

Sheffield Community Academy

Broad Way, Pelsall, Walsall, WS4 1BW

Inspection dates 22–23 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures

- Since the last inspection, standards have remained below national averages in mathematics, science and languages and are not improving quickly enough to reverse a significant lack of progress in these subjects.
- Too much work in students' books is not good enough as the work set for students does not strengthen previous knowledge or provide opportunities for them to develop new skills and understanding.
- Students do not make the progress expected of them, especially in mathematics. Students known to be eligible for free school meals and students who are most able make less progress than that of their peers.
- Students who are most able do not make sufficient progress in a number of subjects, especially in mathematics.
- Too much teaching requires improvement or is inadequate. Recent improvements have not made enough difference to students' achievements, particularly in mathematics.
- Teachers do not use information from checks on students' progress to plan work that matches the different abilities of students in their classes.
- The sixth form requires improvement because the progress of students is not yet securely good on all courses.
- Leaders, including those who have responsibility for subjects, have not reviewed students' attainment and progress in enough depth to help them plan to raise standards. Improvement is inconsistent across subjects and year groups and not as rapid as it needs to be. For example, progress in English is better than in mathematics.
- The governing body and sponsors have not made sure that senior leaders improve teaching and raise achievement at a fast enough rate.
- Leaders, including governors, have not made sure that the spending of additional government funding for disadvantaged students and for those falling behind in English and mathematics is improving the achievement of these students.

The school has the following strengths

- The new Principal is having a positive impact on standards by raising expectations and improving teaching.
- At the last inspection behaviour and safety were judged as a strength and this is still the case. Students' behaviour is good and

- Teaching is good or better in English, physical education, media studies and drama. contributes to a calm and purposeful atmosphere in the academy.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 49 lessons across all year groups, some jointly with members of the academy leadership team. The work in students’ books was evaluated. Shorter visits were made to other lessons and to activities including registration time and assemblies.
- The inspection team observed the behaviour of students as they arrived at the academy, during lesson changeovers, at break and lunchtimes, and as they left the academy premises at the end of the day, as well as in lessons.
- Account was taken of e-mails received from parents and the results of the academy’s own questionnaire given to parents, as there were insufficient responses to the on-line questionnaire, Parent View for these to be taken into account by inspectors. The replies to the academy’s staff questionnaire were considered.
- Inspectors looked at important documents, including examination results and records of students’ assessments. They also scrutinised the academy’s policies and procedures for safeguarding and child protection. They examined records relating to behaviour and attendance and looked at documents used by leaders and governors to check the work of staff at the academy.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, academy leaders including heads of subjects, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, groups of students, a representative of the Ormiston Trust and a provider of School Improvement Services from the Ormiston Trust.

Inspection team

Peter Humphries, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Judith Straw

Additional Inspector

John Leigh

Additional Inspector

Chris Griffin

Additional Inspector

Bimla Kumari

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, sponsored by the Ormiston Trust, opened in January 2009. The academy is a company limited by guarantee with its own full governing body.
- The Principal joined the academy in September 2013. There has been a restructuring of the leadership team and governing body since the last inspection. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body took up their posts in January 2014.
- The Sheffield Community Academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is much higher than average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs supported at school action is higher than average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is below average.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage.
- A small number of students receive part of their education at other establishments, including Pelsall Youth Centre, Nova Training, Walsall Construction, Walsall Leisure Services, Alpha Hair Academy and Manor Farm Childcare.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to speed up the progress students make by:
 - setting tasks that are at the right level to get the best out of students, especially the most able
 - using questions in lessons that check students' understanding and develop in students the ability to think, reflect and communicate clearly
 - giving students clear and subject-specific feedback so that they know how to improve their work, and then making sure that students act upon this advice and guidance
 - providing opportunities for students to develop their literacy skills in all subjects, especially in writing.
- Improve students' achievement in mathematics by:
 - eradicating weaknesses in mathematics teaching
 - improving students' skills in carrying out calculations and their ability to use and apply number skills when solving problems
 - ensuring that students have opportunities to use their mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Ensure that all groups of students in the sixth form achieve well by:

- checking students' progress more regularly and rigorously
- reducing variations in students' progress through swift interventions to keep students on track
- ensuring that teaching in the sixth form is consistently at least good across all subjects.

■ Improve leadership and management, including governance by ensuring that leaders and governors:

- have the skills and knowledge necessary to check the progress of all students accurately
- communicate a greater sense of urgency by making sure plans to improve student progress are clearly focused on what will make the biggest difference to improving learning and teaching
- incorporate into improvement plans some short- and medium-term milestones that can be used to measure success
- regularly monitor the success of actions that have been put in place to raise standards, and challenge staff if progress falls below that which is expected
- bring about rapid improvements in the learning and teaching of mathematics so that standards rise quickly and students make at least good progress
- consistently make judgements on the quality of teaching that take into account how well students are making progress
- tackle weaknesses in the provision for students who are most able and for those who are eligible for support through the pupil premium
- frequently check to see if the spending of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up grants are raising standards for disadvantaged students and for those falling behind their peers in English and mathematics
- undertake an external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the academy's use of the pupil premium grant, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Ofsted will make recommendations on governance to the authority responsible for the academy.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- Most students who join the academy in Year 7 have achieved below-average standards in their primary schools. While overall attainment improved to become broadly average in 2013, students' attainment has remained low and their progress weak over time in a number of key subjects.
- For the last three years, the progress students make in mathematics by the end of Year 11 has been much lower than that expected. For the past two years, the students' progress by the end of Year 11 has been lower than national figures in science, languages and humanities.
- While well-presented, the work seen in students' books is of a standard below that expected and confirms that students are not learning quickly enough.
- Progress in English is better than in mathematics. However, students throughout the academy have low levels of literacy; many students having reading ages three years below their birth date age. These crucial skills, as well as those of numeracy, are not being developed well enough across most year groups. Students have insufficient good opportunities to use and apply their literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects.
- Across all year groups of the academy, groups of students, including those who are known to be eligible for support by the pupil premium funding and those who are most able, make inadequate progress overall from their already below-average starting points. Students who are most able significantly underachieve in mathematics, science, languages and humanities.
- On average, students known to be eligible for free school meals gained approximately a grade lower than other students in both English and mathematics at GCSE in 2013. This group of students also make significantly less progress than that of their peers in science and in languages. Students do not have an equal chance to learn well in all subjects and too many students leave the academy ill equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Disabled students and those who have a statement of special educational needs and those who are supported at school action make the progress expected of them.
- Students who are supported by the Year 7 catch-up grant (additional government funding for those students not at the expected level in English and mathematics at the start of Year 7) are making good progress and the gap between them and their peers is closing. However, the good practice seen in Year 7 is not replicated across the academy.
- Most-able students do not make the progress expected of them in mathematics, science, languages and humanities. Inspectors' scrutiny of students' work confirmed that in those subjects, most-able students are not given work that enables them to make sufficient progress. However, in English the most-able students are given appropriately challenging work that enables them to make expected progress.
- The academy enters some students early for GCSE examinations, but has decided to discontinue this practice as it has been shown to limit the progress of all groups of students.
- The small number of students who follow more practical subjects off site make good progress and gain experience in a range of subjects and work-related qualifications. This is helping them acquire the necessary skills to gain suitable employment or further training.
- The academic achievement of students in the sixth form requires improvement. Most students are beginning to make the progress expected of them. Although most enjoy their chosen courses and very few have dropped out since the beginning of the school year, the academy's tracking shows a variation in progress currently being made across the range of sixth form courses.
- Within the overall picture of weak progress, there are some successes, notably in English where students' achievement improved from considerably below expectations to in line with expectations in one year.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate because it is not helping students to make up for previous underachievement or to make sufficient progress in their subjects, particularly in mathematics. During the inspection, teaching in too few lessons was good or better.
- Because of the weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics, students' understanding of number is not as well-developed as it should be. As a result, students cannot tackle more challenging work as they do not have the necessary knowledge, skills or understanding.
- In mathematics, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for students to apply what they have learnt to different situations or contexts. As a result, students are not able to solve practical mathematical problems.
- In all subjects, teachers miss opportunities to develop the students' literacy and numeracy skills. Students are not always expected to write in full sentences or given opportunities to write for extended periods of time. Students' poor numeracy skills inhibit progress in other subjects such as science. For example, in one science lesson students struggled to convert seconds into minutes and vice versa and were then unable to focus on developing their scientific understanding.
- Students in Year 7 are well-supported in developing their reading skills suitable to their ability. They have made rapid progress since joining the academy in September. However, this good practice is not duplicated with other year groups.
- Teachers do not always make sure that the learning activities are set at the right level. As a result, in too many lessons, most-able students have to repeat work that they can already do and understand while those who find the work difficult do not have opportunities to develop and strengthen their understanding.
- Teachers do not use questioning skilfully to check if students understand the work or to develop students' thinking and reflection skills. Too many teachers accept answers that are superficial and not in full sentences. Teachers sometimes do the thinking and the problem-solving for the students.
- Teachers' marking across the academy, including in the sixth form, lacks consistency. In many subjects, the teachers' written comments do not always show students what they have to do to improve their work or follow up to make sure that students have acted on suggestions for improvement. Too often, students are given feedback only on their effort and not enough on what it is they have done well and what they have to do to improve.
- The quality of support for disabled students and those with special educational needs is good. Teaching assistants are actively involved in lessons and are used to support all students, not just those identified as needing help. Teaching assistants help students by asking questions that encourage thinking and consideration of how to complete tasks in different ways.
- Some aspects of students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are promoted well in certain subjects, such as English and religious education, assemblies and in registration time. However, opportunities are missed in other subjects.
- Teaching observed in the sixth form during the inspection was good, particularly in science, physical education and media studies. However, there has not been enough good teaching in the past to help students achieve well in all subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure, including while off-site in alternative provision, is good. Parents and students agree that students are safe in the academy. Students have a good understanding of the dangers of bullying in all its forms, including that based on racism and homophobia. In discussion, students say that any instances of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- The development of students' e-safety is good and students are fully aware of the dangers of cyber-bullying and the misuse of mobile phones including 'sexting'.

- Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable, including those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, told inspectors that they are cared for well by staff and other students.
- Students who attend courses away from the academy say they feel safe and are aware of what to do if there are any concerns.
- Students' attendance is good and is above the national average for secondary schools. The academy attendance target of 95% is being met by all groups of students, including minority groups and those who are supported by the pupil premium grant, and by all year groups.
- The behaviour of students is good. The last inspection of the academy in 2011 identified students' behaviour as strength and this remains the case. Students have positive attitudes to their learning, and relationships with staff are courteous and respectful. Students' good behaviour, both in lessons and around the academy, contributes to a calm and orderly environment for learning. The views of the administrative and kitchen staff were summed up by one member of staff who said, 'the children here are lovely.'
- Students are very proud of their academy and they demonstrate this by wearing their uniform with pride. Two Year 11 students told inspectors during a break time that they 'like to keep smart because it makes them feel good'.
- The academy buildings and facilities are treated with respect by all students. After very busy break and lunchtimes, there is very little litter and students use the bins provided.
- The academy does not use bells to indicate lesson changeovers or the ends of breaks. Students still move promptly and safely around the academy. Inspectors were particularly impressed with the way in which consideration is given to disabled students who use wheelchairs. When asked, these students said that other students always help them by opening doors or help them with equipment.
- Students come to the academy prepared to learn and bring the necessary equipment. For example, in physical education lessons all students wear Sheffield Community Academy kit and participate in lessons in some capacity, even if injured.
- Sixth-formers make a positive contribution to the academy community by supporting the Year 7 reading scheme and being mentors to younger students.
- As a result of highly effective leadership of the academy's proactive approach to behaviour management, the academy has not excluded any students for five years. The academy uses a system of internal exclusion in the 'Success Centre'. Figures for this resource show that very few students 'revisit' the centre. While in the 'Success Centre', students still have lessons delivered by teachers, ensuring that students do not fall behind in their work.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leadership and management are inadequate because, over time, the academy's leaders, including governors and middle leaders, have not done enough to raise students' achievement and the quality of teaching. Improvements in the progress of students, particularly the most able, those in receipt of the pupil premium and all groups of students in mathematics, have not been fast enough.
- The academy sponsor, while accepting that it knew that students at the academy were not making the progress expected of them, has not acted swiftly enough to make the necessary changes to the governing body to reverse the trend of underachievement.
- Senior leaders' self-evaluation, which judged the academy to require improvement, is too generous, overly descriptive and does not enable leaders to identify clearly the priorities for improvement.
- The development plans, which set out how the academy intends to bring about improvement, are not good enough because they are too imprecise and have too many gaps. They do not show enough urgency, do not have measurable outcomes, or points that must be reached on the way. They also do not identify the financial resources required.
- Most subject leaders are beginning to have an accurate understanding of what needs to be done

to improve students' achievement. However, there are still some middle leaders who lack the skills and understanding to raise standards in their departments quickly.

- The performance management of staff is now more closely related to students' results. However, although the performance of some staff has improved, the underperformance of other teachers has only recently been challenged.
- The recently appointed Principal, through her inspirational and visionary leadership, has made some significant improvements since her appointment. However, there has not been sufficient time for the focused work of the restructured leadership team to demonstrate full and sustained impact on improving the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- A number of staff have left the academy since September 2013. There are positive signs that the principal is raising her colleagues' awareness of the way the quality of their work, planning and use of assessment affects students' achievement and progress. However, this has still to be validated through a sustained improvement in students' outcomes particularly in mathematics.
- Academy leaders have established an orderly and hardworking community and have now begun to create an academic culture of high expectations and aspirations.
- The curriculum has improved so that students now receive prompt attention to develop their reading in Year 7. There remain, however, considerable shortcomings in developing students' writing and numeracy skills across the academy.
- In the sixth form, students have access to a good range of advice and independent, specialist guidance to help them decide what to do when they leave the sixth form and at the end of Year 11. This means that they are choosing courses that are more appropriate for their abilities and talents. As a result, fewer now drop out of their studies and, in most subjects, are beginning to make the progress expected of them.
- Sixth form students make a positive contribution to the academy community by supporting younger students who are not making the progress expected of them. Students have a wide range of enrichment activities that also include opportunities for work experience. Students who failed to achieve the expected level of progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 11 retake these examinations in the sixth form.
- The head of sixth form has identified the correct priorities for improving the quality of provision and outcomes for students. The tracking of students' progress has been improved. However, the impact on sustained improvements in attainment and progress is yet to be seen.
- All statutory requirements for safeguarding students are met. Staffs are vigilant and act to ensure students' safety. All personnel checks are carried out thoroughly and safeguarding records are kept very well.
- Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body are new to their posts. They, and other governors, have not had sufficient time to demonstrate their capacity for challenging academy leaders to raise standards.
- Discussions with the academy sponsor and governors show that, until recently, the governing body did not monitor the work of the academy properly, or provide effective challenge and support. The governing body recognises that it has allowed the academy to drift. Governors have not understood or used the information about students' progress and attainment to question academy leaders about the inadequate progress made by students in mathematics, science, languages and humanities.
- Before September 2013, governors did not challenge the Principal about teachers moving up the pay scale or through the threshold. Major changes have taken place which are just beginning to improve this situation.
- The reorganised governing body is beginning to understand how the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up grants are being spent. However, it has not checked on the impact of this funding.
- The governing body has not been involved in frequent and systematic scrutiny of the quality of teaching and its effectiveness in ensuring that students make the progress expected of

them. New approaches to the monitoring of teaching have been established, but it is too early to say whether these are effective.

- The governing body has ensured that procedures and policies for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.
- The governing body has commissioned a review of its own effectiveness that will take place in March 2014.

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	135769
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	440460

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	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,377
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeanne Monckton
Principal	Paula Ward
Date of previous school inspection	15 June 2011
Telephone number	01922 685777
Email address	postbox@scacademy.co.uk

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