

Academy 360

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135622
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	361299
Inspection dates	11–12 April 2011
Reporting inspector	Margaret Farrow HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1014
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Walls
Principal	Mr Paul Prest
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Thirty two lessons were observed and thirty four teachers seen. Inspectors held meetings with the Chair of the Board of Governors, the Chief Executive, staff, groups of students and an education adviser from the Young People's Learning Agency. They observed the academy's work and looked at a range of policies and documentation. Inspection questionnaires from 72 parents and carers, 24 staff and 109 students were also analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The impact of leaders' actions to raise attainment and hasten students' progress across the academy.
- The impact of actions to improve the quality of teaching.
- The capacity of senior leaders in driving forward improvement.

Information about the school

The academy is of average size when compared to similar institutions. It opened in September 2008 and was formed from two predecessor schools, one secondary and one primary. Until the academy moved into its new building in September 2009, it operated from the two predecessor school sites. The lead sponsor of the academy is Gentoo, a not-for-profit social housing group that is also leading regeneration of the area surrounding the academy. Sunderland City Council is the co-sponsor.

The academy is divided into three phases: 'Learn to Grow', for pupils from Reception Year to Year 4; 'Learn to Learn' for Year 5 to Year 8 and, 'Learn to Live', for students from Years 9 to 11. The academy provides alternative curricular provision in the Achievement Centre for up to 25 students deemed at risk of permanent exclusion, or whose circumstances make them vulnerable. A Student Development Centre caters for students in need of temporary social or emotional support. The academy hosts the 'Hub' provision, for 35 students from across Sunderland local authority area who have a statement of special educational needs.

Virtually all students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students known to be entitled to free school meals is much higher than average. There are more boys than girls. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average, as is the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs. The academy's specialism is in 'business and enterprise through innovation' and has recently achieved Healthy School status. There was significant staff turbulence in both predecessor schools during the year prior to their closure and this continued during the first eighteen months of the academy's existence. A number of subject leader posts remained unfilled during this time.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this academy requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The academy is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' attainment, achievement and attendance.

Nevertheless, aspects of the academy's work are good, including the extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles and the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) into the curriculum. Outcomes, the quality of provision, and the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are also good. The quality of provision in the Hub is also good; students make good progress during their time there and are proud of their achievements.

Developing a new academy quickly, from predecessor schools with their own ways of working, the history of underachievement in the secondary school, the move to the new building and staff turbulence all had a particularly detrimental impact on students' outcomes in 2010. Attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 was well below average. Students' attainment in Year 11 was also well below average but there was significant improvement in the proportion attaining five good GCSEs from 2009. However, most students made inadequate progress, even when taking into account their lower-than-average starting points on entry into their previous school in Year 7.

The Chief Executive, sponsor and leadership team have taken decisive action to improve matters. They are moving the academy, through a range of strategies including partnership working with an outstanding academy and targeted interventions to more successfully support students who are underachieving. Staffing is now more stable with key staff successfully recruited to help drive improvements. Current evidence indicates the majority of students are now making satisfactory progress in their lessons; some make good progress, not least due to improvements in the quality of teaching which is satisfactory. Some teaching is good and occasionally outstanding, and the proportion of inadequate teaching is reducing effectively through the sharing of good practice and performance management arrangements. However, leaders know that teaching needs to be consistently good to make sure students catch up fully on the ground lost in previous years and to help them make the best possible progress. In spite of concerted action by senior leaders to raise aspirations, a few teachers are still not ambitious enough for their students. In some weaker lessons, teachers' subject knowledge is not always sufficiently strong in the subjects they are teaching, or activities planned are limited in variety and interest for students. The academy has developed a robust assessment process to capture students' progress and achievements regularly. Not all teachers use this information well enough to plan lessons that help students quickly move on from their current levels of

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understanding, or once lessons are underway, to adapt lessons to make sure that the points individuals are struggling with are checked and tackled. Despite the good progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities in the Hub, students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in other classes, especially when teachers do not fully adapt their planning to match their individual needs.

Behaviour is satisfactory overall. It is sometimes good, particularly in the three centres and the 'Learn to Grow' phase. Students who spoke to inspectors indicated that behaviour has improved markedly in recent times. However, in a significant minority of lessons in the middle and upper phases of the academy, low-level disruptive behaviour of a minority of students has a negative impact on other students' learning. Boisterous behaviour in some of the open spaces is not always managed well. This is in part due to teachers' inconsistent use of the academy's behaviour management strategies. In their inspection questionnaires some students reported that poor behaviour had a negative impact on their feelings of safety. Consequently, although safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements, are rigorous and of high quality, and students when spoken to say that they do feel safe, these aspects of the school's work are judged satisfactory, rather than good. Improvements to the curriculum as well as proactive work with families are helping to improve attendance, particularly in the lower phase; although rates remain low. Good support in the Achievement and Student Development centres is helping to significantly reduce the proportion of students who are persistently absent or at risk of exclusion, as well as successfully supporting the academy's vision to be an inclusive community. However, lower-than-average basic skills, low attendance rates and issues of punctuality to lessons limit students' potential for successful transitions into life after the academy.

The Chief Executive and sponsors' determined vision for the academy to be outstanding is beginning to be embraced by staff. Academy leaders and the Board of Governors are working together to drive improvement and are becoming more successful in this endeavour; as seen in the improvements in the quality of teaching and in the better progress students are making. Action planning for improvements is based on accurate self-evaluation and increasingly influenced by the developing middle leaders and the successful nurturing of emerging leaders. They report convincingly that they are much more accountable for the achievement and progress of students through rigorous monitoring and evaluation and performance management arrangements. They have a clear understanding of what is working well and what should be better and are collectively taking action to tackle these issues. Given these actions, the recent improvements in students' progress and the determination to get things right, the academy has satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to raise standards and hasten the rate of progress students make in their learning, particularly in the middle and upper phases, the academy should:
- improve the quality and impact of teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers always have high expectations of students' capabilities
 - improving the match of teachers' subject knowledge to the subjects they are assigned to teach
 - ensuring teachers plan lessons that include activities with variety and with potential to interest students

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- ensuring teachers make good use of students' individual assessment information when planning lessons so that the learning needs of all students are met
- taking more account of the individual needs of students once lessons are underway, so that the points students may be struggling with are tackled
- sharing the good practice clearly evident in the school.
- improve students' behaviour by:
 - developing teachers' skills in managing students' behaviour so that students are positively engaged and any misbehaviour is swiftly dealt with
 - ensuring that the academy's behaviour management procedures are consistently and fairly applied so that boundaries and expectations of students and staff are clear.
- develop additional strategies to ensure there is a marked increase in attendance rates and that all students arrive punctually to lessons.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Inspection evidence including lesson observations, scrutiny of students' books and teachers' current assessment information show that students are now making satisfactory and sometimes good progress in lessons. This represents improvement since summer 2010, when attainment and progress were inadequate. More effective use of information about students identified as underachieving is successfully narrowing the gap between their progress and that of their peers. There is no discernible difference between the progress of boys and girls in most lessons. Although attainment is improving in all key stages, it remains low and students' progress, whilst now satisfactory and improving, has not been rapid enough to fully tackle the underachievement from previous years in some lessons and subjects, particularly English at Key Stage 4. Actions taken have significantly improved mathematics results and over 34% of Year 11 students have already attained at least a grade C through early entry examinations. The academy is on track to achieve its challenging targets for the number of students attaining five GCSEs grade A* to C.

Students know what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and are proactive in being healthy, particularly through the many extra-curricular opportunities provided. These include cheerleading, break dancing, football, netball, trampolining, gymnastics, rugby, dance, the 'Let's Get Cooking' programme, smoking cessation and drug and alcohol awareness courses. Students develop good ICT skills from an early age, experience effective work-related, business and enterprise opportunities, particularly through the sponsor Gentoo, and receive good information, advice and guidance when choosing options. However, students' lower-than-average basic skills and low attendance rates contribute to a below-average proportion progressing into education, training or employment at the age of 16.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Most lessons are characterised by good relationships between staff and students. Teaching is stronger in the lower phase, where it is often well planned and includes a good variety of activities that motivate students and promote independent learning. In successful lessons, teachers' good use of questioning and timely interventions help to correct any misunderstandings that students may have. Teaching assistants are used well to support those who find learning difficult. Many lessons here help boost students' confidence and self-esteem. In the middle and upper phases more teaching is satisfactory with less that is good or better and occasionally, some is inadequate. Sometimes activities are not well organised and lessons lack variety, pace and challenge. The precise learning needs of individual students are not always identified and tackled by teachers. Occasionally, teachers have difficulty in capturing students' interests and students are not committed to learning. At times low-level disruption by some limits the progress of others in the class.

The curriculum to Year 6 covers all the expected areas of learning and now satisfactorily extends skills of oracy, literacy, numeracy across a broad range of topics and learning opportunities. Sometimes students of different ages, but with similar levels of development, work together in literacy lessons. This has the potential to be productive but success is sometimes limited by the low-level misbehaviour of older students, or by teachers who lack sufficient knowledge or skills in teaching literacy. In Key Stage 4,

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students are generally satisfied with what is offered and their needs are well met by the increasing range of available courses. However, the extensive amount of tutor-time is not always used well and leaders are planning to tackle this. The impact of the academy's specialism is satisfactory, with strengths in the development of interesting enterprise activities. It is too soon to see its impact on students' outcomes or in the wider community.

The care, guidance and support provided are satisfactory; they are improving and helping sustain satisfactory learning. Care and support for students who are vulnerable, facing temporary challenges in their lives, or going through a period of emotional difficulties is good, sensitive and effective and greatly welcomed by the students themselves. Good partnership working with a range of agencies also contributes to the successful support for students in times of most need.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Since summer 2010, the Chief Executive has taken powerful action to further develop leaders' roles and their accountability. Middle leaders are fully involved in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, book scrutiny, teachers' planning and marking. They and a group of emerging leaders lead cross-academy initiatives. Together these actions are helping to develop a more consistent approach to improvement across the academy. However, middle leaders do not always ensure that all teachers are using the data they have about students' progress well enough. The effectiveness of the Board of Governors is satisfactory. It is providing increasingly high levels of challenge as the information discussed is focused more closely on accurate and regular data about students' attainment and progress. Its members are proactively involved in academy's developments and have worked closely with the Chief Executive to develop and transmit a vision for excellence. They know there is still more to do to ensure all students and staff fully embrace this vision. Every effort is taken to tackle discrimination and ensure equal opportunities. Promoting inclusion lies at the heart of the academy's work, harassment of any kind is challenged and incidents are rare. Students are making better progress in lessons and the gap between different groups is narrowing effectively because of the targeted support, including assertive mentoring, for students who need help in catching up. The academy promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. Students have a good understanding of local and regional communities that differ from their own. Plans are in place to improve their understanding of communities across the world, through the delivery of the international curriculum.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage are good; children attain well and make good progress from their below-expected starting points. They form good relationships with each other and with adults, engage enthusiastically in individual or collaborative play; and develop a good understanding of how to share and take turns. The quality of teaching is good, assessment information and children's views are used to plan activities across all areas of learning. The curriculum provides a good balance between focused, teacher-led activities and those which children choose for themselves. Occasionally, there is a lack of opportunity for children to interact with adults when engaged in self-chosen learning and play opportunities. There has been recent, significant investment in the outside area. Following consultation with parents, carers and children, children now enjoy a range of interesting activities both inside and out. Good leadership and management mean that the classroom is well organised, vibrant and colourful. Teachers and adults are well deployed and act as good role models. Teaching assistants are particularly adept at nurturing the most vulnerable children, helping them to enjoy all experiences available. All work well to provide good care and support. Partnership with parents and carers is good. A high number come into the setting; especially to work with their children on the half-termly shared play and learning sessions. Regular meetings and discussions ensure they keep up to date with their children's progress, while learning journals help them to celebrate their children's achievements.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A small proportion of parents and carers, around 7%, responded to the inspection questionnaire. They are broadly supportive of the academy. About a quarter made additional comments; with more negative than positive. Some expressed concerns about behaviour and their children's progress. These issues have been addressed in the body of the report. A few expressed concerns about bullying. Students say that bullying occasionally takes place but once an adult is informed it is usually tackled quickly. Individual comments were fed back to the Chief Executive where the confidentiality of the parent or carer would not be compromised.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Academy 360 to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 72 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1014 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	32	41	57	5	7	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	29	40	37	51	4	6	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	23	32	35	49	11	15	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	36	36	50	7	10	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	21	29	42	58	6	8	2	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	28	39	54	10	14	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	26	43	60	7	10	2	3
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	21	29	39	54	5	7	4	6
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	31	39	54	7	10	4	6
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	24	32	44	11	15	10	14
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	22	34	47	11	15	6	8
The school is led and managed effectively	15	21	40	56	11	15	5	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	31	34	47	9	13	5	7

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



14 April 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Academy 360, Sunderland, SR4 9BA

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we visited the academy recently and for talking to us over the two days. Some aspects of the academy's work are good. For example, the way that you adopt healthy lifestyles through the range of sporting and health-related activities you take part in, the work and achievements in Reception class and care and support for students in the Hub.

In summer 2010, some students' attainment was low and students made generally inadequate progress across the academy. Actions taken by the Chief Executive and other leaders are already improving matters and you are making satisfactory and sometimes good progress in lessons. Teaching is satisfactory and improving but we judge that it needs to improve further. Not all teachers are using the assessment information they have about your progress to make sure lessons match all your needs or challenge you fully. Although improving, too many students do not attend regularly and this is having an impact on their progress. We have asked for this to improve. A number of you told us that behaviour is improving but you also say, as do some of your parents and carers, that behaviour is not good enough. We saw generally satisfactory and sometimes good behaviour in most lessons. However in a few lessons, some students' behaviour disrupted others' learning and some students are too boisterous in the open spaces. Such actions affect your views on safety in the academy. Consequently, although many students do behave well we have judged that behaviour needs to be further improved. These concerns have led us to judge that the academy requires a notice to improve. Inspectors will visit the academy after a few months to see how well leaders are tackling these issues.

Those of you who do not attend as regularly as you should or arrive late to lessons can help by making more effort to be in school and on time. Similarly, those of you who misbehave could have more consideration for other learners.

Once again, many thanks for your contribution to the inspection and, on behalf of the team, I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Farrow

Her Majesty's Inspector

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