

North Shore Academy

Talbot Street, Stockton-on-Tees, TS20 2AY,

Inspection dates 12–13 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching, while much improved, is not good enough to make sure that all groups of students, especially the most able, achieve as well as they should.
- Not enough students make good progress in the core subjects of English and in particularly mathematics and science.
- Students' achievement is not consistently good across a range of subjects. Standards, particularly in mathematics and science, have not risen sufficiently.
- Teaching is not consistent across the academy or within subjects. Consequently, some of the strengths in the best lessons, such as matching the work to the needs of the students, helpful marking of work and skilful questioning, are the very aspects missing from the weaker ones
- At times, teachers expectations of what students can achieve are too low. Tasks are occasionally too easy for the most-able students and this restricts their progress.
- Not all teachers do enough to develop students' reading, writing and speaking skills in lessons. Students' work is not always presented as neatly as it could be.

The school has the following strengths

- Students behave well and feel safe. They have good attitudes to learning and their behaviour around the academy is calm and purposeful. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
- Senior leaders' monitoring and evaluation of the work of the academy is rigorous and accurate. Their expectations of how students should behave and how well teachers should teach are without compromise.
- The quality of teaching in English and in physical education is strong and achievement in these subjects is accelerating.
- The relentless determination of the Principal, senior leaders and governors has resulted in many important aspects of the academy's work improving significantly within a very short space of time.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 36 lessons. Eight of these observations were carried out jointly with members of the academy's leadership team.
- Meetings were held with staff, students, five members of the governing body, the school improvement partner and representatives from the lead sponsor, Northern Education Trust.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including the academy's own evaluation of its work, achievement data and documents related to teachers' performance, the academy safeguarding procedures, students' behaviour and their attendance.
- There were insufficient responses to produce a Parent View report for inspectors to see. However, account was taken of the outcomes of a recent survey carried out by the academy.

Inspection team

Anthony Briggs, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Steven Goldsmith	Additional Inspector
Sonya Williamson	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- When the school was inspected in January 2012 it was judged to require special measures because all aspects of its work, especially the behaviour of students, were deemed to be inadequate. Subsequently, the school received four monitoring inspections.
- The academy is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well-above average. The pupil premium funding is additional funding to support particular groups of students, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and those from service families.
- Most students are of White British heritage. Very few students speak English as an additional language.
- Since the academy's last full inspection, a significant number of staff have left and new staff have been appointed.
- A very small number of students receive part of their education off-site at Aspire in Stockton.
- The academy now meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A permanent Principal took up his post in April 2012 following interim arrangements put in place when the previous Principal left the academy after the last inspection.
- In September 2012, ministers appointed Northern Education Trust as the new lead sponsor of the academy, replacing the North Tees National Health Primary Care Trust.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality and consistency of teaching, so that it leads to students making good or better progress, particularly in mathematics and in science, by making sure that:
 - all teachers have the highest expectations of students, particularly the most able, and set tasks that are sufficiently challenging
 - the standard of feedback and marking improves to match that of the best, so students clearly understand how to improve their work in every subject
 - teachers' questioning encourages students to think for themselves and involves them more in taking responsibility for their own learning.
- Improve further students' reading, writing and speaking skills across the academy by:
 - creating more opportunities for students to answer questions in full sentences
 - checking on students' spelling, grammar and punctuation and requiring them to write at greater length in all subjects to enhance their literacy skills
 - improving the presentation of work in students' books.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Prior to 2013, the trend in attainment declined and, in 2012, the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C was exceptionally low. However, in 2013, there was a significant improvement in English GCSE results and this affected the academy's overall figures for attainment which improved, by 31 percentage points, to just below the national average. Attainment in science lagged considerably behind English and mathematics. No students gained a good GCSE grade in the applied science course.
- The overall proportion of students making the progress they should in English also rose significantly bringing it close to the national figures. In mathematics, the proportion of students making expected progress also increased but was some way below the national figures. In both English and mathematics, fewer students made more-than-expected progress compared to the national figures. The most-able students did not do as well as their classmates, with very few making good progress in both English and mathematics. Students' progress in science was much less than in English and mathematics. There still remains a legacy of underachievement but there is no doubt that more students are now making good progress than at the time of the last full inspection.
- Students' standards when they join the academy are significantly below the national average. The academy's latest data show that more students are on track to make expected progress in English and significantly more in mathematics. Improvement is also predicted in several other subjects. Evidence from the work in books shows that there are clear improvements in achievement. Students are making much better progress, largely because of the improvements to the quality of teaching. Targets for 2014 are ambitious and, if achieved, will show a substantial improvement, yet again, on the outcomes for students.
- Students' achievement across different subjects is not consistently good. Students attain best in English and physical education but attainment in other subjects, including mathematics and science, has been much more varied. Nonetheless, current data on students' work show improvements in virtually all subjects across the academy. Improvements in history and music are particularly noteworthy.
- A large number of students are eligible for support through the pupil premium and a number of this group also has special educational needs. The academy has been very successful in narrowing the gap between the achievement of these students and that of their classmates. Nevertheless, in 2013, students eligible for pupil premium attained approximately one GCSE grade lower than their peers in English and mathematics. Effective use is made of the Year 7 catch-up funding for those students who did not achieve the expected levels in English by the end of Key Stage 2. As a result these students are making accelerated progress.
- The academy has continued to enter some students early for GCSE examinations because they believe that it is in the best interest of their students and does not limit the potential of the most able. The academy promotes and checks that all students have equal opportunity to do well.
- The small number of students who attend the off-site provision achieve appropriately in relation to their starting points.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Since the last full inspection, the overall quality of teaching has improved significantly. Particular success can be seen in English where many more students now make good progress. The quality of teaching in mathematics has also improved but to a lesser extent. In other subjects, the improved quality of teaching is resulting in more students making good progress over time. However, there is not enough consistently good teaching across the academy or within subjects. Consequently, how much progress a student makes generally depends on which teacher they get.

- Teachers are consistent in the way they manage students' behaviour. The behaviour policy is applied consistently so students know exactly where they stand in every lesson. As a result they settle down to work quickly and are ready to learn without fuss. This enables teachers to start lessons swiftly with little time lost.
- Although teachers' expectations of students are increasing, not all teachers reflect this in their planning. Most teachers plan lessons that are focused carefully on how much progress students will make from their different starting points. However, in some lessons, teachers do not ensure that the most-able students are challenged. Nearly all teachers use a system of graded activities dependent on the level the student is at. While this works well, on occasions there is not sufficient extra work given to the most-able students and so their progress is capped at times.
- Many teachers are skilled at questioning students to check the depth of their understanding. For example, the use of follow-up questions to probe the level of students' knowledge and understanding was used very well in an English lesson observed. However, this quality of questioning is not found in all subjects including in mathematics and science.
- There is some variation in the quality of marking. Many teachers provide helpful and encouraging comments which help students to improve their work. The best examples of this, seen in English books, show an impressive dialogue between teacher and student. Comments are diagnostic and give clear advice to the students on exactly what to improve. In the scrutiny of students' science books, marking was poor. Too much was cursory and complimentary and too little was evaluative and helpful. There are not enough opportunities for students to respond to teachers' marking, such as by redrafting small sections of work, correcting mistakes or finishing off incomplete work.
- During the inspection, no inadequate teaching was seen, with over half being good or better. Only two outstanding lessons were seen. In the best lessons, students were given the opportunity to work collaboratively and independently. In an outstanding English lesson, the teacher skilfully gave students hints about the content of a poem they were about to study. This fired their imagination and led to some really deep thinking.
- The best lessons have a strong emphasis on literacy. Here, the development of students' higher-order literacy skills such as evaluation and empathy, along with their oracy skills, is strong. The teaching of reading skills is particularly good and is leading to improvements for many students. However, in too many lessons, students are not given enough opportunities to develop their oracy skills when answering questions and do not do enough extended writing in subjects other than English. Similarly, students' skills in spelling, grammar and punctuation are not always developed as well as they should be.
- The quality of teaching has come a long way on its journey from special measures. Inadequate teaching has been eliminated and the improved skills teachers have acquired are leading to many students making accelerated progress in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The improvements made to all aspects of students' behaviour and safety, since the academy's last full inspection, have been substantial. Students now have really positive attitudes and want to do well for their teachers. Their relationships with teachers are strong and this is increasingly helping to accelerate their progress in lessons.
- Students behave very well around the academy building. They are courteous and polite to adults, each other and visitors. The vast majority are well mannered and are particularly proud of their new academy building. Occasionally, they do not take as much pride as they should in the presentation of their work, particularly in science. Internal and external exclusions have reduced considerably and the reasons that students are removed from lessons are less serious as a result of teachers' higher expectations of how students should behave within the classroom.
- Students feel safe in the academy. They know where to turn if they have concerns and believe that, 'Staff really care about us.' They know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, such as when using the internet or in practical sessions in science and technology.

- Students say that bullying is rare and dealt with well when it does occur. They have a good understanding of different types of bullying, such as racism, cyber bullying and homophobic attitudes. They strongly believe that behaviour has improved considerably and accredit this mainly to the expectations of the new Principal. They believe that most misbehaviour in the academy currently is from the Year 7 students because, 'They haven't yet got used to the way we behave here.'
- The academy has effective systems in place to support vulnerable students and to keep all students safe. Information from a recent survey shows that parents have confidence in the way in which the academy looks after and cares for their children.
- Attendance has risen significantly since the last inspection. Substantially more students now attend the academy regularly and arrive on time each day. The proportion of students who are persistently absent is reducing but remains too high. Senior leaders are not complacent about this and realise that there is still some way to go before attendance is in line with that expected. Systems for evaluating and recording attendance are robust, accurate and externally verified.

The leadership and management are good

- Strong senior leadership has brought about significant improvement to the way students behave, the quality of teaching and to students' achievement.
- The Principal has a relentless drive and commitment to improving the academy. He is passionate about improving the lives of these young people. This determination is shared by the vice principal, who has developed robust systems for improvement, and by the other members of the senior leadership team. The much improved middle leaders are effective in their work and ensure the drive for improvement is maintained.
- When the school was placed in special measures, inspectors judged that behaviour was inadequate and that students showed a, 'lack of respect for each other and the staff'. Directly following the inspection the vice principal implemented procedures that had an immediate improvement on the behaviour of students and laid the foundation for the vast improvements the new Principal then put in place. The significance of this work cannot be underestimated as the climate for learning within the academy has been transformed and teachers now have the opportunity to teach in a very orderly environment.
- The leadership and management of the quality of teaching have been exemplary. It has been pivotal in ensuring the improvement of the academy. As a result of effective performance-management systems and robust monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching, underperformance is tackled robustly. The impact of these initiatives can be seen in the way that student outcomes have improved since the previous inspection.
- The academy's checks and evaluations of how well it is doing are robust and accurate. Senior leaders hold middle leaders to account and they in turn ensure that their staff are held to account for the progress students make. The academy's evaluation of the quality of teaching accurately matches that found on the inspection. The evidence provided by the academy shows that the strongest teaching is in English and in physical education, where the only outstanding teaching is found, but that there is some much weaker teaching in other subjects, including mathematics and science.
- The curriculum is managed well. Leaders ensure that there is an element of flexibility that ensures that students do not have to complete a course that is unsuitable for them. Consequently, courses are matched well to the needs of students. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. There is a good sense of social awareness and students have many opportunities to contribute to activities within and outside the academy. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities which are valued by the students. Students are particularly pleased with the way in which music has improved.
- The academy receives very good quality support from the sponsor, which has been appropriately targeted to key areas.
- The overwhelming majority of students and parents that completed the recent survey are

pleased with all aspects of the academy. This was backed up by the discussions with students and staff during the inspection.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body supports and challenges leaders in equal measure. There is a very good match of skills and expertise within the governing body. As a result they have a real grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy and clearly have their finger on the pulse.
- Within the governing body are 'portfolio holders' who have a clear understanding of students' academic performance, behaviour, attendance and the quality of teaching they receive. This depth of knowledge enables them to challenge senior leaders much more diligently.
- The highly experienced Chair of the Governing Body is also the chair of the lead sponsor. Consequently, governors ensure the financial integrity of the academy and make sure that salaries are linked to teachers' performance-management targets. They also check that the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding are used to identify and meet the needs of individual students and evaluate their impact.
- Governors meet their responsibility in ensuring that safeguarding meets 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	136146
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	427716

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	516
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Leslie Walton
Headteacher	Bill Jordon CBE
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2012
Telephone number	01642 612381
Fax number	Not applicable
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