

Wolstanton High Academy

Milehouse Lane, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire ST5 9JU

Inspection dates

22–23 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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

- Year 11 pupils made slow progress in a range of subjects in 2016 and 2017. Disadvantaged pupils, the most able pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities made particularly slow progress.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent. When teaching is less effective, it is not carefully planned to help pupils make good progress from their different starting points. Staff do not have high enough expectations of the pupils or use questions well to aid learning. The school's assessment policy is not used consistently so feedback is variable.
- Pupils, particularly the most able, are still not regularly challenged to make rapid progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils' attainment and attendance levels do not match those of other pupils nationally.
- Absence and persistent absence have been above the national averages over time.
- Too many pupils are late to school.
- Exclusions are higher than the national average and some staff and pupils still do not have high enough expectations of pupils' behaviour.
- Some improvement are not yet fully developed or embedded so they are yet to have a marked impact on outcomes.
- Some parents and carers do not fully support leaders' strategies to improve the school.

The school has the following strengths

- This is an improving school that is now well led and managed. The executive principal, the head of school and other leaders have high expectations of themselves, the staff and pupils.
- Leadership is developing at all levels. Some aspects of the school, including provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, teaching, learning and assessment, and personal development, behaviour and welfare, are well led.
- The Shaw Education Trust provides effective support and challenge to leaders and staff.
- Teaching is improving. There is now some high-quality practice in the school.
- Current pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are making much-improved progress.
- The curriculum promotes personal development and welfare well. The school has an inclusive and positive ethos.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Robust systems are in place to keep pupils safe.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that all staff:
 - have high expectations of every pupil
 - carefully plan and resource activities that allow pupils to make rapid progress from their different starting points
 - use questions well to deepen understanding and promote further learning
 - give feedback in line with the school's policy, so pupils use teachers' advice to improve their work.
- Embed and develop strategies to further improve outcomes for all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and the most able.
- Leaders and managers should take further action to improve:
 - attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils
 - punctuality, by working closely with parents and pupils
 - behaviour and reduce exclusions by embedding higher expectations of pupils' conduct
 - parental engagement so that parents are fully aware of, and support, leaders' strategies to improve the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive principal and the head of school, ably supported by other trust members, leaders and staff, are taking effective action to improve the school. Leaders have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they are using this information to strengthen the quality of education that they provide.
- Senior leaders have high expectations of themselves, staff and pupils and they are raising aspirations throughout the school community. Leaders have created a positive and ambitious culture within the school.
- Senior leadership is very strong and leadership at other levels is increasingly effective. Aspects of the school's work, such as provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, teaching, learning and assessment, and personal development, behaviour and welfare are very well led. The impact of these leaders is evident in the improvements within their areas of responsibility.
- Middle leadership is also having a positive impact. There are some very high-quality middle leaders, and subject and pastoral leaders are supported to be as effective as possible. The trust has provided a wide range of opportunities to develop leadership at all levels. This has greatly increased leadership capacity.
- Leaders have created a positive climate for staff development. As a result of coaching and training opportunities in the school, the trust and beyond, staff are developing their practice. Leaders use performance management and staff training well to improve the quality of education provided.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and tailored to meet the needs of the pupils. As it is now delivered more effectively, pupils are making improved progress in many subjects. The curriculum also promotes personal development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness well.
- Learning in the classroom is supported through a wide range of enrichment activities. Pupils have a clear understanding of cultures that are different from their own, and leaders and staff openly promote diversity and equality of opportunity. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Additional funding is used effectively. The pupil premium now funds a range of targeted activities that are helping disadvantaged pupils make improved progress. Additional resources and interventions are reducing the difference between the outcomes achieved by disadvantaged pupils and those achieved by other pupils. However, the attendance and attainment levels of disadvantaged pupils remain below those of other pupils nationally.
- The Year 7 catch-up premium has led to improved outcomes in English and mathematics for targeted pupils. Actions have led to sustained progress and, over time, a greater proportion of pupils have reached age-related expectations. Additional funding to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is now used well. Leaders have ensured that interventions and the use of resources are carefully coordinated to help this group of pupils make improved progress.

- Leaders are developing strategies to increase the levels of parental engagement and satisfaction. Staff communicate regularly with parents and invite them into school for events and to provide them with information. However, of those parents who made their views known during the inspection, less than half believe that the school responds well to concerns, and only half would recommend the school to another parent. It is evident that some parents are not aware of leaders' strategies to improve the school. This means that they are unable to fully support them.
- As a result of poor outcomes in the past, the trust took decisive action to improve the leadership of the school. It appointed the executive principal and the head of school and it has provided intensive training for leaders and the academy council.
- The school receives a wide range of effective support from the trust. This includes training and development opportunities for staff at all levels, sharing of good practice, assessment moderation and quality assurance.

Governance of the school

- Governance is provided by the board of trustees and the academy council. The board of trustees continues to offer good-quality support and challenge, and the academy council's capacity to hold leaders to close account for the school's performance has been strengthened.
- Academy councillors use the training that they have received to interrogate and obtain the better-quality information that they now have about the school. They ask challenging questions and follow up concerns. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Members of the academy council are clearer about their roles and responsibilities. They link to different areas of the school and offer appropriate support and challenge. The chair visits on a regular basis and knows the school well.
- Those responsible for governance carry out their statutory duties effectively. They ensure that resources are well managed, that additional funding is used appropriately and that safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. As this aspect of the school's work is very well led, there is a strong safeguarding culture. Staff have a thorough awareness of their responsibilities and duties.
- All staff are well trained and kept up to date about safeguarding issues. Leaders and staff have a clear understanding of the processes for reporting concerns, and use systems well. Referrals are timely, and staff use outside agencies appropriately. Leaders follow up concerns tenaciously.
- The school's single central record is compliant, and records are stored securely. Pupils are taught to stay safe in a range of situations.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching over time has not led to good outcomes for pupils. There was some ineffective practice in the past, and inconsistencies remain.
- When teaching has less impact, it is not carefully planned to help pupils make good progress from their different starting points. Staff do not have high enough expectations of the pupils or use targeted questions to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils, particularly the most able, are not consistently challenged to make rapid progress.
- Leaders have taken effective action to improve teaching, learning and assessment. New teachers and subject leaders have been appointed, and effective training has helped to improve practice. There is now some high-quality teaching in the school.
- Where teaching is most effective, staff use their excellent subject knowledge to move learning on at an appropriate pace. Resources are used well, and pupils receive effective challenge and support to deepen their knowledge.
- Teaching assistants provide high-quality support, and most teachers now tailor the work that they set to help pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make better progress than they did in the past. Some staff plan very well to meet the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Pupils enjoy positive relationships with staff and work well together. The enthusiasm and passion many staff show for their subjects is helping pupils develop a thirst for learning.
- Feedback is usually given in line with the school's policy, but leaders have identified that its impact is variable. Practice is not embedded, as staff do not consistently check that pupils are responding to the comments staff make in order to improve their work.
- Pupils are given opportunities to develop their literacy, numeracy and communication skills in a range of lessons and in tutor time. However, the overall quality of provision in tutor time is variable.
- Most staff set homework in line with the school's policy. However, it is not used consistently to consolidate learning or prepare pupils for work to come.
- Assessment is accurate, and the school gives parents clear information about how their child is progressing and what they need to do to improve. Regular contact with parents gives them opportunities to have detailed discussions with staff about their child's progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The school's inclusive and positive culture promotes pupils' well-being.

- Pupils are given opportunities to develop their self-confidence and self-awareness, and they are becoming more successful learners. Most pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. This is particularly evident in Years 7 and 8.
- Pupils wear their uniform with pride and they are willing to take on responsibilities for the benefit of the school. For example, the head boy and head girl and prefects perform duties during social time. Many pupils conscientiously support events that take place in the school.
- Leaders and staff promote pupils' physical and emotional well-being effectively. Pupils are happy to talk to staff should any issues arise. Outside support is used appropriately when required.
- Pupils are confident that staff will deal quickly and effectively with any incidents of bullying should they happen. Staff give clear messages about bullying, and the anti-bullying committee, which includes pupils and staff, has helped to raise awareness of the impact of bullying. Pupils said, and records indicate, that bullying is declining.
- Pupils are taught to stay safe when using the internet, and they learn how to stay safe in a range of situations. For example, they are taught about how to protect themselves from the dangers of grooming, gang culture and radicalisation. They also learn about healthy relationships, the possible consequences of sexting and the impact of drugs and alcohol abuse.
- There are clear procedures in place to promote pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare when they attend alternative, off-site provision. Frequent contact and regular visits help to safeguard the few pupils who receive their education outside of school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Over time, exclusions and absence rates have been higher than the national averages, and too many pupils do not arrive at school on time. Leaders are aware that further action is required to improve behaviour, attendance and punctuality.
- The relatively new rewards and sanctions system is having a positive impact, and pupils reported that the school is now a calmer place. Staff have been trained to manage pupils' behaviour more effectively and they help to de-escalate situations. As a result, instances of inappropriate behaviour and the use of sanctions are declining. However, the system is not fully embedded, and some staff and pupils do not have high enough expectation of pupils' conduct.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons, and behaviour has improved since the last monitoring inspection. However, at times, some pupils do not concentrate fully on their studies and occasionally the learning of others is disturbed.
- Pupils usually conduct themselves well during social time. There is a high staff presence around the school site so they can deal quickly with any issues should they arise.
- The 'support and sanction' room is providing an effective means to help individual pupils improve their behaviour and successfully integrate into the school. There have been marked improvements in the conduct of some pupils who have found it more

difficult to manage their own behaviour. However, current exclusion figures are above last year's national average.

- Absence and persistent absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, have been above the national average since the academy formed. As leaders have correctly identified this as a key area that needs to improve further, they are working closely with outside agencies, families and pupils to reduce absence. Some pupils have been helped to considerably reduce their absence rates, and others continue to have excellent attendance.
- Leaders have also identified improving punctuality as an area that must improve. A significant minority of pupils are still late too often.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Year 11 pupils made very slow progress in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, in 2016 and 2017. However, current pupils in every year group are making much improved progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils made slow progress in the past. Consequently, their levels of attainment were well below those of other pupils. As a result of stronger teaching and better use of pupil premium funding, this group of pupils is making faster progress in a wide range of subjects. In most year groups, the progress of disadvantaged pupils matches or surpasses the improved progress of others in the school. Despite this, leaders are aware that more needs to be done to further reduce the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally.
- In 2016 and 2017, the most able pupils in Year 11 did not make fast enough progress to attain well. As a result of poor teaching in the past, some gaps remain in older pupils' knowledge and skills, but leaders are ensuring that these are being addressed. Targeted activities and increased challenge in lessons are helping the most able pupils to make improved progress in every year group. However, not enough high prior-attaining pupils are making the rapid progress that is required to allow them to achieve at the highest levels.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making much improved progress in almost every year group. In the past, this group of pupils made slow progress from their starting points. However, improved teaching, effective support and strong leadership of this area of the school's work have led to marked improvements in the outcomes for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Pupils in key stage 3, particularly in Years 7 and 8, are making good progress. Pupils in key stage 4, particularly those in Year 10, are making better progress than previous cohorts.
- Pupils are making faster progress in many subjects in both key stages. Progress has improved in English, mathematics, science, humanities and modern foreign languages. Although inconsistencies remain, pupils are making stronger progress in art, photography, religious education, information communication technology, physical education, food technology and English than in other subject areas.

- As a result of effective careers education, a greater proportion of Year 11 pupils move onto further education, employment or training than the national average. A very large majority of the current Year 11 have appropriate destinations in place.

School details

Unique reference number	142015
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10048364

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	793
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Jon Rouse
Executive Principal	Julie Yarwood
Telephone number	01782 742901
Website	www.wolstantonhigh.org.uk
Email address	office@wolstanton.shaw-education.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Wolstanton High Academy is an average-sized secondary school. It became part of the Shaw Education Trust in September 2015. Governance is provided by the trust and the academy council.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language are below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including those who have an education, health and care plan, is broadly average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is average.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for key stage 4 pupils' attainment and progress.

- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Stoke-on-Trent College and Newcastle-under-Lyme College on a part-time basis. A few pupils attend CEDARS and Merit full time.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made short visits to a range of lessons on both days of the inspection. Some of these were with school leaders.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally, and observed behaviour in lessons and during social time. Nineteen responses to the pupils' questionnaire were considered.
- Meetings were held with the executive principal, the head of school and other leaders and staff. The lead inspector considered 37 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive, a trustee and two directors of the trust. He also met with four members of the academy council, including the chair and the vice-chair.
- The lead inspector met with a parent and analysed 48 responses and 27 free-text comments on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. The school's feedback from recent parental questionnaires was also reviewed.
- Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan and information about pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. Documents relating to safeguarding were checked, and inspectors looked at published information on the school's website.

Inspection team

Simon Mosley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Graeme Rudland	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Badyal	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Henshaw	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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