

# Airedale Academy

Crewe Road, Airedale, Castleford, West Yorkshire, WF10 3JU

**Inspection dates** 12–13 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b> <b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Given students' low starting points, they make excellent progress in English. The proportion of students securing five or more A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics, is higher than the national average.
- There are many examples of good and outstanding teaching in the academy. In the best lessons, teachers engage students in exciting and challenging activities leading to excellent progress.
- Students feel safe, are very welcoming, polite and courteous to visitors. They work well together in classrooms and regularly help one another to ensure everyone makes good progress. Their attitudes to learning are best when the teaching is good or better.
- There is some outstanding leadership practice within the academy. The academy's 'striving for excellence' motto is evidenced in the development of staff expertise. Leaders' expertise is used to improve teaching and achievement for students in the academy and in its partner primary schools.
- Governors are not only passionate about making sure students experience quality teaching and make good progress but also that they are looked after and develop as responsible young individuals. This drives governors to effectively support and call the academy leadership to account.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding. Achievement in a few subjects, particularly mathematics, art, history and technology, is not yet consistently good or better.
- Students' attitudes to learning are not always sufficiently positive for them to make outstanding progress.
- Leaders and managers do not always take into enough consideration the quality of the work in students' books and students' opinions when checking on the quality of teaching.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 part lessons, involving 40 teachers. Nine of these were jointly observed with members of the senior leadership team. Three registration periods and one assembly were also visited.
- Inspectors spoke to four governors, a school improvement advisor, senior and middle leaders across the academy and students from every year group.
- Inspectors looked closely at a range of documents including information on teachers' performance, the academy improvement plan, external review reports, records of the quality of teaching and internal and external data on students' attainment and progress.
- Inspectors considered the 29 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and reviewed the results of written responses of 44 parents to the same questions.

## Inspection team

Pankaj Gulab, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Osama Abdul Rahim	Additional Inspector
John Ashley	Additional Inspector
Tony Price	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Airedale Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be supported through the pupil premium (additional funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and the children of families in the armed forces) is above average.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below the national average, as is the proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is above average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' progress and attainment.
- Ossett Academy and Sixth Form College oversees the provision of the sixth-form teaching on the Airedale site. This provision was not the subject of this inspection.
- The academy is a named partner within the teaching-school alliance based at Outwood Grange Academy.
- Airedale Academy is in a formal collaborative partnership with seven primary schools.

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

- Raise students' attainment and progress, particularly in mathematics, history, art and technology, to match those of the high-performing subjects, through securing more good and outstanding teaching by:
  - ensuring that teachers use their knowledge of students' starting points to plan activities and provide resources that help students of all abilities to make good and outstanding progress
  - insisting that teachers plan engaging and interesting activities that enable students to take more responsibility for their own learning and to have consistently positive attitudes to learning
  - sharing more widely the excellent classroom practice already evident in the academy.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that when checking the quality of teaching, more consistent use is made of the review of students' work in books and opinions about their learning experiences.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment on entry to the academy is below average in both English and mathematics. Standards reached by the end of Year 11 exceed the national average in English and are in line in mathematics. The proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics, in 2013 rose to above the national figure, demonstrating the good achievement of students in the academy.
- There is excellent progress being made by students in English, with the proportion making at least good progress being more than 10 percentage points above the national average. Progress in mathematics is improving and close to the national average. This in part reflects the academy's good use of the Year 7 catch-up funding provided to support students entering the academy with attainment below that expected for age in these subjects.
- Over the past two years, students in the academy have secured high point scores for the best eight subjects including English and mathematics, as a result of good performances in both GCSE and vocational courses. On this measure, the academy adds excellent value to students' progress.
- Students supported through the pupil premium secure average point scores that are well above those of their peers nationally. They even exceed the value for all students nationally. However, they still do not match the scores reached by their peers in the academy. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals making expected levels of progress in English improved in 2013 to above that of not only their peers nationally, but also of all students nationally. However, the rate of progress remains below that of others in the academy. In mathematics, the proportion of these students making the expected level of progress rose to the national average but was below the rate of progress of other students in the academy. The attainment of students known to be eligible for free school meals in English and mathematics, is a grade below that of their peers in the academy who are not eligible for free school meals. This is a smaller gap than that existed in 2012.
- The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs improved in English to above the 2012 national average and in mathematics to the 2012 national average, but in both cases lagged slightly behind the progress of other students in the academy. However, the narrowing of any gaps in the progress and attainment of various groups demonstrates the good promotion of equal opportunities.
- The performance of most-able students improved in the 2013 GCSE examinations and more students secured A\* and A grades in many subjects, but not all; this rightly remains a focus for the academy.
- The academy no longer enters students early for GCSE examinations in Year 10 and uses entry part way through Year 11 only for students who are ready to take the examination and meet or exceed their expected levels of progress.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching seen during the inspection was good and some was outstanding. Work in students' books shows that teaching over a period of time is effective and leading to good progress. Interventions over the year are also having a positive impact on achievement. As a result, teaching over time is good in the academy.
- In the best lessons, it is obvious teachers know their students. They revisit previous work and build on the skills they will need use in order to address the objectives for the lesson. The range of activities and organisation of groups allow students to engage effectively in their learning. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to involve students with effective questioning that challenges and deepens their knowledge. Teachers regularly check learning, maintain pace and

challenge by offering support where it is needed and further challenge where it is not. As a result, students make good and outstanding progress in gaining new knowledge, skills and understanding.

- This was seen in a geography lesson that explored tourism in extreme environments through an adaptation of a 'snakes and ladders' game which used problem and benefit cards to facilitate students' discussion. Through collaborative discussions and effective questioning, students' understanding was developed significantly, leading to outstanding progress.
- Marking is good in a range of subjects; it gives students a clear indication of what they are doing well and how they might improve. While some teachers ensure students respond to their comments, this is inconsistently done across the academy, leading to students missing the opportunity to progress further. The academy is addressing this aspect.
- Teaching assistants are used well in lessons to address a range of student needs, including those of students with special educational needs. They are guided well by teachers and sensitive to giving students the time and opportunity to work things out for themselves before intervening.
- Literacy skills are promoted well in all curriculum areas and reading is promoted well across the academy. In one Year 8 science lesson, for example, a teacher used a complex article on the 'lines of defence' in human bodies to effectively develop students' comprehension skills by running a competition for students to find the correct answers to questions in the text. Staff across the academy participate in promoting literacy by publishing a picture of the book they are currently reading and sticking it on the door of their classroom or office.
- In lessons where teaching requires improvement, teachers have not planned sufficiently well to meet the needs of all groups in the class, for example, a few use the same resources for all students. Students are not challenged sufficiently and are given limited opportunities to take responsibility for and to consistently appreciate learning. Teachers do not always indicate clearly to students how much needs to be done in the time available. This leads to students taking their time over the work or being passive, resulting in slower progress.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Students' attitudes to learning are positive in most lessons and particularly when teaching is good or better and expectations are high, as in physical education and performing arts lessons. The academy has worked hard to develop the idea that students should support one another in their learning and not only rely on the teacher. This is evident in the best lessons, where students try to explain topics to those who are struggling, rather than do the work for them. However, in a few lessons where expectations are lower, students become passive and their attitudes to learning are less positive, which leads to their quality of learning being less than good.
- Students' social skills are well developed. They are welcoming, polite and courteous to visitors. They engage well with adults and honestly convey their feelings about the academy.
- Around the academy during break times and at change of lessons, students' behaviour is good. At lunchtimes, they queue in an orderly manner and show consideration for others. The atmosphere is calm. The presence of teachers is welcomed by students as a supportive structure rather than one that is needed. Students are regularly punctual to lessons.
- Behaviour strategies to reduce the incidents of poor behaviour have been effective because the number of fixed-term exclusions has dropped in the last year and continues on the downward trend this academic year. Students have every confidence that staff in the academy will address any issue of bullying well. A majority of parental responses on Parent View and most on paper questionnaires agree that the school manages bullying well and students in the academy are well behaved. Most parents indicated that their children feel safe in the academy.
- The academy has taken robust steps needed to improve attendance and reduce the levels of persistent absence. Both have improved over the last year by about two percent. Attendance is

now close to the national average and data from the current year suggest that attendance will continue to improve.

- The academy site, while being relatively open, is looked over at key points by staff in offices and remains safe. Students spoken to say they feel very safe in school and have been made aware of how to stay safe in different situations, including online and on the phone.

## **The leadership and management** are good

- The Principal has a vision that high achievement is possible for every student in every subject. This strong vision is shared and supported at all leadership levels, leading to improvements being made in the quality of teaching and learning. Partnership working is very strong and developed to improve the outcomes in the academy and its partner institutions.
- Governors and leaders in the academy are very forward looking in their improvement planning and have developed an effective partnership with its primary schools. This sharing of expertise and resources to address weak literacy skills, levels of participation and attendance, is showing positive impact. The standards with which students now enter the academy are much closer to the national average than ever before. This community approach to issues of participation and aspiration also extends beyond Year 11, with some sixth-form learning taking place on site as part of another college. Plans to open the academy's own sixth form are well advanced.
- Leaders at all levels know the strengths and weaknesses of the academy. Actions taken to address areas of weakness are effectively monitored through a robust quality assurance process. Performance management is well managed and staff are clear about what is expected of them.
- The quality of teaching is developed well through a programme of coaching and specific training. This is undertaken through the academy's partnership with a teaching school and through the sharing of good practice. Senior leaders who jointly observed lessons with inspectors identified the key features of good and weaker learning precisely and judged teaching accurately. The way the academy checks on teaching quality does not always include the consideration of students' views or an effective review of the work in their books to gain a more informed judgement of effectiveness over time.
- Targets set for students are challenging and well understood. Regular tracking of progress is shared with students who plot their progress on a chart that is attached to their books and folders. Students know how well they are doing as a result of teachers' regular marking and the opportunities built into lessons for self- and peer-assessment.
- The improvement strategy manager analyses data very well and provides regular progress data to enable all staff to identify the underachieving students. Effective intervention arrangements are in place and these contribute well to the standards reached by students at the end of Year 11.
- The curriculum structure is good and reviewed regularly to meet the needs of students well. It provides opportunities for all learners to develop a wide range of skills that promote learning. The quality of the curriculum in lessons is, however, not always engaging and interesting, leading to learning that is sometimes less than good.
- The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs are promoted well through the rich and extensive extra-curricular programmes and a range of trips and visits. The performing arts specialism subjects contribute significantly to developing students' self-esteem through the curriculum and a range of performances involving large numbers of students throughout the year.
- The academy makes good use of local-authority expertise in the form of an educational advisor who contributes to developing the skills of leaders in lesson observation and management.
- Safeguarding and child-protection arrangements in the academy are robust; they are effectively managed by the academy and overseen by the governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are passionate about making sure that all the needs of students are met within the

academy. They are reflective of their own abilities and undertake appropriate training when needed. They are regular visitors to the academy and have been involved in exploring the experiences of students in the academy. For example, one governor, with educational experience, shadowed a student supported through the pupil premium funding for a day with a focus on the literacy challenges the student might experience. This, alongside reports from the academy and some joint lesson observations with senior leaders, has provided governors with a clear picture of the quality of teaching. Governors have promoted robust performance management arrangements and not shied away from turning down progression up the pay spine when necessary. A focused review of standards and the impact of expenditure, such as the pupil premium, helps to ensure improvements continue to be secured in students' achievement and standards.

## 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>	136613
<b>Local authority</b>	Wakefield
<b>Inspection number</b>	425970

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>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	711
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mike Dixon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Michaela Blackledge
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 September 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01977 664555
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