

Kearsley Academy

Springfield Road, Kearsley, Bolton, Lancashire, BL4 8HY

Inspection dates 9–10 May 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		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

- There is no established pattern of students making progress from their starting points that compares favourably with the national averages.
- The quality of students' writing is below the standard of their other work and is not always corrected sufficiently.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good or better and some inadequate teaching remains.
- While there is evidence of recent improvements, the actions of leaders and managers, including governors, have not had sufficient impact to ensure that students achieve consistently well.
- The sixth form requires improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- The academy has a growing reputation among the local community.
- Senior leaders have established a good system for improving the quality of teaching, which is beginning to have an impact. As a result, current students are making better progress than students who took GCSEs in previous years.
- Students feel safe; they behave well around the academy and believe that working in the new building has led to improved behaviour.
- Leaders and managers have successfully improved students' attendance.

Information about this inspection

- During this inspection, inspectors observed 25 lessons, including six that were observed jointly with senior staff at the academy. They also made shorter visits to several other lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Principal, staff and students, as well as the school's Achievement Partner and the headteacher of a local primary school. The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with the Chair of the Governing Body and the Chief Executive of the academy's main sponsors, Northern Education.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including that relating to the work of the governing body and the achievement, behaviour and safety of students. They took account of the school's surveys of parental views as well as responses to the staff questionnaire. They were unable to take account of the online questionnaire Parent View, because too few responses were registered.

Inspection team

Paul Chambers, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Timothy Gartside

Additional Inspector

Judith Tolley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Kearsley Academy is small compared with most secondary schools.
- The academy is sponsored by Northern Education and Bolton Council; it has partnership arrangements with Bolton University.
- The academy opened in September 2010 and expanded to include a sixth form in September 2011. It moved into new purpose-built accommodation in April 2013.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority and those from services families) is high compared with the national average.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Over 90% students are White British; remaining students come from a range of different ethnic backgrounds.
- In all year groups, the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language has increased recently.
- A very small number of students attend off-site provision part-time, following vocational courses run by Rathbone or the Prince's Trust.
- In 2012, the academy did not meet the government's current floor standards for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by
 - ensuring that teachers take more account of different ability levels in the class when planning and teaching lessons
 - pursuing further current initiatives to share good practice so that more teaching is of a consistently good quality.
- Raise achievement so that the proportion of students making the expected progress in English and mathematics at least matches national averages.
- Improve the quality of students' writing by giving more opportunities for extended writing and ensuring that teachers correct students' written work more rigorously.
- Improve outcomes in the sixth form by ensuring that students are on courses appropriate to their ability levels.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the evaluation of students' achievement takes sufficient account of all recent examination results
 - ensuring that the monitoring of teaching takes full account of students' progress over time.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students enter Year 7 with attainment that is below that expected for their age. Attainment at GCSE overall is below average. Measures of progress show that students who left the school recently made less progress than similar students in other schools. In both 2011 and 2012, the proportion of students making the expected progress in English was below average; similarly, the proportion making the expected progress in mathematics was below average.
- Data provided by the school, supported by the early-entry GCSE results of current Year 11 students and other inspection evidence, show that current students are making better progress than those from recent years. The evidence points clearly to higher results in GCSE English and mathematics than those achieved by recent students.
- The quality of students' writing is lower than other aspects of their work.
- The achievement of all groups, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, requires improvement. Students who speak English as an additional language, many of whom are relatively new to the school, are well supported and quickly acquire the skills they need to take a full part in lessons.
- In 2012, students known to be eligible for the pupil premium attained GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics that were approximately one grade below those of other students.
- Only small numbers of sixth-form students entered for qualifications before the end of the sixth form's first year of operation. However, the proportion of successful entries was lower than the national average. More recent evidence shows that, while some current students are making good progress, others are having difficulty coping with the demands of their courses.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching observed during the inspection ranged from outstanding to inadequate. While the majority was good or better, a substantial proportion was not. Inspection evidence and students' progress over time indicate that the school's view, evaluating teaching as good, is over-positive.
- Teachers show good subject knowledge. They use information and communication technology well to display key ideas in an interesting and attractive way. They develop positive relationships with students; as a result, lessons take place in a calm atmosphere and students respond well to the tasks set.
- In several lessons seen, students learnt effectively by reflecting on the quality of their work or that of other students. For example, in an excellent dance lesson, the teacher drew students' attention repeatedly to the criteria used to assess their performance. As a result, at the end of the lesson, students were able to explain clearly what they had learnt.
- Where the learning is less effective, teachers take insufficient account of the range of abilities in the class, so that the work is too difficult for some and too easy for others. While the quality of questioning was good in several lessons, in others, the teacher gave students insufficient thinking time or missed chances for students to give an extended answer.
- Teachers have responded positively to the school's drive to improve students' language, communication and mathematical skills. However, they do not always give sufficient attention to developing students' writing skills, for example, they give too few opportunities for extended writing or they fail to correct poor spelling or grammar.
- In the sixth form lessons observed during the inspection, teaching was consistently good.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Students behave well around the school and most lessons take place in a calm working

atmosphere. Staff and students believe that the move to the new buildings has had a positive impact on students' behaviour. Sixth-form students work well outside lessons in the study areas allocated to them.

- The academy's pastoral system and mentoring of individual students who display challenging behaviour have helped to reduce both the number of exclusions and the number of referrals to senior staff.
- Students feel safe in the academy. They know that there is always someone on the staff to whom they can turn. They are aware of different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. They report that, although there is some name calling, bullying is rare and dealt with swiftly.
- Attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. The proportion of students who are persistently absent has reduced. Students move calmly and sensibly around the academy and most are ready to start lessons on time. Managers are aware that a small number of students need help to improve their punctuality to lessons.
- The small number of students who attend off-site provision appreciate the opportunity to learn in a less formal setting and to develop work-related skills. Managers ensure that the students are safe and monitor their attendance and progress closely.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- While the school evaluates leadership and management as outstanding, inspectors judge it to require improvement because leaders have yet to secure a track record of good achievement for students or a trend of improving examination results. Self-evaluation takes insufficient account of the full set of recent examination results, such as the inadequate achievement of students who took GCSEs in 2012.
- Leaders, including the Principal, have high ambitions for future developments. They articulate a clear philosophy for raising aspirations and improving outcomes for young people in the area. Evidence for this can be found in the decision to set up the sixth form and maintain it even when, initially, numbers were low. Numbers in the sixth form grew considerably this year.
- Leaders and managers form a unified team and enjoy the support of other staff, for example, all who responded to the staff questionnaire said they are proud to work at Kearsley Academy. The academy enjoys a growing reputation in the area, and has established effective partnerships with local primary schools.
- The academy enters students early for their GCSE English and mathematics. Relatively few students gain the highest A* and A grades. Inspection evidence suggests that more students have gained the highest grades this year but also that some students lose motivation to improve their grade after gaining a grade C at their first attempt.
- The curriculum meets the needs of students. In Year 7, a cross-curricular approach to teaching English and humanities subjects helps students to settle into the academy quickly and to develop strong relationships with their form teacher. The academy has set up timetabled sessions that focus on helping weaker readers to catch up with age-related expectations. In Key Stage 4, leaders have ensured that curricular options enable students to gain a grounding in the most popular sixth-form subjects.
- A programme of after-school enrichment activities helps to promote students' social and teamwork skills. Groups of students have achieved notable success at a national level, gaining prestigious awards in cheerleading and street-dance.
- The pupil premium funding has been spent on a range of provision, including one-to-one tuition in mathematics, mentoring, literacy support and motivational trips. The impact of this additional provision is mixed: in English and mathematics, the gap between the attainment of students eligible for the pupil premium and that of other students widened in 2012 compared with the previous year, but data supplied by the school show some narrowing of gaps for current students. Year 7 catch-up funding has been used for educational visits and to support the

teaching of reading but it is too soon to assess its impact.

- The school's surveys show positive parental views of the school. For example, parents feel well informed about the progress their children are making.
 - The academy has capacity to improve. Leaders and managers have raised attendance and improved behaviour. The quality of teaching is beginning to improve, as a result of sharing good practice and focused staff development and is leading to better progress for current students. However, attainment dropped last year (albeit with a weaker group of students). Leaders accept that examination predictions last year were over-optimistic and now have a more rigorous system in place for monitoring students' progress.
 - The academy's sponsors provide helpful support in a number of ways. For example, Northern Education provides funding for the school's Achievement Partner, who is able to give additional support to the school's leaders. The support from Bolton Council facilitates links between the academy and other local schools, and enables staff from different schools to share expertise. The partnership with Bolton University helps to raise the aspirations of sixth-form students.
 - The academy meets all safeguarding requirements.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors hold the academy's leaders to account. For example, they challenged the academy's leaders to explain why the 2012 results did not meet predictions and are now confident that the system used to monitor students' progress is more reliable. They are aware of where teaching is stronger and where it is weaker through not only discussions with the Principal, but also regular visits to classrooms. They ensure that pay rises are awarded only when merited by teachers' performance.
 - Governors ensure that financial management is sound and monitor the use of pupil premium funding. They are aware that the school's website does not currently include enough information on issues such as the academy's curriculum or the pupil premium and its impact.
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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

Unique reference number	136135
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	399788

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	440
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ray Steele
Principal	Nigel Jepson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01204 332 555
Fax number	01204 332 555
Email address	admin@kearsleyacademy.org

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