

The Purston E-Act Academy

Pontefract Road, Featherstone, Pontefract, West Yorkshire, WF7 5AJ

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Not enough students make the progress they should and standards are too low. Progress in mathematics is particularly slow. There are marked gaps between the progress made by disadvantaged students, those with special educational needs and other students.
- Teachers' expectations are too low, particularly of the most and least able students. There is not enough good teaching to help students make up the ground they have lost in their learning over time.
- There is significant disruption to students' learning through staff absence.
- The academy has not made effective use of the pupil premium funding to improve the progress, behaviour and attendance of disadvantaged students.
- The behaviour of some students is not consistently good and a number regularly misbehave for supply teachers and midday staff.
- Students' attendance is low and there are too many who are persistently absent.
- The information leaders have about the quality of teaching and students' work has not been used effectively to bring about the rapid improvement needed.
- Governors are not effective in challenging leaders about the performance of different groups of students, for example boys, or the quality of teaching.
- The temporary nature of some senior leadership appointments makes recent changes to improve the academy fragile.

The school has the following strengths

- The new interim Principal and his recently appointed team have quickly grasped the scale of the improvements needed. They are taking swift action to get the academy back on track.
- Teachers have responded well to recent training and coaching and they are keen to develop their practice. Teaching is beginning to improve.
- Disabled students are well supported in joining in all lessons and after school activities. They are happy and have positive attitudes to learning.
- Students feel safe in the academy and they have faith in staff to support them when they are facing difficulties.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 parts of lessons. Six were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Discussions were held with the interim Principal, staff, members of the governing body and one inspector interviewed a representative from the multi-academy trust.
- The inspectors spoke to students in lessons, at break and during lunchtimes. They also spoke formally to two groups of students.
- One inspector visited a group reading session.
- The inspection team observed the academy's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the academy's plans for the future and on-going reviews of those plans. They also looked at behaviour logs, records of racist incidents and the academy's safeguarding arrangements.
- One inspector toured the academy with students.
- There were insufficient responses to the on line questionnaire (Parent View) for inspectors to consider. Inspectors took account of 27 responses to the staff inspection survey.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the academy's view of the impact and effectiveness of the multi-academy trust's services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess how well the support provided by the multi-academy trust is helping to improve the academies for which it is responsible.

Inspection team

Joan Hewitt, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Derek Davies

Additional Inspector

Clive Hurren

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- The academy is much smaller than the average size secondary school.
- The proportions of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are well below the national figures.
- The percentage of students who are supported by the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for students in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those whose parents or carers are in the Armed Services) is well above the national average.
- The proportion of students registered as disabled or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average, as is the number of students supported at 'school action plus'. The proportion of students supported at 'school action' is also above the national average.
- The academy opened in September 2012
- The academy has alternative education provision arrangements with Elite Motor Vehicle Maintenance, Dimensions and Featherstone Rovers Rugby League Football Club. There are very few students attending these provisions.
- The academy has a specially resourced provision for students with a physical disability. There are currently nine students attending this unit.
- At the time of the inspection, the interim Principal had been in post 10 weeks and two of the senior leadership team three weeks.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better across all subjects, but especially in mathematics, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of the quality and amount of work students of all abilities can do, especially the most and least able
 - making sure teachers plan questions that will make students think hard and give extended answers
 - quickly completing the training of staff to ensure they are making accurate checks on students' progress and then using this information to plan work at the right level for students of different abilities
 - making sure students' writing and presentation skills are developed effectively
 - ensuring tasks are engaging and help students develop the ability to think things through for themselves.
- Rapidly improve all students' progress and raise attainment, but especially boys, students with special educational needs and those eligible for support through the pupil premium funding, by:
 - developing high aspirations for students' achievement by consolidating the new system of setting targets

- arranging an external review of the use of pupil premium funding and acting rapidly to implement the recommendations in order to close the gap in performance between disadvantaged students and others in the academy.
- Improve attendance and reduce the number of students who are persistently absent by embedding the recent improvements to the academy's work to promote good attendance.
- Take swift action to improve students' behaviour by:
 - improving students' attitudes to midday and supply staff
 - checking that staff, including supply teachers, and students stick to the rules about behaviour in lessons and are accountable for a rapid improvement in behaviour
 - eliminating anti-social behaviour, such as smoking, and reduce the number of students who come out of lessons without good reason.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders, managers and governors so that they can secure rapid and sustained improvement by:
 - continuing to develop middle leaders' skills so that they are consistently using the information from the checks they do on the quality of teaching and students' work to plan for rapid improvement
 - widening the range of courses and subjects available to students to ensure they develop appropriate skills and raise their aspirations
 - undertaking an external review of governance and implementing its recommendations
 - securing the long-term future of the academy by appointing a permanent Principal and other senior leaders.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Students underachieve at the academy. The number of students achieving five good grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, last year fell far short of the national average and standards are too low, given students' individual starting points.
- Students' achievements at GCSE last year were lower than the academy had predicted. This has revealed concerning inaccuracies in teachers' and middle leaders' checks on students' progress. The new leadership team is in the process of putting this right. The academy's internal data suggest that progress is improving for students in other year groups but these internal checks on progress are not completely reliable.
- Students' progress in mathematics is a concern. There has been some recent improvement in teaching in mathematics but it has not been sufficient to fill the gaps in learning left by previously inadequate teaching. Many students were entered for GCSE mathematics early and for a significant number this had a detrimental effect because they did not make enough progress.
- There are marked gaps in the progress made by boys and those with special educational needs compared to other students. This is because teaching has been weak since the academy opened and some teachers' expectations of students are too low. Disabled students make the same variable progress as other groups of students.
- Students who are known to be eligible for free school meals also underachieve. Their results lagged behind other students by over a whole GCSE grade in both English and mathematics. The academy has used the pupil premium funding for a range of activities including one-to-one tuition in mathematics and employing mentors. However, this has not significantly improved the progress of these students. Consequently, the academy has not been successful in giving disadvantaged students a good chance to succeed.
- Achievement in reading is improving but students' writing skills are under-developed. Students do not have enough opportunities to write at length in a range of subjects.
- It is not clear how well the few students who attend alternative provision are doing because, until recently, leaders have made insufficient checks on their progress.
- The most-able students do not make as much progress as they could because work is not challenging enough. New leaders have improved the way targets are set and students are beginning to understand that more is expected of them. However, the lack of challenge over time has resulted in some of the most-able students being too easily satisfied with mediocre work.
- In lessons, most students complete their work and want to achieve. However, a number of students do not work well, especially when they are taught by supply teachers. In these lessons, students are reluctant to settle down to work, chat too much and call out across the classroom. This disrupts their own learning and causes problems for other students who do want to learn.
- Many of the serious shortcomings, which have led to the inadequacies in students' achievement, are being tackled by the new leadership team but these actions are very recent and have not been in place long enough to bring about improvement.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Too much teaching is run-of-the-mill and this is not helping students to catch up and make better progress. Students say teaching is improving and that more lessons are interesting and helping them to learn more effectively. However, much of this improvement is too recent to have accelerated students' progress.
- Students complain that there are too many supply teachers and this disrupts their learning. Students and staff agree that attitudes to learning are not always positive in lessons taught by

supply teachers.

- Teachers do not always expect students to work hard enough and when this happens students give up too easily if they do not understand the work straightaway. The most-able students are not given work that is hard enough and less-able students, including those with special educational needs, are let off the hook too easily with work that does not stretch them. Teachers are beginning to plan how they are going to make sure students of different abilities make good progress, but this is still under-developed.
- In lessons where activities have not gained students' interests, they are reluctant to get down to work. They are not able to sustain their concentration without constant encouragement and cajoling from teachers and learning support assistants.
- Physically disabled students are accommodated seamlessly. Good work by support staff makes sure appropriate adjustments are made; for instance, checking that desks are at the right height and equipment is in easy to reach positions.
- Marking has improved recently and there are clear examples of teachers marking regularly and making helpful comments about what students can do to improve their work. In some instances, students are asked to follow up on the teachers' comments but this is not commonplace. In some students' books, teachers praise work that is scrappy and lacking detail. This leads to students settling for work that is not their best and slows their progress.
- Where teaching is good, students work harder because they are interested in the tasks set and teachers expect that pupils will apply their learning to new problems. Teachers ask demanding questions that make students think hard. For example, Year 10 students made good progress in calculating the area of isosceles triangles because the teacher was insistent that they try different methods and work hard together to solve problems.
- However, this good practice is not consistent across the academy. Teachers tend to take answers only from those students who have their hand up and this allows other students to take a back seat and not concentrate properly. When students do answer, they offer short replies and teachers do not consistently probe and insist on more thoughtful responses.
- Teachers are working hard to make sure students get to read a variety of texts. Younger students also read to older students during tutor time. This is giving them regular opportunities to improve their skills and develop a love of reading. The quality of these sessions is inconsistent but developing well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- The behaviour of students is inadequate. This is because some students do not treat supply teachers and midday staff with respect. Students' behaviour in the canteen during the inspection was generally calm and well-ordered, but midday staff indicated this is not always the case. Students also confirmed this to inspectors.
- For many students, behaviour is adequate, the academy is tidy and, on the whole, uniform is worn reasonably smartly. However, they often lack self-discipline and indulge in chatter when the opportunity arises. Where teaching is good, and students are required to work hard, behaviour is generally positive. A few students use excuses, such as going to the toilet, to wander the corridors and show little enthusiasm for returning to class.
- A small group of students regularly smoke on site. They know they should not and accept the sanctions that follow if they are discovered. However, this does not deter them and they openly admit that they play, 'cat and mouse' games with staff to find a place to smoke.
- Exclusions have risen in the last few months because staff have taken a firmer line with behaviour. Students and staff say that behaviour has improved since the arrival of the interim Principal and they approve of the stricter approach. Most students have responded positively but there has not been enough time for these new routines to have had a significant impact on challenging embedded habits.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement. Students say they feel safe and they are complimentary about the care they are given by staff. They feel

comfortable approaching adults if they are upset or experiencing problems in or out of school. Staff log any incidents of bullying and follow them up to check all is well. However, there is no systematic analysis of these incidents to identify any patterns or particular groups of students involved.

- Attendance is improving but remains well below the national average. The number of students who are persistently absent has also reduced but is far higher than the national picture. Students eligible for support through the pupil premium attend less regularly than other groups.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- The Principal and two assistant principals are employed on short-term contracts. The process to recruit to appoint permanent staff is underway; nevertheless, until these are in place the capacity of the academy's leaders to bring about sustainable improvements is fragile.
- Too much teaching requires improvement and there is still an element of inadequate teaching. Leaders have not been rigorous enough in checking on the quality of teaching in lessons covered by supply staff. There are examples of senior leaders coaching teachers and helping them to improve their practice and teaching is improving. Inadequate teaching has been reduced and training is targeted on important aspects such as marking. Nevertheless, these improvements have not secured enough consistency in the quality of teaching across the academy.
- Middle leaders were not clear about their responsibilities when the academy opened. They check the quality of teaching and students' work regularly but until recently this information has not been used effectively to bring about improvement. Some heads of subjects say they have been held to account rigorously but others have not. This inconsistency has been true for much of the life of the academy and consequently, leaders have failed to improve the progress students make.
- The way in which teachers have been rewarded lacked coherence when the academy opened and it was not been effectively linked to the progress students make. The new leadership team have put in place sensible procedures which firmly link the quality of teaching to pay, but it is too soon to evaluate this fully.
- The range of subjects and courses available to students is not planned to raise students' aspirations. Less-able students do not have access to a wide enough range of courses. Teachers do not focus sufficiently well on improving students' writing and speaking skills. Current leaders are aware of this weakness and taking action but over time, this has limited the development of students' skills.
- The new interim Principal and the permanent vice-principal have made a strong start in identifying the weaknesses of the academy. They have swiftly gained the confidence of staff and students. The appointment of two interim assistant principals has also strengthened the team. In the short time they have worked together, they have started to put in place the building blocks to support the academy in improving students' achievement and behaviour. However, the new systems and ways of working are at a very early stage and have not been in place long enough to make a significant difference to students' progress and behaviour.
- Arts, humanities and after-school activities contribute well to developing students' cultural and spiritual awareness. For example, students have made dishes associated with different countries and this has been further enhanced by the canteen promoting Asian-inspired cuisine.
- Students' social and moral development is not as strong, because they lack self-discipline and have not developed an enthusiasm for learning. Leaders have not helped students to develop respect for all members of staff.
- Overall improvements have been too slow and have only gathered pace in the last few weeks and months. The multi-academy trust did not challenge the academy soon enough about the quality of teaching and the progress students were making. There has been a significant change since April 2013 and the academy's education adviser is visiting the academy regularly. The trust is now offering training, for example, for governors to help them in understanding data. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this recent support. Action has also been taken to strengthen the senior leadership team but the academy does not currently have a substantive

Principal.

- Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The Chair of the Governing Body and several other governors are newly appointed and have not had time to develop a detailed understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses or how under-performance of teachers is tackled.
- Governors know how the pupil premium funding has been spent but they have not held leaders to account for the marked differences in students' achievement, behaviour or attendance.
- Governors have checked that safeguarding requirements are met and they keep a close eye on exclusions.
- Since the academy opened, governors have not had enough focus on teaching and achievement. They know this must change and recognise the importance of their part in challenging the academy to improve.

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 Ousted 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 Ousted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138593
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	434136

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	380
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynne Stavely
Head teacher	Rob Rossides
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01977 722805
Fax number	01977 722809
Email address	admin@tpea.org.uk

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