

Ullswater Community College

Wetheriggs Lane, Penrith, Cumbria CA11 8NG

Inspection dates

21–22 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not resolved some of the weaknesses identified in previous inspections. Consequently, the quality of education has declined.
- Disadvantaged pupils have failed to make strong progress. In the past, they have achieved far less than they should across the curriculum. This is now starting to improve.
- Although attendance is starting to rise, it continues to be below the national average, including for disadvantaged pupils. Some pupils are often late for school.
- Leaders and governors do not ensure that Year 7 catch-up funding improves pupils' progress.
- The quality of pupils' written work varies across the curriculum.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Following recent training, some teachers are now more effective at challenging pupils in their work.
- Leaders do not ensure that the curriculum in key stage 3 gives pupils enough opportunities to study in depth and gain the subject knowledge required to start key stage 4. In key stage 3, teachers do not develop pupils' reading and mathematical skills well enough.
- While most pupils make the progress of which they are capable across the curriculum, their progress is improving more in key stages 4 and 5 than it is in key stage 3. Leaders' monitoring of teaching does not make it clear to teachers how to improve pupils' progress.

The school has the following strengths

- This is a caring and supportive school. Pupils are well cared for, behave well, feel safe and enjoy being at this school. Pupils relish the opportunity to take part in a huge range of extra-curricular clubs.
- Sixth-form provision is a strength of the school. Leadership is good, the curriculum is well planned and students are taught effectively and make good progress.
- Leaders and governors have successfully improved the curriculum at key stage 4.
- Staff give disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) excellent pastoral care and support.
- Governors make sure that pupils are safe in the school, for instance by improving site security.
- Parents and carers are highly supportive of the work of the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and pupils' progress by:
 - making sure that all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - checking that pupils' written work is of the same standard across all subjects
 - ensuring that leaders' monitoring of teaching makes it clear to teachers how to improve pupils' progress.
- Make sure that pupils miss as little learning time as possible by improving:
 - pupils' punctuality at the start of the day
 - attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and students in the sixth form.
- Enhancing the support for disadvantaged pupils so these pupils make the best possible progress and fulfil their academic potential.
- Increase the effectiveness of the key stage 3 curriculum so that it better meets the needs, interests and aspirations of all pupils, but particularly the least able, by:
 - giving more attention to improving pupils' reading, problem-solving and numeracy skills
 - deepening pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding to enable them to be more successful in academic and vocational courses when they transfer to key stage 4
 - making sure the Year 7 catch-up funding helps pupils to catch up by the end of the year.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher has united the senior team and other leaders to work together to sort out the weaknesses identified at the school in previous inspections. After a slow start, some areas have improved, such as making sure that pupils are safe on the school site and improving the pastoral support given to disadvantaged pupils. The focus is now shifting to improving disadvantaged pupils' academic achievements.
- Staff morale is high. Staff are highly supportive of the senior team and are committed to improving the school further.
- Leaders have created an ethos where pupils feel happy and included in this caring and supportive school. Bullying is extremely rare. Leaders have stopped pupils calling others unkind names, including using the term 'gay' in a derogatory way.
- Since September, the learning of disadvantaged pupils has benefited from leaders' intensive support and monitoring. Leaders spend the pupil premium effectively to identify pupils' individual barriers to learning and to tailor a bespoke package of individual care and support. Although improvements are emerging, the funding is not improving the attendance and academic performance of a few disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders monitor teaching and learning, and there are emerging pockets of good practice, such as in the teaching of languages. However, leaders do not fully share this successful work with other teachers.
- At times, leaders fail to make clear to teachers what it is that they need to do to improve pupils' progress. Leaders' feedback to teachers rarely mentions the achievements of disadvantaged pupils or those with special educational needs and/or disabilities in a class, even though these groups are known to do less well than others in the school.
- Leaders make certain that newly qualified teachers are well supported by colleagues in the same department and across school.
- Following a review of the key stage 4 curriculum, leaders have increased the opportunity for more pupils to be entered for the EBacc combination of subjects. Pupils in Year 9 have recently chosen their courses for key stage 4. They have been supported well through careers advice and guidance from subject teachers, tutors and outside speakers. Almost one-quarter of pupils in Year 9 have set their sights on achieving the EBacc, which is an improvement on recent years.
- Vocational learning opportunities in key stage 4 are helping pupils to learn skills, such as in construction and motor vehicle studies. For some pupils, these courses have helped to inspire them and improve their behaviour and attendance.
- Leaders have not yet implemented changes to pupils' key stage 3 curriculum, such as in mathematics. Leaders have been slow to implement the revised national curriculum in mathematics. Most pupils in key stage 3 have very few opportunities to increase their fluency and reasoning or to solve problems in mathematics. Consequently, they do not have strong enough foundations to get off to a good start in mathematics in key stage 4.

- Subject leaders are reviewing the knowledge, skills and understanding needed for pupils to be successful in their subject in the future. This work is at an early stage of development and in some subjects, such as geography, leaders are also refining assessment.
- Although leaders have introduced silent reading in form time to improve reading across the school, it is unclear if pupils are reading books that are suitably challenging for them, extending their vocabulary or introducing them to different authors and genres.
- Leaders and governors do not know enough about the support provided for the weakest readers in Year 7. It is unclear if Year 7 catch-up funding is helping pupils to catch up with their classmates by the end of the year.
- Leaders use funding for pupils with SEND to good effect to pay for extra staff and to fund the specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils who receive extra help through staff in the specially resourced provision are supported exceptionally well. Teachers and teaching assistants know who the pupils are with SEND in their class, and how to help them to learn.
- Leaders are strengthening the attention that they give to improving attendance. Some pupils arrived late for school during the inspection, including some who arrived more than an hour late. Leaders are reviewing their procedures for recording pupils' lateness and ways to improve punctuality.
- Leaders provide a very wide range of extra-curricular activities for pupils at lunchtimes, which are well attended and valued by pupils. These include sports, performing arts, agriculture, coding, creative writing and clubs at which to debate topical issues or to campaign against injustice and inequality. Leaders create many opportunities for developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities in all year groups. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- Following a review of governance in February 2018, governors have improved some aspects of their work. For instance, they have improved the way that they hold leaders to account for the improvement of the school. Governors often challenge leaders regarding the information that they provide to the governing body.
- Governors have skilfully drawn up a three-year plan to reduce a significant deficit budget. This is running according to timescale and will ensure that the school is in a much stronger financial position from 2020.
- Governors said that they are confident that pupil premium funding is making a difference to disadvantaged pupils through the mentor programme, which is slowly starting to raise pupils' aspirations. Similarly, governors know that funding for pupils with SEND is used effectively. However, they are unclear about the impact of Year 7 catch-up funding.
- Governors have records of the training that they undertake, including on the safe recruitment of staff. They check to make sure their own training is up to date.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective, because of significant improvements made by leaders and governors in response to weaknesses identified by inspectors in 2016 and 2018.
- Leaders rightly set out to improve safeguarding as their number one priority. For example, improvements made to site security and pupil and traffic movement around the site mean pupils now arrive and leave school safely and are safe around school. This view is confirmed by the very large number of parents who responded to the parents' questionnaire saying they are confident their child is safe and well cared for.
- Detailed records are maintained of safeguarding training completed by staff. Leaders provide regular top-up training so that all staff know the signs and symptoms of potential abuse and what to do if they have concerns about a pupil.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, weaker aspects in teaching have led to a decline in some pupils' progress. Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. In some subjects, teachers fail to insist that pupils present their work neatly and to the best of their ability and to complete work that has already been started. Leaders' improved attention to developing teachers' skills is turning the tide, and more pupils are benefiting from improved teaching. Teaching is now strong in several subjects, including performing arts.
- Teachers often consider the development of pupils' speaking and oracy skills through leading discussion and debate. However, the quality of pupils' written work does not consistently reflect the high standard of ideas that they express in such discussions. Teachers do not demand that pupils produce high-quality writing across the curriculum.
- Pupils' work in their books in some subjects reflects a superficial coverage of topics, where teachers have tried to cover too much in too little depth. This is particularly the case in key stage 3. For example, in mathematics, key stage 3 teachers provide very few opportunities for pupils to explain and think through their solutions or to solve problems.
- Teachers have undertaken training to make their teaching more challenging. Pockets of improvement are evident, particularly in the teaching of French. This success is not evident throughout the school. On occasions, pupils are asked to copy down unnecessary information from the board, carry out repetitive or mechanistic tasks or colour diagrams rather than doing more challenging work.
- Some teachers use assessment information carefully to check pupils' understanding and skills before introducing them to new work. They plan activities that make sure the foundations to new learning are secure before deepening pupils' learning. This was evident in physical education, French and in a critical thinking lesson for pupils in Year 10. However, this success is not secure across the curriculum.
- Most teachers have secure subject knowledge. This is used to good effect when they

explain work to pupils, ask questions or model examples of responses to help pupils to improve the quality of their work.

- French is consistently taught effectively, and pupils of all abilities are challenged, including the most able. Language teachers model the spoken language well throughout lessons, and pupils' listening and speaking skills reach a high level of development as a result.
- Pupils told inspectors that they often have very little homework set or opportunities to extend or practise their learning outside school.
- Enthusiastic teachers work hard to develop pupils' skills in extra-curricular activities. In the cheerleading club, pupils from Years 7 to 13 were seen demonstrating their skills to a high standard in a very professional performance.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils enjoy school and say there is something for everyone at Ullswater Community College. Pupils say that school is a good place to be and they would highly recommend the school to others.
- Pupils say they feel safe. They are taught how to keep themselves safe in different situations, such as when using social media. Pupils are aware of extremism and radicalisation through their consideration of terrorist attacks, such as the recent attacks in New Zealand. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme teaches pupils about the dangers of smoking, alcohol and substance misuse, and includes mental health and well-being.
- Pupils have a good understanding of cyber-bullying. They say there is very little bullying or name-calling of any kind. They are confident that action would be taken if this was reported to a teacher.
- Disadvantaged pupils have personalised support plans to help teachers to raise pupils' aspirations. These are reviewed regularly, and the views of parents and pupils are considered in this process. Support plans are detailed and informative, reflecting 'wrap-around' pastoral care for these pupils. Some support plans do not place sufficient emphasis on ways to improve academic achievement.
- Careers guidance is mainly targeted at pupils in Years 9 to 13. Pupils in Year 8 receive some careers advice and guidance through the citizenship curriculum and 'the futures festival', which introduces them to science, technology, engineering and mathematics events.
- The very small number of pupils who take part in off-site alternative provision are monitored carefully by leaders to make sure they are safe, well cared for and successful in their studies.
- Pupils are very proud of the vast range of extra-curricular clubs and activities available for them at Ullswater Community College.
- Some boys expressed concerns to inspectors about a few toilet doors not closing

properly, because locks were broken. Some of the youngest pupils were unhappy about lunchtime arrangements and told inspectors they sometimes get pushed around in queues. Leaders take seriously the concerns of pupils and are currently working with pupils to improve lunchtime arrangements and the menu choice in the dining room.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Although most pupils are proud of their uniform, some pupils are unclear about leaders' expectations of how they should dress. Pupils said that some of their peers often break the uniform rules and this is not challenged by teachers, which they find frustrating.
- Pupils do not always work to the best of their ability, especially in writing. Inspectors saw examples of scruffy writing, graffiti and doodling in pupils' planning books. Pastoral leaders do not challenge this enough, and the behaviour continues over time.
- In activities, pupils are typically engaged and interested in their learning. They listen to their teachers and quickly follow instructions. Low-level disruption, such as talking over the teacher, occurs in only a small number of classes and typically when the teacher has failed to provide interesting work for pupils.
- Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average three years ago. However, it has since declined and is now below the national average. Leaders have responded with a number of strategies, including working more closely with parents. Although attendance remains below the national average, there are signs of improvements.
- Disadvantaged pupils' attendance is below that of others in school and well below the national average for other pupils. Personalised support plans and regular meetings with leaders selected as mentors are helping to reduce absence for many of this group. Overall, attendance for disadvantaged pupils is now improving.
- Pupils arrive at lessons on time and move quickly between classes during the school day. However, some pupils regularly arrive late at the start of the day.
- Some pupils with SEND have low attendance, but this is often unavoidable due to medical needs and hospital admissions.
- After an increase in exclusions last year, the number of pupils excluded for poor behaviour has reduced back to levels seen in previous years, which is below the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils start in Year 7 with attainment that is below the national average, due to the selective grammar school system in the area. Historically, most pupils make the progress of which they are capable across a broad range of subjects.
- Pupils' attainment in English, mathematics, languages and humanities by the end of key stage 4 is broadly average.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is slowly starting to improve. In the past, it has been too low compared to other pupils nationally. Better teaching in Years 10 and 11 and a much stronger focus on improving the attainment of disadvantaged pupils are

leading to signs of improvement. Inspectors found no difference in the quality of pupils' work in books for disadvantaged pupils compared with their classmates.

- The most able pupils make the progress of which they are capable but, occasionally, this is hampered by a lack of challenge, for example in science. Following a period of instability in the leadership of science, teachers are now receiving stronger direction and teaching in science is improving quickly. In the past, some pupils have not studied the right science course to ensure that they make the best possible progress. The quality of information given to Year 9 pupils and their parents has improved, and is enabling them to make better-informed decisions about science option choices.
- Pupils in Year 10 following construction and motor vehicle studies, including many who are the least able, make excellent progress in the development of their skills. Pupils confidently apply their mathematical skills to the work-rate calculations required as part of their course.
- Pupils with SEND, including those supported through the specially resourced provision, are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. For example, pupils were highly motivated and engaged in their artwork and made good progress as a result.
- The very small number of pupils who take part in off-site alternative provision are engaging with their programmes and improving their knowledge, skills and understanding in the subjects they are able to follow.
- Pupils do not make consistently good progress in mathematics, particularly in key stage 3. Pupils' mathematical skills are not being developed well enough, because they are not given opportunity to deepen their learning of topics before teachers introduce new learning.
- In writing, pupils' progress varies, linked to the challenge that teachers give them. Some teachers do not demand that pupils produce their best work across subjects.
- Weak readers, including some who are eligible for support through Year 7 catch-up funding, read to a sixth-form student and do silent reading in form time. Pupils provide their own books to read, so leaders are unclear if these pupils are making sufficient progress in their reading to catch up with their classmates by the end of Year 7.
- A high proportion of pupils continue from the school into education, employment or training, and this is consistently above the national average.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership of the sixth form is good. The curriculum is well planned and teaching overall is effective.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths of sixth-form provision and know where further improvements are needed to make the sixth form even better. The head of sixth form is ambitious for the future development of post-16 education at Ullswater Community College.
- Students follow a variety of vocational and academic courses, which can be combined to form a study programme to meet students' needs and their future aspirations.

- Learning in vocational courses is supplemented by a good-quality work placement, which adds relevance to students' learning. This, together with strong and effective teaching, ensures that students make good progress in vocational subjects such as business studies and applied sciences. In 2018, students' progress in these courses was above the national average.
- Students following some academic courses have made good progress in the past. Teaching and assessment in the sixth form are improving. Most activities provide challenge to all learners, and teachers encourage students to develop independent learning skills that will help them in further education. As a result, progress is now good in most academic subjects.
- A very small number of students each year resit their GCSEs in English and mathematics. Most are successful in improving their grades, as they are taught by subject specialists with a good knowledge of learning and assessment.
- The retention of students on courses continues to improve. This is the combined result of making sure that students study the right course for them, and also of the careful monitoring of students who leave, to find out the reasons why they did not complete their studies. Over a three-year period, the number of students who have left before the end of their course has reduced from 30 in 2016 to two in 2018.
- More girls than boys choose to continue their post-16 education after Year 11 at the school. Following their investigations, leaders identified course availability as a key reason for this difference. Leaders plan to introduce a more substantial vocational sport qualification to better suit the needs and interests of boys to help to challenge this imbalance.
- Students particularly appreciate the advice and guidance from staff to help them to choose courses when starting in Year 12. This includes talking with subject teachers and having taster lessons to experience what sixth-form learning is like before starting the course.
- Students are provided with a vast range of enrichment opportunities which develop their personal and social skills and improve the quality of their written personal statements and university applications. Some students are successful in achieving the Duke of Edinburgh gold award, and others complete first-aid qualifications, overseas work experiences, sports leader awards and attend university summer school residentials and conferences.
- Students play a wider role in the school, and many act as support assistants to help younger pupils with their learning, for example listening to pupils read, helping those with weak numeracy skills and leading year group councils. Sixth-form students are mature and sensible, and make a positive difference to the life of the school.
- Students benefit from a range of support to keep them safe and also to improve their independent living skills in preparation for living away from home. This includes safe driving, safe use of social media, personal safety, financial management and basic cooking skills.
- Attendance in the sixth form, although improving, is below that of any other year group in school. Sixth-form leaders have improved the signing-in procedures and now check up on students' absence or lateness with a telephone call to parents.

School details

Unique reference number	112393
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10091023

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,401
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Davies
Headteacher	Nick Ellery
Telephone number	0176 821 0206
Website	www.ullswatercc.co.uk/
Email address	admin@ullswatercc.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 February 2014

Information about this school

- Ullswater Community College is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The majority of pupils are of white British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than the national average, and very few pupils are identified as speaking English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is below average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average. The number of pupils with an education, health and care plan is high. Approximately 20 pupils receive

support through an on-site, specially resourced provision.

- A very small number of pupils attend off-site alternative provision at Educla.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons in all year groups and in a wide range of subjects to observe teaching and pupils' learning. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- A detailed review of pupils' work in books was carried out from a sample of pupils from Years 7 and 9, in addition to looking at pupils' work on computers and displayed around school.
- Inspectors met formally with governors, senior and middle leaders and teachers, including one who was newly qualified. The views of 107 staff who answered Ofsted's questionnaire were considered.
- An inspector met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils as they arrived at school and left at the end of the day. Inspectors spoke to pupils during break and lunchtime and as they moved around school between lessons.
- Inspectors met formally with four groups of pupils, including sixth-form students.
- The views of 291 parents who responded to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) were considered, along with 224 free text comments and one more detailed, written response, sent directly to Ofsted.
- Visits were made by inspectors to the specially resourced provision and the applied learning centre.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, policies, behaviour and attendance information, and information on pupils' achievements and senior leaders' monitoring of teaching.

Inspection team

Denah Jones, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lisa Crausby	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Philip Wood	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2019