

Inspection of Washington Academy

Spout Lane, Washington, Tyne and Wear, NE37 2AA

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 June 2021

Overall effectiveness Requires Improvement

The quality of education	Requires Improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires Improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Behaviour is improving at this school because leaders and teachers have raised their expectations of pupils. Leaders recognise that there is more to do to ensure that pupils comply fully with school policies and procedures. Now, in most lessons, pupils concentrate and follow teachers' instructions. Teachers challenge pupils when they do not. Most pupils spoken with say that they are not worried about bullying. They feel safe at school.

Quality of education requires improvement because, in some subjects, pupils cannot remember what they have learned well enough. For those pupils whose reading is below expectations for their age, the lack of phonics teaching means they cannot catch up quickly. Leaders have clear plans, which are underway, to support these pupils to catch up. Leaders have ensured that curriculum planning is happening and is beginning to be sequenced and ambitious for all pupils. Recent changes to assessment to check pupils' gaps in learning have not had time to take full effect.

Leaders have implemented a strong programme of personal development for pupils. Pupils really enjoy opportunities such as being 'digital leaders' and 'sport leaders'. Pupils are keen to take on these roles and proudly wear a different uniform to other pupils. Younger pupils look forward to becoming 'literacy leaders' and 'numeracy leaders' in Years 10 and 11. Leaders ensure that preparing for the future and looking into different careers is a priority.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The quality of education that pupils receive is improving. Leaders know that there is more to do and are held to account effectively by governors. Consequently, there is clarity among leaders at all levels about how the school needs to improve. For example, senior leaders have prioritised training for subject leaders. This is beginning to have an impact. Subject leaders have clear plans for the important knowledge that they want all pupils to remember. This includes planning for those pupils in the additionally resourced provision. Teachers understand what they want pupils to learn. However, in some subjects, pupils cannot always recall with confidence what they have learned. This is because strategies such as 'retrieval' tasks at the beginning of lessons have only recently been introduced. More time is needed to see the full impact of these strategies. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is variable. In English, pupils with SEND are well supported to access the same curriculum as other pupils through the use of sentence starters. This support is not consistent in all subjects.

Pupils who struggle with reading do not get the right help and support. This is because teachers lack the expertise to teach phonics. There is not a clear system of phonics teaching in place for teachers to follow. Leaders know this. The recently appointed special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo) has

begun to implement a plan to improve the teaching of phonics so that pupils can catch up quickly.

Leaders have put in place new routines for moving between lessons. This is because of COVID-19 (coronavirus). Pupils' movement between lessons is orderly. Some pupils, however, do not follow school routines well enough. For example, attitudes to uniform are variable. This is not always picked up by teachers and leaders. A small minority of pupils do not behave respectfully to visitors and peers. 'Restorative justice conversations' help pupils understand how to behave respectfully in school but are not always as successful as they could be in changing pupils' attitudes.

Pupils told inspectors that behaviour is getting better in lessons. Inspectors agree, but there is further to go with this. During the inspection and in school records of behaviour, it is clear that behaviour requires further work. Recent strategies to tackle persistent absence are leading to improvements but leaders know there is more to do.

Bullying records show that bullying is rare. Leaders' focus on this area means that most pupils have a good understanding of bullying. Pupils are confident that adults will take action when bullying is reported to them. A large majority of parents who responded to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire have a positive view of how leaders tackle bullying.

Plans to develop pupils' respect for others are well embedded across the curriculum. Assemblies are focused on topical issues such as Pride Month. The personal, social, health, citizenship and economic (PSHCE) education programme is based on the concept of kindness and acceptance of others. Pupils have a range of after-school clubs available to them and many pupils attend this provision. This helps pupils develop skills of independence and resilience. These have been able to continue despite COVID-19. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain by being given chances to talk about topical issues on ethics, for example around vaccines and computing. There is a strong careers programme in place to support pupils in making their future choices.

Teachers really value the opportunities which leaders provide to work together in departments and with other schools in the trust. This is having an impact for pupils. For example, recent changes in assessment in mathematics allow teachers to make precise plans based on gaps in pupils' knowledge. Leaders are considerate of staff workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have clear systems in place to keep children safe. They keep detailed records and provide regular training updates to staff. Leaders carry out thorough checks when recruiting staff to the school. Senior leaders receive regular and systematic safeguarding updates from the safeguarding lead.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe. They feel confident about reporting concerns to adults in the school. Leaders have appointed a head of diversity and this is helping to create a more inclusive environment. Staff are aware of their responsibilities in helping to keep children safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers lack the expertise to support pupils who struggle with their reading. This means that these pupils do not enjoy reading and do not catch up with their peers to become confident, fluent readers. Leaders should help the weakest readers by implementing a clear system of phonics teaching. They should also train staff to deliver this and embed a culture of reading more widely across the school.
- In some subjects pupils cannot recall what they have learned well enough. Some pupils also lack confidence in using important subject vocabulary. This means that pupils' progress through the planned curriculum is slower than it should be in some subject areas. Leaders should ensure that there are clear end points with precise information about what pupils should know and remember. This should include subject-specific vocabulary.
- Some pupils do not have a positive, motivated attitude in lessons and around school. This is preventing them from being successful in their learning. Some pupils do not take part fully in school life. Leaders should refine and embed policies to ensure that all pupils develop positive attitudes towards school.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school [here](#).

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.

School details

Unique reference number	144937
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10184600
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	644
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Paul Woodmancy
Headteacher	Susan Hamilton
Website	http://www.washingtonacademy.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	3 March 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Washington Academy has an additionally resourced provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. There are 20 pupils attending this provision.
- A small number of pupils attend off-site alternative provision at The Beacon of Light School and Evolve Sports Academy.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- During the inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher; the deputy headteacher; senior leaders with responsibility for behaviour, attendance, safeguarding, and teaching and learning; the SENDCo; and subject leaders. Inspectors also met with representatives from the local academy board, including

the chair of the local academy board, and trustees from the Consilium Academies Trust. Inspectors also met with the chief executive officer, the deputy chief executive officer, the director of education and the education adviser from the trust.

- Inspectors met with a range of staff, including teachers and support staff, during the inspection and considered the responses to Ofsted’s questionnaire for staff. Inspectors also took note of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses.
- To check leaders’ management of safeguarding, inspectors looked at the single central record, met the designated leader for safeguarding, considered the school’s approach to the safer recruitment of staff and looked at a sample of safeguarding records. Inspectors also spoke with governors, trustees, staff and pupils to check their views on safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders for the additionally resourced provision and listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, English, science and humanities. Inspectors met with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils and teachers, and looked at pupils’ work.

Inspection team

Matthew Vellensworth, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Michael Reeves	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Julian Appleyard	Ofsted Inspector
Barry Found	Ofsted Inspector

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