

Workington Academy

Address: Stainburn Road, Stainburn, Workington, Cumbria, CA14 4EB

Unique reference number (URN): 141499

Inspection report: 15 September 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders apply the same rigour to attendance and behaviour as they do in other areas of the school's provision. As part of their inclusive approach, leaders identify the specific barriers to attendance and behaviour that some pupils face. Leaders take a robust and, at times, creative approach to reducing these barriers for pupils. Consequently, pupils' attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is usually well above the national average. However, more pupils have recently joined the school with mental ill health. Although their attendance is below the national average, it is improving with the support provided by leaders.

Pupils embody leaders' high expectations for behaviour. Leaders have crafted a curriculum that teaches pupils the importance of positive behaviour choices. As a result, the school is a calm and respectful place. In lessons, pupils apply themselves well to their learning.

Pupils recognise incidents of bullying or unkind behaviour and are comfortable reporting these to staff or addressing them themselves maturely. Consequently, staff deal with these incidents swiftly. Leaders support pupils who find managing their behaviour challenging. While maintaining high expectations, leaders provide pupils with mentoring and personalised plans, recognising and rewarding improvement. Most of these pupils, therefore, build the essential skills to self-regulate. The notable impact of leaders' approach to attendance and behaviour has led them to support other schools locally and nationally.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders have shaped a highly effective approach to inclusion, informed by their understanding of the challenges faced by the school community. Robust systems identify and support pupils who face barriers to learning or wellbeing. Leaders' astute analysis of data identifies challenges rapidly. These include disadvantage, special educational needs and/or disabilities, mental ill health and low reading ages, which are particularly prevalent locally.

Regardless of the barriers pupils face, leaders secure appropriate support, including from charities and professionals. When local provision is not appropriate, leaders create bespoke approaches. They share these approaches with other schools and institutions. Leaders are advocates for inclusion, collaborating with others on a programme to support young people across the region.

Leaders use pupil premium funding astutely. Additional tuition and financial support reduce barriers to clubs and trips for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders adapt trips and resources so that pupils with physical disabilities can participate equally.

Leaders' deep understanding of pupils' needs helps them put highly effective support in place. Pupils in alternative provision and those known to social care progress towards their targets. Leaders collaborate with colleagues and the local authority's virtual school to

support this. Pupils in the resourced provision access lessons and social times with their peers when appropriate. They also receive specialist support that builds their independence.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders and those responsible for governance share a clear and unified vision for the school, rooted in pride in the local community. They want pupils to achieve well and broaden their ambitions. Leaders pursue this vision through a sharp approach to continuous improvement. Trustees and governors use their knowledge to challenge leaders effectively while maintaining a focus on pupils' best interests. They regularly visit the school, speaking to staff and pupils. There are clear channels of communication between leaders, governors and trustees. This helps leaders provide additional support when required.

Leaders know the school and its pupils very well. This helps them identify priorities for improvement, including pupils' attainment in national assessments. They have the knowledge and expertise to address these priorities. Their approach to inclusion and personal development, which are both embedded in the culture of the school, reflects this. Leaders also support other schools locally and nationally while continuing to learn from others.

Staff share leaders' vision for the school and local community. They are proud to work at the school and feel valued. Trustees, governors and leaders care deeply about staff's workload and wellbeing. Leaders ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to carry out their roles effectively. Through a carefully planned professional development programme, staff continue to strengthen their practice. As a result, they become skilled practitioners, particularly in inclusion and safeguarding.

Parents and carers recognise the rapid improvements made at the school. The vast majority value the support their child receives and appreciate their child's positive experience at school.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders understand the long-standing challenges that pupils and the local community face. They have embedded a personal development programme that teaches pupils the compulsory information they need while helping them overcome local challenges and thrive in modern Britain. Personal development is woven through school life. Leaders and staff broaden pupils' aspirations and prepare them extremely well for their future.

Leaders and pupils make the 'not in our school' pledge that helps to create a safe and inclusive environment. This pledge emphasises respect for individual differences, including ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation. Leaders teach pupils about important aspects of British life through varied experiences. Pupils learn about democracy by holding their own votes. Visits to other countries and places of worship broaden their cultural awareness. These experiences help pupils understand and apply the values that leaders promote.

Leaders analyse safeguarding reports, pupils' views and staff feedback to quickly identify pupils who need additional help. They tailor support to address gaps in pupils' knowledge, understanding and experiences. Strategies include one-to-one tutoring and sessions with

the life coach. Leaders also design individual support when needed, finding creative ways to reduce the complex barriers some pupils face.

Leaders provide an extensive range of enrichment experiences. Pupils explore journalism by writing for the school newspaper or presenting in the radio club. They develop leadership skills through mentoring and the school council, and creativity through 3D printing and choir. These opportunities help pupils discover new interests and shape their future aspirations.

Leaders provide effective careers guidance. Careers fairs, work experience and visits to local employers and universities broaden pupils' ambitions. From Year 7, informed guidance helps pupils make ambitious choices. Pupils move on to appropriate and highly regarded destinations. This demonstrates how the personal development programme helps pupils understand the full range of futures open to them.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Over recent years, the school has undergone rapid improvement. Pupils and students in recent examination years did not experience the curriculum and teaching now in place. That said, pupils typically make progress from their starting points and generally attain results in national assessments that are in line with those of their peers nationally. This attainment allows pupils and students to go on to appropriate and ambitious future destinations.

Pupils currently at the school build an increasingly secure body of knowledge as they move through the years. They produce high-quality work, with any gaps in their knowledge of reading, writing and number appropriately addressed. This is also true of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who are known to social care.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make particularly positive progress from their starting points. Despite the complex challenges that these pupils face, they attain the qualifications and skills needed to access appropriate and ambitious future destinations.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders maintain an unwavering focus on the curriculum and teaching. Their close analysis identifies highly effective practice and areas that need further development. This informs teachers' professional learning. Teachers consistently use appropriate techniques and practices. They provide carefully considered explanations and set appropriate learning activities so that pupils can apply new knowledge. Teachers sequence lessons so that pupils gradually build their knowledge and understand increasingly complex ideas. They regularly check pupils' progress through the curriculum and usually address identified gaps in knowledge. However, there is variability in the way in which teachers use the information from these checks in some subjects and year groups.

Teachers know their pupils well, including the barriers some pupils face. Teachers have the knowledge and skills to reduce these barriers and identify others. Through adapted

resources, additional checks on understanding and, when appropriate, extra tuition, teachers ensure that pupils who face challenges with their learning or wellbeing receive effective support. Teachers and staff in the resourced provision are well trained to help pupils who access this provision progress through the curriculum.

Leaders know that many pupils have gaps in their essential knowledge of reading, writing and number. Pupils receive support in lessons, form time and, when appropriate, through additional help to close these gaps.

Post-16 provision

Expected standard 

In line with leaders' vision for the school, the post-16 provision offers students appropriate and ambitious qualifications. Teachers design lessons that help students build their knowledge of complex ideas over time. They give students detailed feedback to address gaps or misunderstandings. Students, including those who face challenges in their lives, generally make appropriate progress from their starting points. Recent attainment in national assessments reflects students' historical experience of a less effective curriculum and teaching when they were in the secondary school. The school has since seen rapid improvement, yet some gaps in knowledge for students in the sixth form persist. Consequently, students' attainment in A levels, though improving, is below the national average. That said, students' attainment in vocational courses is well above the national average over time.

Leaders know that qualifications alone will not enable students to thrive in the wider world. Therefore, they provide a complementary and carefully planned programme of enrichment and careers advice, tailored to individual needs. Students complete work experience, support pupils with reading and build independence by organising events such as the prom. Leaders raise students' aspirations by taking them to universities outside the local region. As a result, students are well prepared for their chosen next stage.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils and students are proud to belong to this school community. Despite the challenges that many pupils face, the culture of support helps the school to be a place of safety and security. Consequently, pupils regularly attend school. Pupils are kind and respectful to one another. They are considerate of others and help those who face difficulties to feel at ease. Pupils form meaningful friendships and welcome new people to the school warmly. On the rare occasion when incidents of unkind behaviour or bullying occur, pupils know that staff will address these quickly. Pupils understand that the staff care deeply about them. There is someone to talk to if they need help.

Pupils feel heard. Leaders regularly encourage them to give their views about the school and the wider world. In turn, pupils and leaders collaborate to bring improvements to the school. Pupils' voices and best interests are at the heart of leaders' decisions. This open communication helps pupils, including those who face barriers to learning or wellbeing, quickly get the support they need. They build trusting relationships with staff, who provide effective help so that pupils can access and benefit from the school's full provision. This

includes enrichment activities that enable pupils to perform in the local community, represent the school in competitions and develop navigational skills by completing The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. This collaborative approach between pupils and staff forms a supportive and warm culture in which pupils refer to the school as a 'family' and 'team'.

In lessons, pupils and students engage well with their learning. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, receive the support they need to progress through the curriculum. Consequently, pupils and students generally attain examination grades that are broadly in line with those of their peers nationally. Most pupils move on to appropriate courses after Year 11, while students in the sixth form progress to ambitious apprenticeships and university courses.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to embed high-quality teaching practices across all subjects and year groups so that pupils' and students' outcomes in national assessments improve.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Cumbria Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Lorraine Hughes, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by George Beveridge.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This inspection took place on 15 and 16 September 2026.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with school leaders, trust leaders, trustees and members of the local advisory board. Inspectors also spoke to a number of pupils, staff and parents.

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.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

At the time of the inspection, there were 1,181 pupils on roll at the school.

The school includes provision for 6 pupils with physical medical needs or specific learning difficulties in a specially resourced provision.

The school currently makes use of 5 alternative provisions, including 2 that are unregistered.

The school also, under the same registration, runs a sixth form as part of a joint venture with another local school in the same trust. This sixth form is called West Coast Sixth form and is based across Workington Academy and Whitehaven Academy, Cleator Moor Road, Whitehaven, Cumbria CA28 8TY.

Executive Headteacher: Mark Bedford

Lead inspector:

Tom Theobald, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Linda Griffiths, Ofsted Inspector

Phil Smith, Ofsted Inspector

Scott Maclean, Ofsted Inspector

Andy Burton, Ofsted Inspector

Gerard Preston, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

 The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 15 September 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,234

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,063

School capacity

1,360

Above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

30.71%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 30.4%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

5.27%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.53%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

12.64%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

National average: 14.0%

Location deprivation

Well below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English indices of deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	33.5%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	31.9%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	40.9%	45.3%	Close to average

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	40.5	46.1	Below
2023/24 (final)	39.9	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	43.1	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.19	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	0.15	-0.03	Close to average
2021/22 (final)	-0.17	-0.03	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	13.7%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	27.8%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	21.2%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	31.2	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	34.6	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	31.3	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.36	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.55	-0.57	Close to average
2021/22 (final)	-0.56	-0.55	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	13.7%	53.1%	-39.4 pp
2023/24 (final)	27.8%	53.1%	-25.4 pp
2022/23 (final)	21.2%	52.4%	-31.3 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	31.2	50.4	-19.2
2023/24 (final)	34.6	50.0	-15.4
2022/23 (final)	31.3	50.3	-19.0

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.36	0.16	-0.53
2022/23 (final)	-0.55	0.17	-0.71
2021/22 (final)	-0.56	0.15	-0.72

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	85%	92%	Below
2022 leavers (revised)	90%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	91%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	29.05	35.00	Below
2023/24 (final)	28.08	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	31.15	34.16	Close to average

A-level value added

A score showing students’ progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	-0.3	0.0	Below
2023/24 (revised)	-0.1	0.0	Close to average

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	7.3%	8.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	7.1%	8.9%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	7.7%	9.0%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	19.7%	23.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	20.4%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	26.2%	26.5%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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