

Inspection of The Whitehaven Academy

Cleator Moor Road, Whitehaven, Cumbria CA28 8TY

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 May 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are kind and considerate towards each other. They respond well to the high expectations that leaders have of their behaviour and conduct. Pupils, including the students in the sixth form, make a strong contribution to the calm and respectful atmosphere that exists in the school.

Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), respond well to the high aspirations that leaders have of their achievement. Students in the sixth form benefit from the courses available to them and the close links that leaders have made with the partner sixth form centre.

Pupils enjoy taking part in clubs and societies such as strategy board gaming, debating club and a wide range of sporting activities.

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, enjoy the opportunities that they have to take on positions of responsibility. These include roles such as school prefects, mental health ambassadors and reading buddies. They also enjoy developing their leadership skills through participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the John Muir Award. Such activities help pupils to become confident, resilient and independent young people.

Leaders deal effectively with any incidents of bullying that may occur. Pupils said that they feel safe and happy. This is because there are adults that they can speak to if they have any concerns or worries.

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

Leaders, including those at the trust, have placed The Whitehaven Academy at the heart of the local community. Historically, outcomes at the school have not been strong. However, leaders have taken the necessary steps so that most pupils now achieve well.

Leaders have established an ambitious suite of subject curriculums. They have thought in detail about the key information that pupils should know and they have made powerful links to the world of work. Most pupils, including those in the sixth form, are well prepared for the next phase of their education. At key stage 4, leaders have increased the number of pupils that follow the English baccalaureate suite of subjects.

Most teachers use their strong subject knowledge effectively to make regular checks on what pupils know and remember. This helps them to identify any gaps or misconceptions that pupils have about their learning. Most teachers use this information well to design activities that help pupils to build their learning over time.

In a small number of subjects, some of the activities that some teachers design do not help pupils to develop the depth of knowledge that they should. When this happens, these pupils do not build a sufficient understanding of key concepts. As a result, they are not well prepared for the next stage of learning.

Leaders have prioritised reading. They accurately identify the needs of less-confident readers as soon as they join the school. Leaders use this information effectively to provide the support that these pupils need so that they quickly become confident, fluent readers. A small number of pupils at the very early stages of learning to read receive the help that they need to develop their phonic knowledge.

Leaders ensure that pupils read a broad range of fiction texts. Pupils' confident recall of the key themes from these books supports their understanding of the wider world. They benefit from reading a range of academic texts that are well matched to the subjects that they study.

Leaders identify the additional needs of pupils effectively, including those with SEND. Most staff use this information well so that these pupils learn confidently alongside their peers.

Teachers deal effectively with any incidents of low-level disruption that may occur. This means that most pupils can learn well and without interruption. Pupils are punctual to lessons and most pupils attend regularly. Leaders provide effective support for a small number of pupils who need help to improve their behaviour and attendance.

Leaders ensure that most pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils know how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. They learn to value the differences that exist between people and this is demonstrated in their respectful conduct towards others. Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a range of experiences that help them to learn about the world of work. As a result, most pupils are aspirational and well prepared for future success in education, employment or training.

The local advisory board holds leaders to account effectively for the quality of education at the school. Staff value the support that they receive for their well-being. They are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong safeguarding culture at the school. They make the necessary checks on staff and ensure that they receive the training that they need to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Leaders respond effectively to any concerns that they have about pupils to ensure that they are safe. This includes working with other agencies when necessary.

Leaders ensure that pupils know about the risks that exist in society. Pupils know how to stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, some of the activities that some teachers design do not help pupils to develop a sufficient depth of understanding. Leaders should ensure that teachers receive the support that they need to further embed the curriculums in these subjects so that all pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their learning.

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](#)' 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	146634
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10267826
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	655
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	15
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	George Beveridge
Headteacher	Nigel Youngman
Website	www.whitehavenacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Whitehaven Academy converted to become an academy school in January 2014. When its predecessor school, The Whitehaven Academy, was last inspected by Ofsted in October 2016, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- The Whitehaven Academy became part of the Cumbria Education Trust in December 2018.
- Leaders make use of one registered alternative provider and one unregistered alternative provider for a small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, science, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. The inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors held meetings with trust leaders including the chair of the trust board, the chief executive officer, members of the local advisory board including the chair and the vice chair, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss reading, SEND, the curriculum, pupils' behaviour and attendance and the provision for pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They took account of the responses from staff and pupils to Ofsted's online surveys and gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils. They checked a sample of leaders' safeguarding records and reviewed the recruitment checks made on staff.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school life and their views of behaviour and bullying. The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke to staff about their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Andy Cunningham, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jackie Cahalin	Ofsted Inspector
Scott Maclean	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Chamings	Ofsted Inspector

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