

Hope Valley College

Castleton Road, Hope, Hope Valley, S33 6SD

Inspection dates

26–27 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- From their above-average starting points, students of all abilities do not make fast enough progress in all their subjects.
- Higher and middle ability students, and some who are disabled or who have special educational needs, make slower progress than others. Progress is slowest in mathematics.
- There is a core of good and outstanding teaching within the academy, yet for some groups, notably in mathematics, it is not good enough to secure good progress. This has contributed to an overall drop in standards to levels likely to be in line with, rather than above the national in 2012.
- The use of assessment information is not yet reliable enough in both English and mathematics to allow accurate target setting for students.
- Although a rigorous package of monitoring, evaluation and continuing professional development has helped to improve teaching in English, improvement in mathematics has been slower. The impact of leaders' work on students' outcomes in national examinations, in both subjects is, as yet, limited.
- There is some weakness in academy-wide planning for improvement, since the academy does not always establish precise enough ways of measuring the progress and effectiveness of new initiatives.

The school has the following strengths

- The academy has a highly inclusive ethos and fosters a very strong sense of community within and beyond the school.
- Students' learning and progress in science, technology and languages are consistently good.
- The academy provides a very happy and secure learning environment in which students feel very safe, well supported and cared for. Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good.
- The academy provides an extensive range of after-school activities which contribute greatly to students' good personal development.
- The Principal and senior leaders have a very clear determination to eradicate any underperformance, and have met with some success. They have set in place very robust systems which demonstrate clear capacity to achieve further improvements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day’s notice.
- Inspectors observed 26 lessons, of which five were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made a number of other short visits to an assembly and tutor groups.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee and academy staff, including senior and middle leaders. A telephone discussion was held with an external consultant to the academy.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the Parent View online questionnaire along with other emails and letters from parents received in the course of the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work and looked at a number of documents including: data on students’ current progress; planning and monitoring documentation; records relating to behaviour and attendance; and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Susan Wareing, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Jeffrey Plumb

Additional inspector

Balbir Kaur-Pierpoint

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Hope Valley College converted to become an academy in September 2011. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is well below average.
- The proportion of students identified as disabled or having special educational needs is well above that found nationally. Their needs relate mainly to moderate learning difficulties including behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- Very few students are from minority ethnic groups, or are at an early stage of learning to speak English.
- As part of the local authority's post-16 provision, the school is currently hosting a pilot of specialist provision for a small number of Year 12 students who are disabled or who have special educational needs.
- The academy has specialist status as a High Performing School and has Healthy and Eco-School Status. The academy's specialist curriculum areas include technology, mathematics, science, English, art, applied learning and provision for gifted and talented students.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expected for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, especially in mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - all tasks and activities are sharply tailored to students' individual needs
 - all teachers give students detailed feedback that will inform them of precisely how well they are doing and how to make the next steps in their learning.
- Raise achievement for all groups of students, particularly in mathematics, so that they all make consistently good progress given their starting points by ensuring that:
 - all lessons provide a variety of tasks that engage all students very actively in their own learning, especially in mathematics
 - all tasks and activities are sharply tailored to students' individual needs
 - all students have enough opportunities in all their subjects to improve their skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Sharpen improvement planning and target setting to increase the impact of the leadership of teaching and students' achievement by ensuring that:
 - all new academy-wide plans for improvement have precise, measurable targets and challenging but realistic outcomes
 - middle leaders, especially in English and mathematics, make consistently good use of assessment information to set reliable targets for students.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **requires improvement**

- Students enter the academy with standards that are above average. Results in the 2011 GCSE examinations were above average and the proportions of students making at least expected progress were in line with those seen nationally.
- Students' overall achievement requires improvement because standards, as based on the 2012 examination results, are likely to have fallen to broadly average levels due to inconsistent rates of progress for students across subjects, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Despite vigorous action by senior leaders, improved progress in English and mathematics is unlikely to be reflected in the 2012 examinations. There is evidence of a stronger upturn in the performance of students who will take their examinations in 2013.
- Many students did well in a range of subjects other than English and mathematics. Business studies, biology, core and other sciences, geography, and physical education (PE), German and geography were stronger subjects.
- In addition to English and mathematics, history was a weak subject but through the academy's decisive action it is beginning to improve.
- The academy has had some success in narrowing the gap between the progress of girls and boys. While the progress of those eligible for the pupil premium is in line with the national average, these students do not progress as rapidly as other students.
- The progress of most students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is in line with expectation. The small number of students supported by school action plus underachieved in 2011, although not significantly so, compared to the national expectation of similar students. The school recognises the need to sharpen its assessment of this group of students in order to set them appropriately challenging targets.
- Students have relatively few opportunities to develop their speaking, writing and reading skills systematically across subjects, but the recently appointed subject leader for English is working energetically to put in place a more coherent strategy. For example, a weekly 'Drop Everything and Read' project has been established to promote independent reading and there are weekly focuses on different aspects of writing, for example on punctuation.
- The development of students' mathematical skills across subjects is embryonic.

The quality of teaching **requires improvement**

- The proportion of good and outstanding teaching has risen. Three-quarters of the teaching seen during this inspection was good or better. However, its quality is not yet consistently good enough to drive the achievement of all students as fast as it could, especially in mathematics, where some inadequate teaching was seen.
- The typically good teaching seen promotes positive attitudes to learning. Effective and regular assessment ensures that students know their current grades and levels and precisely how to improve their work further.

- Relevant and engaging lesson content and challenging teaching approaches enthuse students, for example in the making and use, in an ethics and philosophy lesson, of a Rubik's cube, by which Year 7 students measured their own understanding of the concepts of creed and belief.
- Weaker lessons lack a clear sense of purpose; too much of the learning is passive and tasks and activities are not well matched to students' individual learning needs. Students do not receive feedback on their work that is detailed enough to help them to improve it.
- In lessons seen, teaching assistants were generally effectively deployed to provide appropriate support to groups and individual students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour and safety of students is a strength of the school. Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They generally have very well developed personal skills and readily interact with adults. Occasionally, when the teaching is less engaging, low-level disruption occurs, but most teachers manage it well.
- Students' very positive attitudes to learning are reflected in their punctuality, above-average attendance rates and in dramatically reduced exclusions. These improvements have been achieved by the academy's determined efforts in partnership with an extensive range of outside agencies, such as the Children's and Adolescents' Mental Health Service (CAMHS).
- Students say that the academy keeps them very safe and gives them a good understanding of different types of bullying. They consider a strength of the academy is the way all students are accepted for who they are. In the very rare instances of bullying that occur, they are confident that they can always turn to an adult who will deal effectively with their concerns.
- Students say they enjoy being part of their mixed-year tutor groups because it helps them to feel like one big family. Within these groups they learn to respect students of different ages and relish the opportunity to act as role models to younger students in their turn as they grow older.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Although the leadership and management of the academy have several strengths, these have not yet had sufficient impact on students' achievement.
- The Principal and senior leaders have a clear vision for the academy, shared by middle leaders and the whole staff. It is based on their deeply held commitment to the academy's highly inclusive ethos and its commitment to the wider community.
- New systems for the management of teaching are very robust and have achieved a greater proportion of good or better practice. However, feedback on teachers' performance is not always sharply focused on the extent to which they are accelerating students' progress.
- Performance management is firmly linked to the Teachers' Standards. The Principal and governors do not shrink from hard decisions if staff do not perform well.
- Rigorous procedures are in place for tracking the progress of individual students and different groups. However, the use of information from this process is not yet consistently refined enough, for example in English and mathematics, to set sufficiently reliable targets for students.

- The academy's strengths and weaknesses are honestly and accurately identified and reported regularly to the governing body. However, in planning improvements the academy does not always set itself precise enough targets, timescales or an exact view of the desired outcome, in order to measure their success.
- The academy is involved in a wide range of partnerships, especially with parents, who are very happy with the academy's work. Collaboration with other local schools and colleges has led to many successes in encouraging disaffected or vulnerable students to continue their education beyond Year 11. The academy makes effective use of independent external consultancy in moving it forward. The impact is seen in improvements to previously underperforming subjects, for example, history.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and flexible. Almost all students go on to further education, employment or training at increasingly high levels. Students enjoy a rich variety of opportunities to take up leadership roles, for example in sports and other enrichment activities, such as musical performances and visits abroad.
- The academy promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively through assemblies, geography and art lessons, and active links with schools in Denmark and Kenya. Students would rightly welcome more opportunities for direct contact with people from diverse ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.
- The academy's good capacity for further improvement is seen in the improvement of teaching, and in astute new appointments to the senior and middle leadership teams that are beginning to show an impact on performance, for example in English.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - is clearly aware of what the academy needs to do to improve further, is ambitious for the academy and holds the leadership to account very effectively
 - contributes individual expertise in very direct and practical ways to support and challenge underperforming departments.
- Senior leaders and managers, including the governing body, promote equality effectively and tackle discrimination appropriately. This can be seen in the academy's judicious use of the pupil premium to improve the examination grades of some individual students.
- All statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding were met at the time of the inspection.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137350
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	403696
Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	633
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	A Critchlow
Headteacher	Bernard Hunter (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Telephone number	01433 620555
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