

Fulwood Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135936
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	381965
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Patrick Geraghty HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	857
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Goldie
Headteacher	Richard Smyth
Date of previous school inspection	N/a
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors spent the majority of their time visiting 40 lessons observing 39 teachers. They held meetings with staff, groups of students, and the Chair of the Governing Body. Documentation was scrutinised including: information related to the tracking of the academic and personal progress of students; detailed analysis of students' attainment and progress; academy self-evaluation; minutes from meetings of the governing body and evidence to demonstrate how the academy supports students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Inspectors also examined evaluations undertaken by the academy to ensure that it meets statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding. In addition, 166 parental questionnaires were scrutinised along with questionnaires returned by a representative sample of staff and students.

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

- Students' attainment and progress to determine the effectiveness of strategies used to improve outcomes.
- If inadequate outcomes, teaching and behaviour, noted in the monitoring visit, had been tackled.
- If teaching and learning are sufficiently challenging to promote better outcomes for students.
- The effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation by leaders and managers at all levels to drive improvement.

Information about the school

Fulwood Academy was opened in September 2009. The academy's sponsor is Charles Dunstone, founder and Chief Executive of Carphone Warehouse. The academy is situated in Fulwood, north of Preston. The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs are also above the national average. About 24% of students come from homes where English is not spoken as the first language. The academy has a specialism in arts and digital media technologies. New buildings currently under construction are due for completion in September 2012 on the present site. A sixth form opened in September 2011.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is now a satisfactory and improving school. This represents a significant change since the Ofsted monitoring visit in December 2010. Academy leadership has turned around a school characterised by inadequate outcomes, teaching, behaviour and attendance and embedded systems than are enabling better provision. Central to this is the drive of the Principal in challenging academy systems and robustly embedding a culture of improvement. He has brought to the academy a zero tolerance of underachievement. There have been significant staff changes since his appointment. In 2011, the academy achieved a 12% improvement in key GCSE indicators. There is a strong understanding within the academy of the need to further accelerate the percentage of students gaining 5 GCSE A*-C, including English and mathematics.

Systems to ensure and monitor the quality of provision have been reshaped. Tracking, monitoring and intervention systems are much improved. No inadequate teaching was observed during the inspection. Managers acknowledge the need to now reduce the percentage of satisfactory lessons and increase the proportion of those that are good so as to further accelerate improved outcomes for students. Students were keen to speak of improvement to teaching and behaviour and of the high aspirations that the Principal and his staff were now setting them. The curriculum is better matching the needs of all students. Strong alternative provision at Key Stage 4 is impacting on the attitudes and aspiration of formerly disaffected students. A sixth form was opened in September 2011 to further build on curricular opportunities and to pursue a culture of high aspirations. Care, support and guidance systems are good and are effective in supporting those at risk of underachievement.

A sense of urgency to further embed improvement and raise aspiration pervades the new senior leadership and is driven by the Principal. New leadership in English and mathematics has had a positive impact on teaching within those areas. The Principal has an acute sense of the need for further and accelerated improvement, which is reflected in accurate and developmental self-evaluation. He is strongly supported by the academy sponsor and the governing body. The academy has good capacity for further improvement because of the significant improvements already accomplished and the clear understanding of further improvement required. Systems and the required drive are fully in place to achieve this.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To raise attainment at Key Stage 4 so that outcomes for five GCSE passes at A* to C, including English and mathematics, are further accelerated.
- Accelerate the rate of progress by ensuring that more teaching is good or better by:
 - sharing best practice within the school so that inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning are tackled and all students have the opportunity to engage in consistently challenging learning
 - ensuring questioning is used effectively to challenge individual students according to their needs
 - promoting a greater focus on independent and group learning skills
 - ensuring that marking in all subjects gives a clear indication to students of what they need to do to improve
 - ensuring consistency in the use of data for lesson planning across the curriculum
 - providing a greater focus on developing oracy skills.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

When students join the academy in Year 7 their attainment is below average. The current quality of work in students' books and engagement in lessons observed during the inspection were satisfactory. When students are given the opportunities to develop their learning skills they respond with enthusiasm and challenge and their progress is good. For example, in a Year 8 geography lesson students were challenged to develop their analytical, evaluative and oral skills at an exacting pace. They responded with enthusiasm through paired work, individual tasks, good use of information and communication technology (ICT) and an excitement at developing their presentational skills. Students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers. From 2009 to 2011, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C has risen to near the national average. The proportion of students attaining this measure with English and mathematics included increased in 2011 by 12 percentage points. Evidence from the academy's tracking records, from lessons observed by inspectors and the current standards of work indicate that students are making satisfactory progress and are on track for a further significant increase in 2012. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is improving, although inspectors noted an insufficient focus on the development of oracy skills.

Behaviour is satisfactory, which represents a significant improvement since the monitoring visit. In part this improvement is linked to the good care and support that students receive. Some low-level disruption in a minority of classes limits learning opportunities. Exclusions have been reduced. Attendance has improved rapidly and is

now average. Students take advantage of a broad range of sports provision and feel that the academy is a safe place. An increasing number contribute to the wider communities through collections for charities and local community work. Students' preparation for their future economic well-being is satisfactory. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is now satisfactory, which represents a significant improvement in eradicating much previously observed inadequate teaching. During this inspection no inadequate teaching was observed. The best lessons are characterised by good pace and enthusiastic student participation. Challenging questioning is well used to engage students and develop their understanding of topics. A variety of tasks, including good use of ICT, keeps students on task and fully engaged. The less successful lessons are characterised by slow pace, insufficient variety of tasks and a lack of challenge. There are too many missed opportunities to develop independent learning skills. While the academy now has a critical mass of good teaching, managers acknowledge that there remains too much that is satisfactory. Data in these lessons were not used to plan activities to best meet the needs of all students. In a minority of lessons, low-level disruption hinders learning. Good examples of marking to inform progress, assessment and peer assessment were observed. However, in a minority of lessons there was variability in assessment and marking practice.

The curriculum is satisfactory and is now better meeting the needs of all students. Dedicated provision for disaffected students is impacting positively on their attainment and progression opportunities. The academy approach to the development of literacy and numeracy skills is more cohesive, organised and rigorous. However, managers acknowledge that further work is required to develop these skills in Years 7 and 8. There has been a highly positive take-up of book loans from the academy library. Student oracy skills are underdeveloped. Recently

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

established sixth-form provision has further enriched curriculum pathways within the academy. Curricular provision within the specialism area is developing but needs to have greater impact on teaching throughout the academy. The curriculum is enriched by a range of external partnerships.

The care, guidance and support provided for students are good. Transition from primary school is effective so that when students join the academy in Year 7 they feel that the support they receive is good. Tailored and effective support is provided for vulnerable students in the 'academy plus' centre. Good links with external agencies promote and support students' welfare, learning and progress. Strategies to promote improved attendance have been successful and attendance has risen in successive years from 90% to presently over 93%. Academic guidance to students wishing to move into the academy sixth form and further education has improved and is now good.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The Principal has provided a high level of challenge to academy systems and aspirations since his appointment in early 2010. Inadequacies in outcomes, teaching, behaviour, punctuality and attendance have been eradicated. Since the monitoring visit there have been significant staff changes and these have further impacted on improved quality systems across academy provision. Staff and students widely acknowledge the Principal's impact on improving standards. One Year 8 student encompassed these views thus, 'Mr Smyth has changed this school. He has challenged us all to do better'. New appointments to the senior management team have further embedded the strong emphasis on higher aspirations and improvement. The new director of standards has vigorously pursued a robust approach to improvement. Clear and achievable targets are set coupled with a more rigorous approach to monitoring, tracking, evaluation and intervention to improve provision. There is a strong focus on sustainable improvement.

The management and use of data both by senior and middle leaders has improved but is not fully embedded in all classroom practice. The quality of teaching and learning is better monitored. Much effort has focused on the eradication of inadequate teaching. The academy recognises the need now to increase the percentage of good teaching so as to further accelerate students' achievement and progress. The Principal sets a highly realistic tone, which informs accurate self-evaluation and sharp identification of areas for improvement. The governing body is knowledgeable about the challenges that face the academy. They have made an excellent contribution to the substantial academy building programme. They acknowledge the need to provide greater challenge to senior leadership.

The academy recognises the need to establish more clear lines of communication with parents and carers so as to better apprise them of academy improvements over time. The academy has fostered good partnerships with a host of external agencies to promote students' learning and support their well-being and to provide specialist support for a range of students and particularly those who are most vulnerable. There is satisfactory promotion of equal opportunities as new academy systems begin to impact on narrowing the achievement gaps between different groups of students. Managers have been successful in promoting a more harmonious academy community and in better understanding the needs of the local community. A good understanding of different cultures has been successfully promoted. Safeguarding is good; policies and procedures are comprehensive in range and coverage. The academy's value for money, set against outcomes, is satisfactory.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

The academy opened a sixth form in September 2011. It was not possible for inspectors to grade such recently established provision. However induction and enrolment systems and the quality of teaching observed were at least satisfactory. The sixth form offers a wide range of GCE AS and A-level courses.

Views of parents and carers

An analysis of responses to the questionnaire indicates that the majority of parents and carers are happy with their child's experience at the academy and that appropriate steps are taken to ensure that their child is well prepared for the future. A small minority felt that the academy does not deal effectively with behaviour and healthy lifestyles; they also raised concerns about how well staff communicate with them. Inspectors found that behaviour and progress have and are improving. However, inspectors have noted these parental concerns and have asked the academy to continue to look at these areas.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Fulwood Academy 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 166 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 857 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	37	22	112	67	11	7	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	38	23	113	68	12	7	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	39	23	93	56	30	18	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	21	106	64	19	11	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	30	18	114	69	14	8	4	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	19	108	65	21	13	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	13	104	63	33	20	3	2
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)	34	20	111	67	12	7	4	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	18	113	68	21	13	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	23	86	52	28	17	10	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	14	99	60	22	13	10	6
The school is led and managed effectively	35	21	112	67	11	7	6	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	49	30	97	58	13	8	3	2

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.



17 October 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Fulwood Academy, Preston, PR2 9YR

Thank you for the friendly welcome that you gave my colleagues and me when we inspected your academy recently. We would particularly like to thank those of you who spoke with us.

Our inspection found that yours is a satisfactory and improving academy. You are making satisfactory progress throughout your time at the academy. Your GCSE results are improving but pass rates in GCSE English and mathematics need to improve further and more rapidly. There is good teaching in the school, however, we found too much that was satisfactory. In the good lessons, you respond well to the teachers' high expectations but many of you are not sufficiently challenged to do better in the satisfactory lessons. Your curriculum options are satisfactory and improving. The teachers and support staff care for you and give you good support.

The leaders in your academy worked with us to decide on some ways in which your provision could be better. We decided that to achieve this, the school should:

- improve your results in GCSE examinations, particularly in English and mathematics, so that you all make better progress
- improve the percentage of good and better teaching so that you are all challenged and achieve your best.

You can help your academy to improve further by ensuring everyone focuses on the pursuit of excellence for all of you and trying hard in your studies so that you can achieve your full potential in life. I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty
Her Majesty's Inspector

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