

Inspection of Washington Academy

Spout Lane, Washington, Tyne and Wear NE37 2AA

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 March 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Victoria Carter. This school is part of Consilium Academies, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Michael McCarthy, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Martin Fleetwood.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils are happy and feel safe at this inclusive school. Bullying rarely happens and is dealt with swiftly should it occur. Pupils have contributed to the development of the 'Washington Way' values, which has significantly improved the culture. Pupils buy into these values and most are positive about their learning. Pupils behave well in lessons and they are courteous and polite to visitors.

Some pupils do not make enough progress through the curriculum. This has resulted in poor outcomes at key stage 4. Pupils have not always been taught consistently well. Recent changes have improved the impact of teaching and current pupils' progress is quickly improving.

Pupils take part in various clubs and activities that broaden their interests. For example, they take part in climate club, classics and cheerleading. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported by well-trained staff. They are fully included in all aspects of school life. For example, pupils with SEND play an active part in the 'Sports Leaders' programme. They act as role models to younger pupils.

Pupils are taught about local risks and dangers. They know about dangers such as online grooming and how to keep themselves safe.

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

The school provides a curriculum that prepares pupils well for their next steps in education, employment or training. The school has reflected on recent examination results and has made appropriate changes to the curriculum to ensure that pupils are better prepared for these assessments. Leaders are now using research-based approaches to curriculum design. Leaders are continuing to make refinements to the curriculum where there are still some weaknesses. Pupils with SEND are well supported both in specialist provision and in mainstream lessons.

The school has recently introduced a new 'SOLAR' teaching model to improve consistency of teaching. Teachers and pupils reflect that this has improved the quality of lessons. The school recognises that there is still some inconsistency in teaching. In some lessons, teaching does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge. Some lessons do not encourage pupils to develop independent learning skills. As a result, some pupils do not develop deeper levels of understanding. This hinders the progress that some pupils make.

The school has prioritised reading. Pupils who are weak at reading are supported effectively through phonics and comprehension programmes. Pupils benefit from new reading and literacy online interventions which are designed to improve reading. Pupils are encouraged to read at the start of lessons and listen to teachers read.

Pupils' outcomes at key stage 4 have been poor. Recent changes to the curriculum are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils now demonstrate that they are making more progress. The school recognises that outcomes at key stage 4 need to improve significantly.

Most pupils behave sensibly in lessons and as they move around the school. They have strong relationships with their teachers. Pupils feel safe and have trusted adults they can approach with problems. New behavioural standards are understood by pupils and used consistently by staff. Most pupils attend school regularly. Some pupils are persistently absent though and miss too many lessons. The school is working with the local community to improve this.

Pupils receive a thorough programme of personal development. For example, they are taught about healthy relationships, fundamental British values, protected characteristics and consent. Pupils have opportunities to develop their leadership through positions such as sports, literacy and rewards leaders. Pupils contribute their views and bring about change via the school council. Pupils on the school council have recently been able to influence school canteen food choices and improve facilities at the school. The school provides thorough career guidance and meaningful encounters with employers. For example, pupils in Year 7 attend a careers fair and are coached to ask pertinent questions to adults.

The school and trust have new leadership which has been established in the last year. New leaders have quickly and accurately identified shortcomings of the school. They have moved very swiftly to bring about change. For example, leaders have introduced new accountability processes for teachers and leaders which focus on analysis of pupil outcomes. This is improving the progress that pupils make. Improved progress is now evident in the work that pupils produce.

Staff reflect that there is a new supportive team culture where solutions can be found to problems. New processes have helped to ensure that governors and trustees now have an accurate understanding of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Outcomes of external examinations have been poor over time. However, recent improvements to the curriculum and the quality of curriculum implementation are now having a positive effect on pupils' learning and achievement. The school should ensure that improvements in the quality of education pupils receive are reflected in the pupil outcomes at key stage 4, ensuring that pupils are ready for their next steps in education, employment or training.

- Some teaching does not provide opportunities to apply knowledge, promote independent learning and develop a deep level of understanding. As a result, some pupils do not make the progress that they are capable of. The school should ensure that teaching provides these opportunities and develops a deeper understanding of concepts and ideas that allow all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or with high prior attainment, to make the progress they are capable of.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. As a result, these pupils miss out on too much of the school's academic and wider offer. Although various support measures have been embedded to improve attendance, relationships with the community need to be strengthened to improve attendance further.
- The recent introduction of accountability processes and analysis of pupil outcomes are having impact but are relatively new. The school and trust should continue to embed new systems of accountability and ensure that there is detailed understanding of the progress that pupils make at all levels of leadership.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

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| Unique reference number | 144937 |
| Local authority | Sunderland |
| Inspection number | 10297446 |
| 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 | 658 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Martin Fleetwood |
| Chief Executive Officer | Michael McCarthy |
| Headteacher | Victoria Carter |
| Website | www.washingtonacademy.co.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 23 and 24 June 2021, under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Washington Academy became an academy in September 2017.
- The school is one of nine schools in the Consilium Academies trust.
- The school has specially resourced provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. In total, 28 pupils attend this provision. The school also has specialist provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Five pupils attend this provision.
- The school uses three unregistered and eight registered alternative providers of education.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other leaders, staff and pupils. They met with governors and trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: science, English, physical education, history, and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors visited the specialist provision for pupils with SEND. They observed pupils at different times of the day and spoke with leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors visited lessons and considered how the needs of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are addressed. They observed pupils at various times of the school day.
- Inspectors spoke to representatives of the alternative provisions used by the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; considered the views of parents and carers; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Chris Carr, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Toni Spoors | Ofsted Inspector |
| Katherine Snowdon | Ofsted Inspector |
| Chris Fletcher | Ofsted Inspector |

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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