

Castle Hall Academy

Richard Thorpe Avenue, Crowlees Road, Mirfield, West Yorkshire , WF14 9PH

Inspection dates

13–14 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

- Achievement requires improvement because there is too much variation between subjects. While progress is good in some subjects, it is less than expected in others, especially in science.
- Too much teaching requires improvement. Not all teachers are setting work that matches the different abilities of students and this slows their learning and progress. Sometimes teachers do not question students well enough to help them to understand fully their learning.
- When marking books, teachers do not always provide students with precise guidance on how to improve their work or expect high standards of presentation and written work.
- There are lessons where teachers do not manage students' behaviour well enough to ensure that good learning takes place.
- Not all leaders and managers are using the full range of evidence available skilfully enough when checking the progress of all students in the areas for which they have responsibility.
- Improvement planning lacks some focus on measuring the impact of leaders and managers' actions in improving teaching and achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Some teaching is good and outstanding and results in students making good or better progress.
- The achievement of students in some subject areas, particularly mathematics, is good.
- Students say they feel safe and enjoy their time at the academy. Their self-esteem is high because relationships are good.
- Leaders, managers and governors have a strong system for the performance management of teachers.
- The recent changes made by the relatively new leadership team are appropriate and leading to pockets of improvement in the quality of teaching and in students' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 38 lessons and 38 teachers. Two joint observations were undertaken with senior leaders.
- The inspectors spoke to three groups of students about their learning in lessons and their safety in school. The inspectors also listened to some students reading.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, school staff and a representative of the local authority. In addition, the inspectors looked at the school's review of its performance, its development plan, safeguarding information, school policies and the minutes of governing body meetings.
- The inspectors analysed 18 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View)
- The views of 27 staff who returned questionnaires were taken into account.

Inspection team

James McGrath, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lyn Field	Additional Inspector
Janet Peckett	Additional Inspector
Sonya Williamson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than the average sized secondary school.
- There are more boys than girls. The proportion of girls is below average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding provided for children in local authority care, those from armed services families, and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is average.
- The majority of students are of White British backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well above average, mostly from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The alternative providers used by the academy are Project Nexus, Ravenshall School and the White Rose School of Health and Beauty.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Castle Hall Academy converted to become an academy on 1 September 2011. When its predecessor school, Castle Hall School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be satisfactory overall.
- Castle Hall is an Academy Trust and has an informal partnership with one other academy.
- The academy holds an award for Investors in People and the Kirklees Inclusion Quality Standard.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better to ensure that students' achievements are securely good or better across all subjects, including science, by ensuring that:
 - when planning and teaching lessons, all teachers use information about students' abilities to set work that directly matches their different needs
 - all teachers provide better guidance through marking so that students improve their work and make better progress
 - all teachers have high expectations for presentation and the quality of all students' written work, including spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - teachers use questions skilfully to ensure students fully understand and improve their learning
 - all teachers manage students' behaviour consistently well in order to allow every student to make good or better progress in all lessons.
- Further develop the skills of leaders and managers, at all levels, so that:
 - subject leaders use the full range of evidence available to them to take effective actions to ensure that all students are making good progress in all lessons
 - all leaders use the skills of the best teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning

and measure how this improves students' progress

- there is an assurance that the curriculum, particularly in science, meets the needs of all students and enables them to make good progress.
- Improve the impact of improvement planning by making sure that the measures used to judge success are closely linked to improvements in students' learning and progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The majority of students begin Year 7 with standards that are well above average in English and mathematics. By the end of Year 11, standards in mathematics are well above national standards due to consistently good teaching. The proportion of students gaining grades C or above in English at GCSE is above the national average.
- Results varied considerably across subjects in 2012 and this variation continues which is why achievement requires improvement. The 2012 results were well above the national average in a range of subjects, including modern foreign languages, history, mathematics and religious studies. In many subjects, students do as well as others nationally but in some subjects their results are well below the national figures, particularly in art, music and in additional science. The standards reached in the English Baccalaureate were well above national standards. The academy is aware that some middle ability students do not achieve as well as they ought to in the English Baccalaureate and they have started to check the progress of these students more carefully.
- The academy's 'student tracking data' indicates that progress still requires improvement in a number of subjects, including science. Lesson observations and a review of students' work confirm that there are still inconsistencies in the progress students are making both within individual subjects and across a range of subjects. There is also too much variation in the standard of spelling, punctuation and grammar in their writing.
- The alternative off-site provision has a good impact on the personal development and the progress of those few students who use it.
- The progress made by boys in the academy is similar to that made nationally, with girls' progress being well above national levels. Students from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language make less progress than expected in English and the academy is taking action to improve this.
- The early entry of all students for the mathematics examination resulted in high levels of achievement with all groups of students making the progress expected of them and many making better progress than this.
- Students' eligible for the Pupil premium did less well in their examinations than non pupil premium students. Students known to be eligible for free school meals achieved less well than those who are not known to be eligible. Disabled students and those with special educational needs are making good progress due to the good guidance they receive from teachers and teaching assistants in the academy's learning support unit.
- The academy promotes reading through its tutorial sessions where all students read at least twice a week. The least able readers are listened to by older students and volunteer 'Reading Friends', adults from the community. Least-able students make good progress with their reading but do not readily use their knowledge of letters and sounds to help them to read unfamiliar words.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Some teaching is of good or better quality, but too much still requires improvement. Teaching is better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3.
- In the best lessons, tasks are well matched to students' needs and provide an interesting range of activities. In a Year 11 history lesson, students were asked to describe what it was like to be a teenager in the 1950s and 1960s considering the impact of the Second World War. A creative range of resources were provided to meet the needs of all abilities and all students made good or better progress. In contrast, there are too many lessons where teachers' planning and teaching do not take into account students' different levels of knowledge or rates of progress, which slows learning.

- Teachers do not always check students' progress swiftly to provide enough guidance and support in order to help all of them progress well with their learning.
- The marking of students' work is inconsistent. Some is regular, thorough and gives a clear indication of what students have to do to improve. Other marking is irregular, cursory and does not provide helpful guidance. Even when marking is good and helpful comments are given, few teachers check that students act upon the advice in order to improve their work.
- Some teachers use skilful questioning that allows students to share their knowledge and understanding so that every student in the lesson benefits. In a mathematics lesson, each answer given by a student was built on by others so that they were all contributing to the solution. Too often questions are not used to involve all of the students and this leaves some students, particularly the least able, having a limited understanding of their work and making slow progress.
- The good use of praise seen in the majority of lessons helps to develop good relationships and confident students with high self-esteem.
- In a number of lessons, teachers do not set tasks with an appropriate level of challenge and students lose interest. Occasionally this leads to some minor misbehaviour. Teachers do not always manage misbehaviour swiftly and skilfully enough to prevent students' progress and learning being hindered.
- Teachers do not take enough opportunities to strengthen students' reading and writing in subjects other than English. They miss too many opportunities for students to read out loud and are not demanding enough, or insistent, that punctuation, grammar and spelling are accurate and that presentation is of a good standard.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Behaviour in the majority of lessons is good or better but it is not consistently positive in all lessons. When teachers did not give careful thought about how to interest the students or set work that matched their abilities there was some minor misbehaviour that had an impact on learning and slowed progress.
- During the past year attendance has been average. The academy's focus on persistent absentees has resulted in improvements in overall attendance. Although overall attendance is improving, the attendance of students eligible for the pupil premium and disabled students or special educational needs remains low and is not rising rapidly enough.
- Around the academy students are polite and courteous with adults. They are keen to tell visitors that they enjoy coming to the academy and confidently discuss their experiences and views of school. They treat each other with great respect and move sensibly and safely in a well-disciplined and well-mannered way. This leads to the academy being a harmonious community.
- Students have a good understanding of how to stay safe because the academy educates them well. They are fully aware of unsafe situations and show confidence in dealing with them, should they occur. Those attending alternative off-site provision say they feel safe and attend well. Almost all of the parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire, Parent View, said their children felt safe and happy at the academy.
- Students are especially assured when talking about cyber bullying and homophobic bullying. They have a good awareness of different forms of bullying and say that teachers take appropriate action on the infrequent occasions it occurs. Their self-esteem is high because relationships are good and they know that they can be open about any concerns they might have.
- The numbers of students excluded from the academy for short periods of time is below the national average and is reducing. There have been no permanent exclusions since the academy opened.
- Students feel they have good guidance about decisions that will affect their futures. Almost all students who left the academy at the end of Year 11 are in education, training or employment.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The Principal has a very clear view of how successful the academy can be, although the improvements he has introduced have yet to impact fully to ensure that the quality of teaching is always good or better. He has taken opportunities to develop a new leadership team who fully understand the values on which the academy is basing its developments as do the rest of the staff.
- The academy's development plan is based on an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. The plan clearly indicates the main priorities for the academy. However, measures to judge its success do not focus sufficiently on how new actions will specifically improve students' learning and progress.
- A very thorough system for checking on students' progress is being introduced throughout the academy. It is used well by some subject leaders who take action when students are falling behind in their learning. It is not used skilfully enough by all subject leaders and some groups of students, including those in receipt of the pupil premium, are not making good progress in all subjects.
- Performance management of teachers is robust and clearly identifies the skills they need to improve by using the national teacher standards. The professional development programme for staff is effective and involves observing teaching in another academy as well as observing good practice in their own academy. These recent changes made by the relatively new leadership team are leading to pockets of improvement. However, the impact of these observations is not yet clearly identified or driving improvement across all subject areas. The use of the academy's best teachers to improve teaching and learning across the academy is at an early stage of development.
- New teachers have been successfully introduced to the academy's ways of doing things. They are receiving good support from leaders to meet the requirements to teach good lessons.
- The curriculum offers a good range of academic courses for students but it is not always well-matched to the needs of the least able students in the academy, particularly in science. The academy does not have clear systems in place to check how the curriculum meets the needs of all students.
- A team-building residential activity for Year 7, visits and trips, and extra-curricular activities make a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The academy is working with the local mosque to ensure that all students can have access to after-school activities and this is a good example of equality of opportunity for all.
- The academy has effective partnerships with training providers to cater for a small number of students whose needs are better served through the alternative arrangements they are able to provide.
- The academy trust works in partnership with another local academy and this is supporting the development of teaching and learning and leadership; the full impact of this work has yet to be seen. The local authority has provided training for senior leaders to hold subject leaders to account for their areas. They visit annually to confirm the Principal's analysis of the academy's performance.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors fully understand the academy's aims because the Chair of the Governing Body assisted in the development of the aims. They use their wide range of professional skills to support the academy. Governors fully understand students' progress data and know which are the best performing subjects and those not doing so well. They ask searching questions of the Principal to determine the quality of teaching and learning in the academy. The governing body has regular financial reports and makes checks on the academy's budget. The governors have appointed an assistant Principal to manage the pupil premium funding and Year 7 catch-up premium. The funding is supporting additional English and mathematics lessons, extra

classroom support and a breakfast club. The effect of these recent developments on students' progress has yet to be fully determined. Governors understand fully the arrangements linking teachers' performance and their pay. When teachers' targets are not met, the governing body challenges the Principal to ensure that there is improvement. Governors have received training and ensure that the academy's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.

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	137399
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	406670

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	868
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Nicholson
Principal	Andy Pugh
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01924 520500
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