

# Thornaby Academy

Baysdale Road, Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees, TS17 9DB

## Inspection dates

9–10 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Students' achievement is inadequate and their attainment is low. Not enough students make the progress they should, particularly at Key Stage 4.
- While senior and middle leaders are taking appropriate actions to tackle long-standing weaknesses in students' basic skills and can point to improvements in English, outcomes in mathematics are too low.
- Students' behaviour is getting better although there is still room for improvement. The majority take responsibility for their own actions and show consideration for the well-being of others. Persistent absence rates are above average but declining.
- Often, all students in a lesson undertake the same tasks because teachers do not take account of the range of abilities in each class. This results in students making limited progress. Higher- and lower-attaining students lose out most.
- Teachers do not provide students with enough opportunities to take an active part in lessons. Students rarely work with their classmates, missing the chance to share their views or refine their thinking. More often, students sit passively listening to the teacher, showing limited interest and a reluctance to respond to questions.

### The academy has the following strengths

- The academy's leadership has a clear and detailed understanding of where improvement is required and action plans are targeted accurately. These actions are bringing about improvements in teaching and students' learning and behaviour, and are sustaining progress in English.
- Students' attainment in English continues to improve at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
- Teachers' marking of students' work in English is effective, providing clear guidance about how they can improve.
- The academy's revised assessment and tracking system provides a clear and detailed résumé of students' progress and attainment.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 lessons, of which over one third were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, two registration periods were observed. A substantial analysis of students’ workbooks in English and mathematics was undertaken.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work and held meetings with the Principal, senior and middle leaders, the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, a parent governor and a representative of the sponsors. Discussions were held with two groups of students about the quality of their educational experience and the academy’s management of behaviour.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the academy’s monitoring and assessment information, improvement planning, records of behaviour and attendance, and records relating to safeguarding students. The inspection team also took account of staff questionnaires, the six responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the academy’s own parental consultation.

## Inspection team

Tom Grieveson, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Peter Harrison	Additional Inspector
Steve Rodchester	Additional Inspector

## Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

### Information about this academy

- The academy opened in September 2010 in the buildings of the predecessor school. The lead sponsor is Teesside University with co-sponsors Stockton Sixth Form College, Stockton Riverside College and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.
- Large areas of the academy building and grounds are out of use because of extensive refurbishment. This will continue until the summer of 2013. Once complete, it will provide improved accommodation and facilities for staff and students.
- The academy is smaller than the average sized secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government funding) is high. Most students are White British and few of the students from minority ethnic communities speak English as an additional language.
- The academy provides for a relatively high proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action plus, the largest group having behavioural difficulties. A small proportion of students has a statement of special educational needs.
- Well over two thirds of the senior leadership team, and about 60% of the teaching staff were appointed to the academy. The academy's Principal took up her post in September 2010.
- The latest unvalidated results for Key Stage 4 examinations in 2012 confirm that the school did not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy has a specialism in Business and Enterprise education.

### What does the academy need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is at least good by:
  - making certain that teachers use assessment information consistently and precisely to meet the identified learning needs of all students
  - making sure that teachers provide regular opportunities for students to take an active part in lessons, so they are involved in collaborative and practical activities and develop their ability to work independently
  - improving students' enthusiasm for learning through more frequent and varied ways to develop their verbal and thinking skills, and confidence, for example, through paired talk, group discussion and class debate
  - ensuring that the marking of students' work, in all subjects, provides clear feedback about how well they have done and what is required to improve.
- Raise standards, particularly in English and mathematics, and ensure that all students make progress which at least matches national expectations at Key Stage 4 by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of students' capabilities and ensuring that the targets for students at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are sufficiently clear and ambitious
  - using the academy's new assessment regime effectively to make certain that students' progress towards challenging targets is monitored rigorously and actions are taken systematically to tackle gaps in students' knowledge, skills and understanding.

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
    - equipping all those in leadership positions with the skills and knowledge necessary to accurately monitor the staff's performance so that feedback is of consistently high quality
    - ensuring that effective leadership of mathematics brings about rapid improvement in teaching and learning so that standards rise quickly and students make at least good progress
    - rigorously using performance management to secure good teaching and leadership.
  - Continue the academy's efforts to reduce persistent absence further and improve attendance amongst all groups of students.
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## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- Students make inadequate progress, particularly in mathematics. Provisional GCSE examination results indicate that outcomes were lower in mathematics in 2012 compared to the previous year, most notably for girls, those supported by the pupil premium, disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- Although there was continued improvement in English, the proportion of students gaining five or more good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, declined. Attainment in both subjects is below average. Nonetheless, almost all students in Year 11 attained at least five good GCSE passes in 2012 with vocational subjects making a strong contribution and this shows an improvement against results in 2011.
- At Key Stage 3, the proportion of students making expected progress continues to improve in English, although progress has stalled in mathematics. Students' attainment at Key Stage 3 is below average.
- Sharper assessment and tracking arrangements provide senior leaders with a more detailed and insightful analysis of students' performance. Underachievement is identified more quickly and is successfully allowing swifter interventions to occur. Targets have been revised and are now more challenging and are being more closely monitored. These new arrangements promote greater scrutiny of individuals' and groups' performance, and strengthen the link with teachers' performance management and their accountability for students' outcomes.
- Whether students make enough progress in lessons depends upon teachers' use of assessment and tracking information as they prepare lessons. Some staff use this information well so that activities are matched closely to the next stage of learning and students make good progress. This is not commonplace or confined to specific subjects. Where teachers do not consider students' differing needs, and particularly when this results in all students being given the same work, progress is limited.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The academy invests substantial resources in improving teaching, including bespoke training where teachers' specific needs are identified. This is integral to teachers' performance management. While the approach is improving teaching overall, too much still requires improvement.
- In several lessons observed by inspectors, teaching failed to take account of the range of students' abilities in each class or the next steps needed to take learning forward. This is most obvious when all students are given the same standard of work to complete and results in a lack of challenge for the most-able students and proves to be too difficult for those of lower ability.
- Most teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and use a broad range of questions. They plan learning in detail but not always with enough clarity about what students will learn, leaving students confused and uncertain about what is expected of them.
- Students are rarely given opportunities to work collaboratively. More often, they are given individual, work-sheet based activities which do little to encourage cooperation, help develop their speaking and listening skills or promote independence.
- There are examples of good and outstanding teaching, but these are not frequent enough. In these lessons, the intended learning is clear, tasks are relevant, interesting and based upon teachers' accurate knowledge of students' capabilities. When teachers encourage students to work productively in paired and group activities this stimulates their interest, offers challenge and effectively promotes learning.
- 'No pen day' coincided with day two of the inspection. This successfully prompted teachers to focus on different kinds of communication and encouraged innovation. Notable examples were seen in religious education, English and drama lessons where students were active and engaged.

Their enthusiasm was evident, particularly when given the opportunity to debate and clarify their values on a range of moral issues. The range of resources used, including iPads to record students' role play, supported learning effectively and provided evidence of learning for the teacher to evaluate. These approaches successfully promoted students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and proved to be effective in supporting the development of their speaking and listening skills and confidence.

- Teachers' marking and feedback is not consistently helpful. The good practice seen in English workbooks provides detailed and accurate feedback about students' performance and clear guidance about how to improve. While there are similar examples in other subjects, teachers' practice is not compliant with the academy's expectations and leaves students confused and uncertain about their accomplishments.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

- Students' behaviour and attendance are improving. Fixed-term exclusions rose in the previous academic year but have declined markedly since the start of this term. Persistent absence is relatively high but reducing as consequence of effective work with particular families. Attendance was below average in the previous year but is broadly average this term.
- Almost all students are respectful of staff and respond appropriately to instructions. They carry out their work as requested although not always with enthusiasm. Their commitment reflects the quality of the tasks given. Where these are dull and uninspiring, students' application is limited and the pace of learning is slow. Conversely, when students are challenged; expected to collaborate; show initiative; and when there is variety of experience they engage willingly and with enthusiasm.
- Students were keen to share their views of the academy with inspectors. They consider behaviour in lessons to be acceptable and often good although they are more critical of the conduct of a small number of students around the academy site, where they say boisterous behaviour causes anxiety for some less confident students. They are keenly aware of a range of issues, notably bullying, which they consider has declined substantially since the academy was formed. Academy records show a steadily declining trend and this includes incidents of racist and homophobic bullying. Key staff are said to be effective in resolving matters. Students say they feel well supported.
- Of the six parents who completed Parent View, two considered behaviour to be a concern. The academy's own consultation shows just under one-fifth of parents disagreeing that behaviour is good, particularly the parents of older students.
- Students present a thoughtful analysis of the academy's progress. The academy is considered to be a 'safe' and 'mostly enjoyable' place. Students look forward to the completion of the new buildings and are mature in their acceptance of the significant restrictions on their movement around the site.
- Students are clear about which lessons they enjoy and those they do not. They are particularly critical of their experiences in mathematics. They enjoy active participation in lessons. Students are keen to engage in the forthcoming 'Hub representative' elections. They appreciate this process is helping them to play a role in the future of the academy.

### **The leadership and management**

### **requires improvement**

- Senior leaders have a secure understanding of where improvement is required and action planning is accurately targeted at where changes are most needed. The result of this work can be seen in improvements in teaching, the sustained rise in English results and the high outcomes against the broader GCSE measure of students' performance. Improving attainment and progress in mathematics is proving more challenging, but staffing changes are close to

resolution with appointments to be made to the leadership and teaching staff in the coming week. The timely and necessary change to the academy's assessment and tracking regime is providing the detail and insight necessary to identify underachievement and ensure that targeted intervention is more rapid. It is strengthening the academy's drive to ensure equality of opportunity for all students but further progress is still required to ensure that all students achieve as well as they should. Nevertheless, the improvements demonstrate that there is secure capacity for improvement.

- Monitoring and evaluation are regular so that teachers receive frequent feedback about their practice and against their targets and the Teachers' Standards. Underperformance is tackled directly. There is a clear line of sight between students' outcomes and teachers' performance. While senior leaders demonstrated the accuracy of their judgements through joint observations with inspectors, consistency amongst the wider leadership team is less certain.
  - Curriculum options at Key Stage 4 provide students with a suitable range of academic and vocational choices. Progression routes into further study, training or work are being managed well and reflect strong partnerships with local colleges. In 2010, the academy succeeded in ensuring that all Year 11 students entered further education, training or work and in 2011 records show that a very small proportion of students left with no recorded destination. The leaders have recognised the need to revise the structure of the Key Stage 3 curriculum to promote greater focus on developing students' literacy and numeracy skills in order to strengthen progress in English and mathematics, and this is now underway.
  - Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed well in lessons such as religious education where opportunities to reflect on moral issues and their own values are done successfully. This approach contributes well to the positive relationships between adults and students, which are evident in the academy. Inspectors observed similar opportunities in English and drama but not consistently elsewhere. The forthcoming 'Hub representative' elections are encouraging students to consider democratic procedures and how these can engage them directly in decision making in the academy.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - governors demonstrate an accurate understanding of the academy's performance; those interviewed during the inspection show a keen awareness of the academy's priorities and receive accurate information on which to review progress
    - governors exert appropriate challenge to the academy's leaders, and whilst appreciate of their efforts, are expectant about what is to be achieved
    - governors meet their statutory responsibilities and ensure that arrangements to safeguard students are secure
    - the use of pupil premium funding is appropriately targeted but its impact on students' outcomes is limited, particularly in mathematics.
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## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136121
<b>Local authority</b>	NA
<b>Inspection number</b>	399826

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	445
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Martin Clinton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Maryssa O'Connor
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	NA
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