionally resourced provision is variable. While teachers and pupils have positive relationships, the level of challenge is often not sufficiently well matched to pupils' needs. Teaching does not consistently identify pupils' misconceptions. For example, during an observation of a mathematics lesson on analogue clocks, the teacher was slow to pick up that pupils were unclear on how many minutes there were in an hour.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Bullying in school happens too frequently. Some pupils say that they are not confident that it will be addressed fully if they report it. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, or made their views known to Ofsted, have concerns about the amount of bullying. Bullying records for this year show leaders are keeping detailed records and do take action to resolve instances of bullying, including working with pupils so that they understand the impact of their actions. Anti-bullying mentors have been trained to promote an awareness of bullying. They have created displays and speak in assemblies to ensure that pupils know what actions to take if they feel threatened.
- The school's personal development lessons in key stage 3 cover a suitable range of topics. These topics help pupils appreciate different risks to their safety and to support their development as British citizens. For example, the programme covers topics such as alcohol abuse and knife crime. Leaders survey pupils' views about the programme and introduce new topics to reflect pupils' interests. However, this provision does not continue into Years 10 and 11. Consequently, some older pupils show a limited understanding of fundamental British values and do not get enough time to discuss social and moral issues. School leaders do make use of external agencies, such as Amnesty International, to raise awareness of subjects such as human rights and equalities.
- There is a suitable careers programme that helps guide pupils in considering their next steps in education, employment or training.
- A programme of 'active tutorials' has been designed to encourage healthy lifestyles. Exercise sessions are run with the help of pupils appointed as sports leaders.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate. Although teachers and pupils report that the school is calmer and more orderly than it was in the past, a significant minority of pupils continue to disrupt learning, especially where teaching is less authoritative, and the behaviour policy is not followed properly.
- Analysis of the school's accidents book shows that peer-on-peer assaults have happened frequently this year. Incidents of boisterous behaviour that result in injury also occur frequently. For example, in October 2018, there were 24 recorded incidents in which pupils were hurt. The same number of incidents happened in January 2019.
- Although the school behaviour policy advocates the use of restorative justice, the number of exclusions has risen this year. To date, there have been 100 exclusions. The rate of exclusions is therefore well above the national average for secondary schools. Leaders and governors use exclusion as a last resort and ensure that the sanction is applied fairly, reasonably and proportionately. There were fewer exclusions in the spring term than in the autumn term.

- A few pupils arrive late to lessons and show no urgency to get to classes on time.
- Although most pupils are polite and pleasant to one another, a small number do not appreciate the value of good manners and do not conduct themselves appropriately around the school. Pupils told inspectors they hear occasional racist or homophobic language, stating that they felt it was due to a lack of understanding or awareness.
- Overall, levels of pupils' attendance have fallen. Pupils' attendance is now low and shows no sign of improving. So far this year, a quarter of pupils have been persistently absent. Leaders acknowledge that they do not have enough resources in place to address this. Poor attendance is adversely affecting pupils' progress, and for those with particularly poor attendance is potentially exposing them to additional risks.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- GCSE examination results in 2018 showed pupils had made significantly less progress across a broad range of subjects than other pupils nationally, including in English, mathematics and science.
- Standards of attainment were also low in 2018. For example, only 22% of pupils attained a good GCSE pass in both English and mathematics last year, which is around half the proportion seen nationally. The picture was similar in other subjects.
- Last year, the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils was disappointing. Other groups of pupils also made poor progress. The progress made by the most able pupils was significantly below that of other pupils nationally in most areas of the curriculum.
- The progress of pupils with SEND is weak. Those who left at the end of Year 11 last year made less progress from their starting points than other pupils. Pupils with SEND currently in the school continue to underachieve. The school's own assessments of pupils with education, health and care plans show that some have made very little progress over time. There is little support available in mainstream lessons to help pupils fully access the curriculum.
- This year, the school's own tracking data indicates that pupils in the current Year 11 have made more progress. Scrutiny of books shows that some pupils are covering more appropriate content in some subjects, but in others, such as mathematics, pupils are still spending time revising and relearning topics they should be secure in. The poor attendance of many pupils also means that books have gaps where essential knowledge has been missed.
- In other year groups, and particularly in Years 7 and 8, pupils are not making the progress they should in many subjects.
- Discussions with pupils during lessons revealed that many pupils could not recall and draw upon prior learning. Consequently, they were unable to make connections and found examination-style questions too difficult. For example, pupils in science struggled to answer questions about home insulation because they could not remember prior learning about radiation and convection.
- The quality of the school's work to promote reading is variable. Some additional support provided on a one-to-one basis for pupils is effective. However, the reading

lessons visited by inspectors lacked any real purpose and did not develop pupils' skills of comprehension and inference.

- Published data shows that the proportion of pupils going into education, employment or training when they leave the school is broadly in line with the national average.

School details

Unique reference number	144937
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10101291
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	597
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Paul Woodmancy
Principal	James Inman (executive principal) Sue Hamilton (associate principal)
Telephone number	01915 804 956
Website	www.washingtonacademy.co.uk/
Email address	info@washingtonacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Washington Academy became an academy in September 2017. It is a member of the Consilium Multi-Academy Trust. Washington Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most pupils are White British. A small proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The school has additionally resourced provision for up to 20 pupils with cognitive learning difficulties. There are currently 22 pupils placed in this provision.

- The school uses The Links pupil referral unit and the YMCA as alternative education providers for a small number of pupils.
- The previous principal left the school in the summer of 2018. The school is now led by an executive principal and an associate principal.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was undertaken without any notice.
- Inspectors met with the associate principal, other members of the senior leadership team, heads of house, a group of subject leaders and a group of teachers. The lead inspector also spoke to the executive principal, who was not on site during the inspection, by telephone.
- Discussions were held with a representative of the Consilium board of trustees, the chief executive of the trust and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors met formally with four groups of pupils. Inspectors also spoke to pupils more informally at social times to gauge their views about behaviour, safety and the quality of education they receive.
- Inspectors listened to some Year 7 pupils read and spoke to them about their interest in books.
- Inspectors visited lessons across key stage 3 and key stage 4. Some lesson observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. During lesson visits, inspectors talked to pupils about their work and sampled some of their workbooks.
- Inspectors visited the additionally resourced provision for pupils with cognitive learning difficulties and met with the special educational needs coordinator to discuss the quality of the school's work to support pupils with SEND.
- An inspector visited the school's isolation room used for pupils who have exhibited challenging behaviour.
- Inspectors scrutinised a sample of pupils' workbooks. The sample focused on books from English, mathematics, science and humanities subjects and included pupils with different starting points in key stage 3 and 4.
- Inspectors considered the 117 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including policies, assessment information, records of checks made by leaders on the quality of teaching, curriculum plans, attendance records, information on behaviour incidents and incidents of bullying, and safeguarding information.

Inspection team

Chris Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
John McNally	Ofsted Inspector
Moira Banks	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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