

The Dearne Advanced Learning Centre

Goldthorpe Road, Goldthorpe, Rotherham, South Yorkshire, S63 9EW

Inspection dates 4–5 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
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.

- Not enough students make the expected progress in English and mathematics. There is underachievement in other subjects and gaps between the performance of different groups of students are not closing fast enough.
- Teaching remains inadequate overall but the quality of teaching is improving in some subject areas.
- Some teachers have low expectations of what students are capable of learning in lessons and do not set work that is sufficiently challenging.
- Not enough lessons provide opportunities for students to be engaged in their learning, to work cooperatively with others and understand how to improve their work.
- Not all leaders have the skills required to enable them to monitor their areas of responsibility effectively.
- Attendance remains below the national average and not enough students understand the value and importance of regular attendance.
- Students' ability to communicate, write at length and improve their mathematical skills are not developed systematically throughout the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The Principal has a very good understanding of the issues facing the school. She demonstrates determination and has rapidly made headway by tackling underachievement and weak teaching robustly.
- Students are friendly and courteous to visitors. They recognise that established rules are now used more consistently.
- Members of the governing body work closely with school leaders and understand the barriers to be overcome. They are very clear about the direction the school must take to improve further and are working well to make things better.
- The local authority, academy sponsors designate and school leaders work well in partnership.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed parts of 37 lessons; eight of these were jointly observed with senior and middle leaders. Inspectors observed leaders giving feedback to teachers and inspectors also looked at work in students' books.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, senior and middle leaders, two representatives of the local authority and five members of the governing body, including the Chair and vice-chair. A meeting was also held with a representative from Navigate Academies Trust, the chosen academy sponsor for the school.
- Students were spoken to in lessons and around the school during social times.
- When making the inspection judgements, there were no responses to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire (Parent View) for the inspectors to look at. However, responses to the school's own survey of the views of parents completed in March 2013 were considered. The 23 responses from staff who returned the Ofsted inspection questionnaire were also reviewed.
- A range of documents was considered including those relating to students' progress, the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness, governance, monitoring of teaching and safeguarding. Other documents and school policies were also taken into account, some of which are available on the school's website.

Inspection team

Marianne Young, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lynne Selkirk

Additional Inspector

Paul Rafferty

Additional Inspector

Johann MacKinnon

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 school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, who are in local authority care or whose parents are in the armed forces), is almost twice that seen nationally.
- The vast majority of students are White British with a few other heritages represented.
- The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs or who have additional support called 'school action plus' is above that seen nationally.
- The proportion of students who have support with their work because they have been identified as needing 'school action' is well above that seen nationally.
- Ninety six students in Years 10 and 11 receive part of their education off-site. The providers are Barnsley College, Dearne Valley College and a local hair and beauty training salon.
- Students' attainment and achievement is below the current national floor target, the minimum attainment and progress expected by the government.
- When the school was inspected in February 2012, it required a notice to improve because it was performing less well than might reasonably be expected. A monitoring inspection took place in September 2012 when progress was judged to be satisfactory.
- The Principal took up her post on 1 January 2013.
- Twenty teaching staff, which is 28%, will leave the school on 31 August 2013. Eleven new staff have been appointed and will take up their posts on 1 September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to at least good so that students are able to make consistently good progress and attainment rises in all subjects, by:
 - making certain that teachers use information about students' capabilities effectively so that students are given appropriately challenging work that interests and engages them in lessons
 - ensuring that teachers' expectations of students' capabilities are high
 - ensuring teachers use questioning more effectively to check students' understanding and challenge their thinking
 - ensuring that marking and teachers' feedback to students help them understand how to improve their work and take the next steps towards meeting their targets
 - developing students' study skills so that they can work independently in lessons and be less reliant on guidance from the teacher.
- Leaders at all levels must take responsibility for moving the school forward by ensuring that:
 - those leaders who require help to fulfil their roles effectively have the skills needed to monitor and evaluate their area robustly
 - all staff take responsibility for improving students' literacy and numeracy skills
 - all staff demonstrate a consistent approach towards implementing whole school policies.

- Insist that regular attendance from all students is the norm, by:
 - monitoring trends in the attendance of individuals and groups of students
 - working closely with students and families to overcome the barriers to full attendance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Students' progress in English and mathematics especially, but also in other subjects including science and geography, is inadequate. Students' progress is hampered by gaps in learning resulting from previously inadequate teaching, as well as current weaknesses in provision. This is particularly the case for all groups of students in Years 10 and 11. The school's assessment information indicates that about half of the current Year 11 students will not make the progress expected in English and mathematics during their time at the school. Their progress is well below that expected nationally.
- The school's assessment records, and lessons observed by inspectors, confirm an improving picture for students in Key Stage 3. More students than previously are making the expected rate of progress in both English and mathematics.
- The pattern of the progress made by different groups of students is not consistent as they journey through the school. This is reflected in their lessons. Consequently, although the gap between disabled students, those with special educational needs and their peers is narrowing overall, it varies from year to year. This year, there is a widening gap in English and mathematics for older students when the progress made by boys is compared to that of girls. The school is not fully successful in securing equal opportunities for all its students because boys do not make as much progress as girls.
- The GCSE results gained by Year 11 students in the key subjects of English and mathematics have been below the national averages since the previous inspection and the school's predictions suggest that they are unlikely to improve this year.
- Pupil premium funding, including additional funding for Year 7 students, is being used sensibly and a thorough analysis of the impact of this expenditure on students' outcomes has recently been undertaken. This analysis shows that students who are known to be eligible for free school meals are making faster progress than their peers. The gap of about one GCSE grade between their attainment and that of other students is closing. There are inconsistencies in this because the strategies used are relatively recent and have not been able to overcome the legacy of underachievement.
- Students who find traditional schooling challenging receive part of their education off-site and attain qualifications that enable them to continue their education or training when they leave school.
- No students are entered early for GCSE English. Early entry in mathematics is used as a platform for students to access the more difficult paper and so higher grades. School data suggests that this entry policy is not limiting students' achievement.
- The amount of progress students make in lessons is dependent on how well information about their potential is used when teachers prepare lessons. A new system is in place to check how well students are doing and to hold teachers to account for any underachievement.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- The quality of teaching seen during the inspection ranged from outstanding to inadequate. Teaching was good or better in less than half of the lessons observed. Weak teaching has persisted for too long and, therefore, over time teaching has failed to eradicate underachievement and ensure all students make the progress of which they are capable. However, some recent improvements are evident in Key Stage 3 where better teaching was seen.
- Lessons are often heavily directed by teachers and students are not given the opportunity to work independently and contribute to their learning. When this occurs and lessons do not meet students' needs, they become bored, passive and irrelevant chatter and inappropriate behaviour occur.

- Not enough lessons are sufficiently well planned to motivate, engage and involve all students in learning. A series of tasks is planned within the allotted time but teachers do not adjust these activities during the lesson in response to students' needs. Teachers check on whether activities have been completed but do not use questioning effectively to measure how well students have understood the work or to challenge them to think more deeply about what they are learning.
- Inspectors saw too many lessons where teachers readily provided answers to their own questions and did not allow students to work things out for themselves. However, in a literacy lesson for a small group of Year 7 students, progress was rapid and understanding secure because students could investigate and discover information during the lesson. A review of the lesson enabled the students to demonstrate what they had learnt rather than what they had done.
- In a very few lessons, teachers provide opportunities for students to develop their mathematical skills as well as their skills in speaking and writing at length. However, because these skills are not given prominence, they do not improve systematically.
- Inspectors saw examples of good and outstanding teaching but these are infrequent. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson, students moved seamlessly through the lesson as they worked together and shared an understanding of factors and prime numbers. Time was used very well, students' enjoyment was evident and progress was rapid.
- Teachers' marking and feedback are not consistently good. Some books have positive comments and grades are given, but these do not help students understand what to do so that they can reach their goals.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' attitudes to learning are not consistently good in all lessons. Students can lose interest and 'switch off'. They sometimes find it hard to maintain concentration during the hour and a half lessons. Inspectors observed this and students confirm that this is typical when lessons are not planned well enough.
- Attendance is below the national average and only recently have leaders begun to tackle this situation with urgency. Weak attendance is exacerbated by the current arrangements for lessons on Fridays. School documents show clearly a dip in attendance, particularly from older students, at the end of the week and this has a negative impact on their progress and attainment. Posters around the school show that regular attendance is being rewarded and this is appreciated by younger students.
- Students told inspectors that behaviour has improved since the beginning of the year because the established rules, including the zero-tolerance approach from the Principal and senior leaders, are being adhered to more regularly by the vast majority of staff. Most students behave sensibly around the school for the majority of the time. Inspectors found students welcoming to visitors and keen to discuss life at school. However, inspectors noted some inattention to behavioural issues by a very few staff.
- Relationships between adults and students are generally positive. However, the current arrangement of the school day restricts the opportunities for students from different year groups to mix, either at social times or within after-school clubs. Efforts are being made to improve this situation: involving students when primary pupils visit the school is a positive move.
- Students are aware of the different types of bullying, including homophobic and cyber-bullying, as well as the dangers of racist behaviour. They report that if bullying occurs, it is dealt with swiftly and 'The Cube' is used by students who need time to reflect and consider their situation.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The newly appointed Principal has wasted no time completing a thorough review of the school. She shows a steely determination and in a short space of time has implemented a number of systems designed clearly to make a difference and to improve the outcomes for all students. Decisive action has been taken, for example, changing the curriculum, the timings of the school day and the leadership structure. Parents are generally in favour of the changes and students look forward to the shorter lesson times.
- A high number of staff will leave at the end of this term because they do not wish to embrace the changes implemented by the Principal. A key improvement is holding all teachers to account for students' progress.
- The Principal is very well supported by the vice-principals who check regularly on the quality of teaching and the impact it has on students' progress. They have a clear grasp of where improvements are needed and how they are working to ensure these happen. Training and support for teachers are in place and teachers are able to work with their peers. Although some improvements are evident, a few staff find it difficult to improve their teaching.
- Many leaders are new to their roles and do not have all the skills required to fulfil them. Senior leaders have made the responsibilities of new leaders clear and have high expectations of their work.
- Performance management is in place. Previously, the criteria for awarding teachers increases in pay were too lenient: teachers now have to prove they have made a difference to outcomes for students.
- The curriculum is adequate and is set to change from September, including a reduction in the number of students educated off-site. This change is to ensure that these students attain qualifications commensurate with their capabilities and so all students are able to access appropriate courses when they leave school. Students are able to consider and learn about spiritual and cultural issues during some lessons, but this, together with ensuring attention to students' literacy and numeracy skills in all the subjects they study, is underdeveloped.
- The local authority provides helpful support for leaders and some departments. Reviews of how well the school is doing are conducted regularly and there is a strong partnership with officers from Navigate Academies Trust. This is helping to ensure a smooth transition to academy status in the future.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors welcome and benefit from recent training from the Principal and the local authority so that they can talk knowledgeably about how well the pupil premium funding is being used, for example. They receive detailed, realistic reports from the Principal which, together with their own visits to the school, enable them to gain a view of the quality of teaching and understand the challenges to be overcome. Links with parents and students are being developed so that their views can be taken into account. Governors strongly support senior leaders' decisions in managing the performance of staff and are robust in challenging the Principal and holding her to account. At the time of the inspection, safeguarding arrangements met current requirements and governors make sure that discrimination is not tolerated.

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	106656
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	399752

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1030
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Steadman
Principal	Chris Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2012
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