

# Berwick Academy

Adams Drive, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland, TD15 2JF

**Inspection dates** 15–16 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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

- Students' achievement varies too much because they do not make consistently good progress over time and across a range of subjects.
- The sixth form requires improvement because students' achievement also varies too widely across different courses.
- The quality of teaching is not strong enough to quickly eradicate the variations and pockets of underachievement which exist.
- The quality of marking varies considerably. Teachers' feedback does not always make clear to students the next steps needed to improve their work.
- Robust whole-academy monitoring and evaluation processes and systems for tracking students' performance are not fully embedded across the school, including the sixth form.
- Leaders do not check or support the work of individual teachers well enough to make sure all students make good progress and consequently systems to manage teachers' performance are weak.
- Recent changes implemented by the headteacher have not had time to impact on students' learning and the academy has yet to demonstrate it can reach and sustain a consistently good performance in all aspects of its work.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and governors have a clear focus on the academy's priorities and what needs to be done for it to have good overall effectiveness.
- Relationships between students and staff are very positive. Students behave well and are supportive and respectful of each other; their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- Parents and students rightly recognise and appreciate the high quality pastoral support, care and guidance the academy provides for all its students.
- A broad curriculum and a wide range of additional learning opportunities in the main school and sixth form cater well for a wide range of needs.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with half a day’s notice. Inspectors observed 27 part lessons across the academy including lessons in the sixth form. One lesson was jointly observed by an inspector and a senior leader.
- Inspectors looked at students’ work in books as well as the quality of teachers’ marking and feedback as part of their lesson observations and through a number of shorter visits to classrooms.
- Inspectors observed the day-to-day life of the academy, including students’ behaviour as they socialised together at break and lunchtimes, and observed an assembly.
- Inspectors spoke to students in lessons and at various times during each day; they also spoke formally to three groups of students, including those studying in the sixth form.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including performance data, records relating to attendance and behaviour, the headteacher’s latest report to governors and the academy’s improvement plan. The central record of checks on staff was also scrutinised.
- Inspectors took account of the 48 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also considered the views of staff, including those expressed in the 32 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the academy’s view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support the academy’s improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

## Inspection team

Wendy Ripley , Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Cathryn Kirby

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Julia Wright

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Jacqueline Rothery

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, the leadership of the academy has changed. The headteacher joined the academy in April 2013 and there has been a recent reorganisation of the senior leadership team and the roles of middle leaders.
- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The number of students on roll has fallen in recent years.
- Most students are of White British heritage; very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, students known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families, is average.
- A below average proportion of students have been identified as requiring extra help through school action because of their special educational needs or disability. The proportion of students receiving extra help at school action plus or having a statement of special educational needs is above average. This is partly because the academy manages a learning resource base for up to 26 students with moderate learning difficulties. All of these students are fully integrated into the academy and are supported alongside their peers in class.
- In 2012, the academy met the government's floor standards (these are the minimum standards and rates of progress expected of secondary aged students).

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

- Ensure that achievement for all groups of students, especially those known to be eligible for the pupil premium and the more-able, is good in all their subjects by making sure that teaching is at least good by teachers:
  - planning lessons so that work is set at the right level and takes account of students' needs
  - consistently challenging and engaging students so they attain the highest possible grades
  - providing more opportunities for students to be active participants in their learning and developing their confidence and independence
  - regularly checking on students' progress in lessons and adjusting their teaching accordingly
  - marking students' work regularly and consistently, providing guidance about how they can improve their work and challenging untidy and careless work.
- Make leadership and management more effective and hasten the rate of improvement by:
  - ensuring processes for whole-academy monitoring and evaluation, and systems for tracking students' performance are rigorous, fully embedded and consistently applied across the academy
  - routinely tracking the performance of individuals and groups of students across a wide range of subjects
  - carrying out regular checks on the quality of teaching and making sure written records of feedback to staff are shared with those observed to support their improvement
  - making sure performance management systems enable staff to demonstrate the impact of their work on students' achievement and routinely hold staff to account for the quality of their teaching and their impact in other areas of delegated responsibility
  - checking that the academy's programme of training and development has a high impact on

teachers' practice within and between departments so that variations in students' examination performance and their experiences in the classroom are addressed.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### Requires improvement

- Taking account of their prior attainment, students do not make as much progress as they should across some areas of the curriculum. This is because not enough teaching is good or better.
- Students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 4 are broadly average and there are signs that the academy's focus on these core subjects is resulting in improved outcomes for 16-year-olds.
- Examination results for sixth form students resitting GCSE English and mathematics are by contrast disappointing and show too little progress.
- Attainment at GCSE level is too variable and in the last three years students' results have been inconsistent in a number of subjects, including science, history, French, geography and physical education.
- Although, historically, national data have shown pockets of stronger performance, the current information provided by the academy, the quality of teaching observed by inspectors and the scrutiny of students' work confirm that students do not make good enough progress through Key Stage 4.
- Overall, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE subjects at grades A\* to C is broadly average. In 2013, the academy's data show that the proportion of students achieving on this measure increased when compared to the previous year.
- A few students are entered early for their GCSE mathematics examination. If they do not achieve their individual target, they resit for a better grade.
- The academy's data for 2013 indicate that boys' achievement improved, narrowing the wide gap seen in the previous year between boys and girls. More effective use of the additional funding received through the pupil premium ensures that eligible students are making more rapid gains in their learning. Nonetheless, academy leaders recognise that the gaps between students who are supported by the pupil premium and other students are not closing fast enough.
- Students who are disabled or who have special educational needs achieve well taking their individual starting points into account. This is due to the high-quality care and support they receive.
- Students join the sixth form with broadly average standards. Students' attainment at the end of Year 13 is broadly in line with that found nationally. Students make better progress in applied A levels and vocational subjects but overall, their attainment and progress show similar variability between subjects to that seen in the main school.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good enough to sustain good achievement or eradicate the small pockets of underachievement that exist.
- The great majority of teachers engaged constructively with inspectors in discussions about their lessons that were observed and how they could be improved.
- While there is good practice in planning, teaching and assessment in some areas of the school, this is not being shared effectively to benefit all teachers in all departments so that variability in students' performance can be eradicated swiftly.
- In the very best lessons, teachers use their good subject knowledge well to extend students' understanding of their work, probe their thinking, engage them and encourage them to reflect on what they are learning. For example, in a Year 9 religious education lesson, students worked in small groups following well-structured guidance to produce a 'rap', song, or poem about 'miracles'. The lesson focused on developing literacy and enhancing students' speaking and listening skills while providing opportunities for them to reflect on the nature of everyday miracles and things they might be thankful for in a way that appealed to their age and interests.

- Fostering students' active participation in learning is evident in some lessons and maintains their interest and engagement with learning. Elsewhere, teachers talk for too long and provide students with too few opportunities to participate. Very occasionally, where this happens students lose interest, but demonstrate high levels of maturity and self-control under these circumstances.
- Teachers do not fine-tune plans so that work set is at the right level for all the students. In a few lessons all students are given the same work. Teachers do not check frequently on how well students are progressing in their learning so they can adjust their teaching accordingly. During the inspection, work given did not challenge students at different starting points to make better than expected progress. As a result, not all students, especially the more-able, are achieving the grades of which they are capable.
- Marking is not regularly helpful in telling students how well they have done and how to make further progress. Students are not always challenged about the presentation of their work. This means some do not get into the habit of working neatly or routinely correcting spellings and are at risk of losing marks in examinations as a result. Some students who spoke with inspectors commented on how little oral and written feedback they received.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils

good

- This is a caring academy and the welcoming atmosphere is immediately evident to visitors. The ethos this creates is reflected in students' good behaviour and the sensible attitudes of many.
- Students arrive punctually to lessons. They behave well in lessons and around the academy and usually show positive attitudes to learning especially in lessons where they know their contribution is valued and expected. Students get on well together, supporting each other in activities and in doing so add to their enjoyment of learning. Students who need help to manage their behaviour are supported well.
- Students feel safe. They say they are well-taught about risks to their own safety through the curriculum, and from the contributions made by visitors to the academy, for example, the local fire brigade. Good relationships exist between students and the academy staff.
- Students are made well aware of the different types of bullying. They know that bullying is not tolerated and is dealt with quickly. The parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the academy keeps their children safe and cares for them well.
- Students' attendance is average compared to other secondary schools and is steadily improving. Exclusion rates are low.
- The academy provides many and varied opportunities for good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is reflected in students' good behaviour, mutual respect and tolerance. Students empathise with the unfairness and hurt caused by prejudice and discrimination towards different groups in society and have a keen sense of fair play and a will to help others. Students spoke with great feeling about all that they had seen and done while on a visit to their link school in South Africa. They are rightly proud of the support they have given to their new friends, the relationships they have forged and the positive difference their fund-raising and help has made.

### The leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The new headteacher is acting swiftly to bring about improvement. She is providing clear drive, ambition and focus to address weaknesses in provision and is raising expectations. The overwhelming majority of responses to the staff questionnaire indicate that staff are fully supportive of the headteacher's leadership and the actions taken so far.
- At other levels of leadership, recent changes have yet to embed and have an impact on outcomes for students. There is more work to be done to refine academy plans and policies, develop the work of senior and middle leaders, and to tackle the inconsistencies in teaching

quality and in students' learning over time.

- Some teaching requires improvement, and greater emphasis needs to be placed on monitoring and improving the students' rates of progress in all lessons and subjects, rather than just the standards they reach. This applies to both the main academy and the sixth form.
- Robust systems for monitoring and evaluating the performance of staff and the effectiveness of their teaching, and for tracking students' performance in their learning are yet to be embedded and applied consistently across the academy.
- The sharing of existing good practice within the academy happens but the process has not been fully maximised to the benefit of all teachers. This is a missed opportunity for the academy to bring about improvement given that its remoteness limits other opportunities to access training and development and forge partnerships with education providers locally.
- Actions taken to secure equality of opportunity for all is reducing gaps between different groups of students and has eliminated the use of student exclusion as a strategy to manage behaviour.
- The curriculum is good because it ensures individuals have a range of practical, cultural and academic experiences that prepare them well for the next stage of their education. Students appreciate the wholehearted commitment the academy makes to meet their diverse range of needs and the steps it takes to ensure they have access to as wide a range of opportunities as possible in the isolated rural area in which they live.
- Students are provided with good quality information, advice and guidance. Impartial careers guidance ensures that students are fully informed about a range of study programmes at the academy and elsewhere that may match their individual needs and aspirations.
- The safety and welfare of all students are a high priority and safeguarding procedures meet current requirements.
- The rapidity and effectiveness of the headteacher's actions to date, the support and challenge provided by the governing body and the staff's positive support for change provide strong evidence of the capacity to bring about further improvement.
- Academy leaders report that they receive good support from some of the local authority services they buy into such as those to manage human resources. Similarly, services to promote improved attendance and ensure specialist support is in place for individual students are valued because of the effective contribution they make to pastoral care.
- There have been very few recent external evaluations of the academy's work. Those that have been undertaken have not been of sufficient depth to help identify the areas of the academy's work that require improvement. Academy leaders and the local authority agree that while relationships between them are beginning to improve, they have been strained in recent years for various reasons. This has meant that local authority visits to the academy have been infrequent and the local authority has not been aware of how well the academy has been doing. Consequently, the local authority has not provided effective support and challenge to help the academy improve. A local authority School Improvement Partner has recently been assigned to work with academy leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Is good.
  - Members of the governing body are committed to securing further improvement and understand what needs to be done.
  - Governors are well-equipped to support and challenge leaders and hold them to account; they use their significant expertise and experience to good effect.
  - The governors regularly discuss the academy's performance, including payment in relation to the quality of teaching, and check on the impact the pupil premium is having on improving outcomes for eligible students.
  - All statutory duties, including safeguarding duties are met fully and governors keep a close watch on the care, guidance and support being provided for vulnerable students and those with disabilities or special educational needs.

## 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>	137598
<b>Local authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	428952

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 converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	760
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Colin Frame
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alexis Widdowson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 March 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01289 305083
<b>Fax number</b>	01289 302681
<b>Email address</b>	admin@berwickacademy.gov.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2013

