

# Consett Academy

Dunelm Road, Consett, County Durham, DH8 8EG

**Inspection dates** 26–27 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement requires improvement, especially in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form. Although progress rates are improving, including for the most-able, students' progress has not been fast enough over time.
- The sixth form requires improvement.
- Not enough of the most-able students are achieving as well as they should to reach the highest grades at GCSE.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good enough to ensure that all students achieve as well as they should, because inconsistencies remain in the demands made of students, including the most-able.
- Although attainment gaps between those supported by extra funding and their classmates are closing they have not been eradicated.
- Lessons sometimes lack vitality and pace and tasks are not consistently set at the right level for all students.
- Occasionally not enough opportunities are provided for students to work things out for themselves. Opportunities are sometimes missed for students to practise their basic skills across all subjects.

### The school has the following strengths

- The high ambitions of the principal, sponsors and governors are fully supported by staff. Senior leaders' resolute approaches are leading to considerable improvements in the quality of teaching and achievement.
- Students' good behaviour, significantly improved attendance and growing pride in their achievements, are helping to create a very positive atmosphere for learning.
- Students feel safe and enjoy good relationships with staff.
- The constantly improving teaching is making a significant difference, especially in Key Stage 4. Progress is quickening and achievement rising year on year for students of all starting points. More students are currently exceeding what is expected of them, including those supported by extra funding.
- The academy provides an interesting curriculum which encourages students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 lessons including eight paired observations and paired work scrutiny with the senior leaders. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and learning walks around the academy in order to check the quality of what is provided for students.
- Inspectors held discussions with students, parents, four members of the governing body some of whom represented the academy sponsors, academy staff, including those with responsibilities for subjects, and local authority educational development officers.
- Inspectors took account of the 121 responses to the Ofsted on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors observed the work of the academy and examined a range of documentation including the academy's own records of students' current progress, parents' views taken following parents' meetings, student views and records from the observation of lessons, students' books and academy improvement planning. They also considered documentation related to behaviour, attendance, child protection and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Christine Kennedy	Additional Inspector
Patrick Feerick	Additional Inspector
Graeme Clarke	Additional Inspector
Robert Birtwell	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average sized academy which has specialist technology and sports status. Consett Academy converted to become an academy on 1 January 2012. When its predecessor schools, Moorside Community Technology College and Consett Community Sports College, were last inspected by Ofsted, they were judged to be good and satisfactory respectively.
- The academy is currently based on the sites of the two predecessor schools. Following a two-year delay, students are due to move into the new purpose-built accommodation in September 2015.
- 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 well above average.
- Currently, an above average proportion of students is known to be eligible for pupil premium funding. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and children from service families.
- Almost all students are from White British communities with a very few pupils from minority ethnic groups.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- No students are currently entered early for GCSE examinations.

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

- Ensure that more teaching is inspiring, thought-provoking and challenging, especially in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, so all students achieve well by:
  - making sure teachers have high expectations and set work at the right level which is closely matched to students' needs and abilities
  - ensuring that the presentation of work in books is of a high quality and accurate, that all work is completed and students respond to requests to make corrections
  - sharing the imaginative, problem-solving methods that exist in the academy more fully across the whole staff
  - making sure teachers check students' knowledge and understanding in order to move their thinking on quickly
  - providing more opportunities for students to work things out by themselves and fully explain their thinking or solutions
  - maximising the opportunities, especially for younger students, to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects.
- Give a high priority to engaging parents and the wider community, including business, in preparation for the move to a single site.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Since the academy opened, students' progress in English and mathematics has improved although the rate is faster in Key Stage 4. Not enough most-able students achieved the highest grades in 2013 GCSE English and mathematics, but the predictions for the current Year 11, confirmed by inspection evidence, reveal increased proportions of students who are on course to achieve the highest grades. More students of all starting points are exceeding what is expected of them. Nevertheless, this pattern has yet to be sustained over time.
- Students join the academy with attainment which is well below average. Despite progress rates quickening in Years 7 to 9, expectations of what younger students can achieve are not consistently high enough. This is evident in the lack of accuracy, layout and content of work in students' books. Too much work is incomplete and students do not always respond to teachers' corrections when work is marked.
- The action taken by the academy to make certain all students achieve equally well are paying dividends. For example, progress in closing the gaps in attainment between students supported by pupil premium funding and that of their classmates is accelerating as the large gaps are closed. Currently, the progress of eligible students is similar to that of their classmates. Attainment gaps at the end of Year 11 in 2013 for eligible students were over one grade behind other academy students in English and mathematics. Academy predictions indicate that this gap will be halved by the end of current Year 11.
- Catch-up programmes for some in Year 7 are showing early signs of quickening progress for eligible students.
- The very few pupils from minority ethnic groups make progress similar to that of their classmates.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make progress similar to that of their classmates, because careful pinpointing of gaps in students' skills is informing intervention and support programmes effectively.
- An enjoyment of reading is being fostered well with less confident, younger readers given extra support. Yet, opportunities are sometimes missed to practise and apply their literacy skills in all subjects, to add to the momentum of improvement.
- The recently established sixth form suffered an early set-back when AS-level achievement fell short of the academy's expectations in 2012. Senior leaders have worked hard to rectify this outcome and ensure that all students follow appropriate courses, achieve well and find a suitable route to further or higher education, training or employment. Although it is too soon to see measurable impact of the improved teaching, there are clear signs that action taken is leading to higher achievement and attainment.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Senior leaders have focussed relentlessly on improving the quality of teaching and learning in the last two years. Underperformance has been tackled resolutely and promptly. Consequently, teaching is constantly improving though it is not yet consistently good enough, particularly in Key Stage 3, to ensure that all students achieve well.
- Despite high levels of commitment, good relationships between staff and students and increasingly effective use of students' progress information to plan activities, teaching does not always capture and hold students' interest. Consequently, progress can be a little uneven.
- In lessons when progress is rapid and achievement highest:
  - staff set high expectations of what each student can achieve and adopt imaginative methods
  - students' progress information is used skilfully to tailor activities to match individual abilities, needs and interests closely
  - thought-provoking questions are used to tease out students' thinking and stretch their

understanding

- problem-solving methods motivate students to work things out for themselves or with a partner.

■ In those lessons which require improvement:

- tasks are unexciting and not enough is expected or demanded of students which leads to a drift in concentration and focus
- explanations are too drawn out, students are too dependent on the teacher and tasks not matched well enough to their skills and interests
- questioning does not follow students' thinking well enough to help them think through what they can learn themselves
- routines such as for listening and answering questions are not always established well enough

■ When achievement is highest and students confidently work on the challenging tasks provided they respond enthusiastically to well-timed thought-provoking activities. Effective use is made of new technology to add to students' interests. For example, in a geography lesson a group of older students was fully absorbed discussing the impact of natural hazards in a developing country, prompted by photographic images. Full and detailed explanations were expected and were given by students.

■ Students' work is frequently marked and written comments ensure that they are aware of exactly how well they are doing. Helpful comments direct students to improve. However, requests for corrections or improvements are not always responded to, particularly by younger students. Opportunities are sometime missed to provide even more concise steps for improvement, especially for the most-able students.

■ Sixth-form students spoke positively about the improvements in the quality of their lessons. Their aspirations and confidence are being steadily raised to help them meet the challenging AS and A-level academic demands.

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

■ Behaviour is good as students move around the academy and in lessons. Social areas are relaxed and friendly. Students report that behaviour has improved a lot since the academy opened. They appreciate and value the meaningful rewards and celebrations of their achievements. They also feel that sanctions are used fairly.

■ In conversations, students report that they are well-informed about bullying in its various forms. If bullying does occur, students report that staff action is prompt and effective. E-bullying is not tolerated. Students add that staff are diligent in responding to any concerns they have. Students whose circumstances might put them at risk are managed skilfully and sensitively.

■ Students are well-informed about how they can recognise and manage risk. Consequently, they are sensible and safety-conscious when in practical lessons, such as in a technology workshop.

■ Students in the sixth form report positively about the quality of support that they receive. Academic guidance is increasingly sharply focused upon choosing the right pathway to the next stage of their education, training or employment. Yet opportunities are sometimes missed to shape personal programmes more closely to their needs.

■ When the academy opened, attendance was well below national averages. Concerted and highly effective action has resulted in an attendance pattern which is currently above the national average. Persistent absence has also been greatly reduced.

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

■ The principal, ably supported by senior leaders, governors and sponsors, have worked tirelessly in their strong drive towards achieving their high ambitions. They have worked very hard to win over the hearts and minds of families they serve and the wider community and the need to do so in preparation for the move to a single site.

- Senior leaders have been resolute in eradicating any underperformance. Significant improvements have been made in raising achievement, improving the quality of teaching, improving behaviour, raising the aspirations of students and their families and improving students' attitudes to learning. There are clear signs that the pace of improvement is quickening. These considerable gains demonstrate the academy's good capacity for sustained improvement.
- The quality of teaching is much improved. It is led and managed well. Staffing is now more settled. For example, the use of supply teachers has been greatly reduced. Effective practice in the classroom is a regular feature of many lessons, although the more imaginative practice that exists in the academy is not always shared widely enough.
- Students' performance is rigorously checked. Gaps or slips in students' progress are quickly pinpointed and acted upon. Increasingly effective use is made of progress information to plan lesson activities, although inconsistencies remain in making certain all students make progress equally well.
- Students of all starting points, including those with special educational needs, are thoughtfully included in all aspects of school life. Discrimination is not tolerated. Improvements in narrowing gaps in attainment are evident, as a result of the positive action to ensure that all different groups of students, including those eligible for extra funding, achieve equally well. Committed subject leaders are systematically developing the essential sharpness to judge subject performance accurately and respond promptly to any identified weaknesses.
- There are robust and rigorous systems in place to check the performance of staff. Rewards and incentives for staff are closely linked to classroom performance. Support programmes and training, including for those newly qualified teachers, are well-organised and closely matched to the academy's needs. Effective use is made of specialists from the sponsor and the local authority to improve the quality of the academy's provision.
- The academy provides a wide and interesting curriculum, well-matched to students' needs. There is an appropriate focus on improving literacy and numeracy skills, although practice is not firmly embedded in all subject areas for younger students. Good opportunities are provided to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The academy's specialism helps to enhance the quality of what it offered to students well.
- The sponsors have an accurate view of current performance and key areas for improvements. They challenge and support in positive ways, an effective feature of the strong partnership working that exists with the academy.
- In their responses to the on-line questionnaire, a minority of parents did raise concerns about the academy's performance. The inspectors found that in the academy's own recent parent surveys, the regular collection of the views of students and the views of the local authority, confidence in the effectiveness of the academy was growing as students' achievements and the quality of teaching improve. This was supported by inspection evidence.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, with much effective practice underpinning the good quality of care, support and guidance provided for students of all ages.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance, including the contribution from the sponsors, is a clear strength of the academy. Its members have a crystal-clear vision for the educational provision in the town and current academy performance. They are highly committed, supportive and challenging when analysing all aspects of the academy's performance. This includes carefully checking of the quality of teaching and the impact of pupil premium funding. Its members use their expertise to good effect. They have used the sponsor's resources and skills effectively, such as when promoting and supporting the establishment of the sixth form. They manage and check performance appraisal adroitly and make certain safeguarding systems are checked effectively.

## 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>	137638
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	399887

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

<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Academy alternative provision converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth-form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1200
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth-form</b>	38
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Karl Fairley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kevin Reynolds
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01207 507001
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