

De Lacy Academy

Middle Lane, Knottingley, Wakefield, WF11 0BZ

Inspection dates 19–20 March 2013

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		Requires improvement 3
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

- Measures of students' progress over time are below national expectations. Although rapidly improving, progress is not yet good as this has not been sustained.
- Teaching is not consistently good. Too many teachers expect students of different abilities to complete the same work. Written feedback to students does not always tell them how to improve their work.
- Although there have been improvements in students' attendance, particularly in the proportion of students who are persistently absent, these figures are still below the national average.
- Senior leaders have not been successful in encouraging parents and carers to engage with the academy.

The school has the following strengths

- This is an inclusive school which values individual students and focuses on meeting their needs.
- Students are cared for well and they feel safe.
- Senior leaders have been successful in improving the behaviour of students. Students behave well around the academy and are polite and friendly.
- In the short amount of time since opening as an academy, the actions of the Principal and senior leaders have already brought about improvements in students' achievements.
- Governance is strong. Governors were instrumental in the choice of academy sponsor and are actively working alongside senior leaders to bring about improvements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons taught by 23 different teachers, of which two were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Four groups of students met with inspectors. Discussions were also held with staff, including senior and middle leaders and newly qualified teachers. A meeting was held with the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body and with a representative of the academy sponsors.
- Inspectors took account of 55 questionnaires completed by staff.
- There were not enough responses on the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) for the lead inspector to be able to access them.
- Inspectors read a range of documents. These included information on the school's self-evaluation, school development plans, data relating to students' current progress, policies and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Anne Seneviratne, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Woodhouse

Additional Inspector

Andrew Henderson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- De Lacy Academy is a much smaller than the average-sized 11–16 secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after by the local authority and children of service families) is much higher than the national average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is well below the national average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly higher than that found nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A small number of Key Stage 4 students are taking an off-site construction course which is provided through Wakefield District Housing.
- De Lacy Academy converted to become an academy in April 2012. When its predecessor school, Knottingley High School was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by making sure all teachers:
 - plan a range of lesson activities to meet the needs of students of different abilities, especially the most able
 - deliver lessons which interest and motivate students to become actively engaged in their own learning
 - mark students' work thoroughly, explaining clearly what they need to do to improve.
- Continue to improve students' achievement by:
 - ensuring all students make at least good progress in all subjects relative to their starting points
 - building on the improvements secured so far to make certain that gaps in achievement for students supported by the pupil premium, and those with special educational needs, are closed quickly
 - improving the behaviour of the small minority of students whose attitude to learning is not good.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of the academy's leadership further by:
 - ensuring academy policies and procedures are applied consistently and their impact is monitored and evaluated
 - continuing to improve attendance so that it is better than the national average
 - engaging parents and carers more effectively in the life of the academy.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students enter the academy with standards that are below others nationally. Over recent years, the rate of progress that students make in English, mathematics and science has been below national expectations. However, a range of inspection evidence shows that current students are progressing at a much faster rate.
- In the past three years, the percentage of students attaining five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, has been below the national average. The total average points score for GCSEs and their equivalent qualifications has been significantly above the national average for the last three years.
- Over the last three years, the attainment and progress of students in mathematics has been on an upward trend, although by 2012 these measures remained below national average. The academy's robust student achievement data shows that consistently good teaching in this department has led to 75% of the current Year 11 being on track to make at least expected progress by the end of the year.
- Long-term staff absence contributed to a dip in students' achievement in English in 2012. Strong leadership of a now stable department and a very robust tracking of students' progress have led to 80% of the current Year 11 being on track to make at least expected progress by the end of the year.
- In 2012, students who are supported by the pupil premium funding achieved about half a grade below their peers in the academy in English and mathematics but the gap is narrowing between these groups in the number of students attaining five A* to C grades with English and mathematics. As a result of effective allocation of pupil premium funding to reduce class sizes and provide one-to-one and small group support, gaps between the attainment and progress of these students and their peers are closing in both English and mathematics.
- Students with special educational needs did not make good progress in 2012. Efforts by the academy to tackle this have resulted in students making better progress particularly in Year 11. Identified students in Year 7 and 8 spend a proportion of the week in 'The Key' where they receive extra help with literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills. Students value this very positive learning environment and the help they receive there, and their improved progress is closely tracked. The academy has allocated some of the Year 7 catch-up funding in order to staff and resource this facility.
- The progress of students who attend off-site provision is monitored closely and they are working successfully towards a Level 2 qualification in construction.
- The academy has a policy of entering all students at the end of Year 10 for mathematics GCSE. This is used as a tool to find out how students are performing and what areas require improvement in order for them to make at least expected progress. All students are entered again for the examination at the end of Year 11.
- The support the academy gives to weaker readers is generally effective but it does not encourage reading for enjoyment which would extend students' vocabulary and raise their self-esteem as readers. The academy does not have a library which makes it difficult to promote a love of reading and presents little opportunity for students to borrow books to take home to read.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There are variations in the quality of teaching across the academy and it is not consistently good.
- Often, where teaching requires improvement, lessons lack the appropriate level of challenge. Teachers do not take enough account of individual students' targets and current achievement

when planning lessons, especially those of the most able. This means that students are not given the opportunity to make good progress.

- In lessons where teaching is less than good, teachers do not plan activities which will interest and motivate students. The students are not given, nor do they take enough, responsibility for their own learning.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers do not use questioning to probe students' understanding which means they do not learn as much as they could. However, where teaching is good or better, effective questioning is used to develop students' confidence in expressing their ideas. Teachers in these lessons ask searching questions, challenging students to take their thinking to the next level.
- Where the quality of teaching is good or better, teachers use their passion for their subject and their knowledge of their students to engage, enthuse and involve them in the lesson. They provide interesting work for the students to undertake with many opportunities for them to learn actively and collaboratively. They use a range of assessment throughout the lesson to inform the learning and ensure all students are making good progress.
- The quality of marking is variable across subjects. At its best, marking celebrates success and gives specific guidance for improvement, but too often, it lacks detail and does not explain to students how to progress to the next level. There is clear evidence of teachers using the 'learning journey' effectively to enable students to assess what progress they are making in lessons but this is not consistent across the whole academy.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Since the school converted to become an academy, there has been significant improvement in students' behaviour. Both staff and students speak positively about this and the impact this has had on the quality of teaching and learning across the academy.
- Behaviour is good in most lessons. However, in a small minority of Key Stage 3 lessons, some students' attitude to learning is poor and they engage in behaviour which disrupts the learning in the classroom.
- The behaviour management system generally works well but there is some inconsistency in how it is applied across departments. There is not enough detailed analysis of the data about removal of students from lessons to monitor and evaluate the policy's impact effectively. Students speak positively about the rewards system and feel that it motivates them to do well.
- Students say that bullying is rare but when it occurs it is dealt with effectively by staff in the academy. They know how to report it and feel that all adults in the academy will support them. Students feel safe in the academy and those spoken to during the inspection were very positive, particularly about the helpful staff.
- Throughout the year, there have been significant improvements in students' overall attendance but it remains below the national average. The academy is working with individual students to reduce persistent absence and, although this figure has been halved compared to last year, it still remains above the national average. Attendance is now monitored very closely and targeted intervention with specific students is having a very positive impact.
- Over recent years, the number of students receiving fixed-term exclusions was higher than the national average. Since September, there has been a significant reduction in this figure for all groups of students apart from those supported by pupil premium funding. This reduction is a result of a revised behaviour management policy and the introduction of restorative practice which engages students in reviewing their own behaviour.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Since converting to an academy, the actions of the Principal and senior leaders have already brought about improvements in students' behaviour, the quality of teaching and students' achievement. Staff at the academy share the same values and are supportive of the Principal as

he leads them on this continuing journey of improvement. One head of faculty said, 'We feel as if we have been empowered.' There was an overwhelmingly positive response in the staff questionnaires.

- New systems, policies and procedures have been introduced since September and these have contributed to improvements in behaviour, teaching and achievement. However, these are not sufficiently embedded and there is still some inconsistency in how these are applied across the academy. Methods of monitoring and evaluating the impact of initiatives are not sufficiently robust.
- Senior and middle leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching across the academy. Each teacher is also part of a 'professional learning community', which is a vehicle for peer coaching and development. Although this has led to improvements in the classroom practice of some teachers, the impact of this and other staff training is variable across the academy.
- Joint lesson observations with senior leaders and the academy's own records show a correlation in the judgement about the quality of teaching across the school.
- The Principal has introduced a more robust performance management system. Teachers' targets are now linked to the quality of their teaching and student achievement, as well as professional development. Performance management is now used effectively to determine teachers' salary progression.
- Only six parents responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) which reflects the challenge which the academy faces in encouraging parents to engage with the academy. There has been little progress made on improving this issue in recent years.
- The curriculum provides well for the majority of students' needs and the academy effectively personalises provision to help students to achieve. However, the curriculum organisation for some lower-ability students in Key Stage 3 means their diet of learning experiences is not as rich and varied as some of the more-able students.
- Leaders, teachers and governors value the support which they receive from the academy sponsor. An academy improvement partner works closely with the Principal for one day a week and the sponsors have provided further support at senior leadership level. The newly qualified teachers speak positively of their training programme, delivered through the sponsors, particularly the opportunities it affords to meet a range of other staff from across the trust.
- Procedures for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors are very much driving the improvements at De Lacy Academy alongside the senior leaders. They were instrumental in the decision to convert to academy status and the choice of sponsor. They have a clear vision for the academy and are very 'hands on' in the way they support and challenge the Principal on all aspects of academy life, including how it spends the pupil premium funding and the impact this is having on students' achievement. They have a clear knowledge of the quality of teaching throughout the academy and how salary progression is linked to performance management. They feel converting to an academy has enabled them to become more strategic and focused.

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	138006
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	402784

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	535
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Stretton
Principal	Gareth Mason
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01977 622850
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