

# Bolton St Catherine's Academy

Stitch-Mi-Lane, Harwood, Bolton, Lancashire, BL2 4HU

**Inspection dates** 5–6 March 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The quality of teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4, although improving, is too variable. It does not always pay enough attention to developing students' literacy skills and some is not challenging enough, especially for lower ability students and the most able.
- Some teaching focuses on setting activities for students rather than the impact that the activities have on learning. The quality of marking is inconsistent.
- The proportion of students making good progress from their individual starting points by the end of Year 11 has varied in recent years, especially in English where there has been significant disruption to the quality of learning and management of the subject.
- Some behaviour in lessons and around the academy in the secondary phase is not consistently good. Teachers are inconsistent in applying the academy's behaviour policy and are not always vigilant enough at break times.
- Leaders and managers do not evaluate the effectiveness of teaching in the secondary phase accurately enough. Subject management in Key Stages 3 and 4 is relatively new and has not yet impacted fully on raising standards of teaching and achievement.
- The sixth form requires improvement because too many students embark on courses that are not appropriate for them based on their prior achievement. Attendance requires improvement in Year 12; too many students do not attend regularly enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in the primary phase.
- Achievement is good in physical education, art and drama.
- The care, guidance and support for vulnerable students are very strong.
- Leaders and managers, including the governing body, are taking the necessary steps to make the academy more effective.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 40 lessons. Five observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors visited tutorial sessions and a Year 7 assembly.
- Inspectors observed the work of the academy and looked at a range of documentation including: the academy's view of its own performance; safeguarding and child protection arrangements; behaviour and attendance; evaluation of the quality of teaching and minutes of the governing body meetings. Students' work in books and files was also examined.
- Inspectors held a series of formal and informal discussions with students to discuss their experience of the academy, and particularly their learning, behaviour and safety. Discussions were also held with staff, including senior and middle leaders.
- A meeting was held with the four members of the governing body, two of whom were also representatives of the academy sponsor.
- Inspectors took account of 12 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as well as summaries of parental responses to questionnaires sent out by the academy. There were no staff responses to a questionnaire for inspectors to consider.

## Inspection team

Stephen Wall, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Osama Abdul Rahim	Additional Inspector
Gary Kelly	Additional Inspector
Carol Machell	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Bolton St Catherine's is an 'all through' academy of average size that opened in 2009.
- The academy has an Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stages 1 and 2 (primary phase), Key Stages 3 and 4 (secondary phase) and a sixth form.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is well above average. (The pupil premium provides additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children looked after by the local authority.)
- Most students are of White British heritage. About 10 per cent are from a wide variety of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is well above that found nationally.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above average.
- The academy does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A relatively small number of Key Stage 4 students receive part of their education off site at Bury NACRO, TLG Farnworth and the Mojo Trust. (All are registered charities working with young people.)
- The proportion of students who join or leave the academy at other than normal times, chiefly in secondary phase, is above average.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching in the secondary phase so that it is consistently good and more is outstanding to enable all students to make good or better progress, especially lower-ability students and the most able, by ensuring that:
  - all teaching uses information about students' progress and abilities to set tasks that are challenging enough
  - teaching uses questioning effectively to make students think hard and give extended answers to deepen their learning
  - there is a consistent approach that focuses sharply on how well students make progress in lessons, rather than on the activities they will complete
  - in all subjects there is a consistent approach to improving students' literacy skills
  - all marking is as good as the best in showing students how to improve their work.
- Improve behaviour in the secondary phase so that it is consistently good in lessons and at break times, by:
  - making sure that in all lessons teachers apply the school's behaviour policy consistently well
  - ensuring that supervision at break times is effective in making sure that the school's policy of being a non-smoking establishment is rigorously enforced.

- Improve the impact of leaders and managers further in driving improvement at a faster pace, by:
  - making sure that leaders and managers evaluate the quality of teaching in the secondary phase accurately to inform their future planning
  - ensuring that the recent restructuring of leadership and management in the secondary phase is fully effective in improving teaching and driving up achievement at a fast pace.
  
- Improve the sixth form, by:
  - making sure that students choose appropriate courses that match their needs, abilities and achievement at the end of Key Stage 4
  - ensuring that students have the necessary study skills to cope with the demands of sixth form work, especially independent study skills for academic courses
  - raising attendance levels, especially in Year 12.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- The proportion of students in the secondary phase attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics has been on an upward trend in recent years. However, significant and unexpected disruption to staffing and the management of English during the last academic year led to a dip in English results. As a result, the academy did not meet the floor standards for the first time in the last three years.
- Senior leaders have taken rapid and decisive action to tackle the disruption. As a result, academy data, supported by inspection evidence from observing learning in lessons, discussions with students and scrutiny of students' written work show that the upward trend has been restored.
- In the secondary phase the proportion of students who make the progress expected of them from their individual starting points in English and mathematics has risen steadily in recent years. However, the proportion making better progress than this, especially lower-ability students and the most able, has fluctuated and has generally been below national figures.
- The achievement of the most able students is not consistently good because assessment information is not always used well enough to set challenging work and push students on quickly in their learning. Conversely, not all lower-ability students make good progress because some work is too hard for them.
- From starting points that are generally well below those expected for their age, children make good progress and achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They continue to achieve well in the primary phase because teaching is consistently good. Attainment has risen in recent years. By the end of Key Stage 2 it is broadly in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In the sixth form attainment is rising securely, especially results in vocational qualifications and in A Level results at the end of Year 13. However, the poor attendance of some students in Year 12 acts as a brake on raising attainment at a faster pace. Similarly, some students do not achieve well because they embark on courses in Year 12 that are not suited to their needs or abilities, and some students are not well enough prepared for the increased demands of independent learning for more academic courses. In 2012 and 2013, the academy was successful for the first time in sending about 20 students to university.
- The academy has a sharp and effective focus on supporting students who are known to be eligible for free school meals. As a result, the gap between them and their classmates has narrowed rapidly in recent years. In 2013, disadvantaged students in the primary and secondary phases did almost as well as other students in English and mathematics. Academy data show that there is currently no gap in achievement. This demonstrates the academy's strong and effective provision for equality of opportunity.
- The academy develops well pupils' skills in reading, writing and speaking and listening in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in the primary phase. In the secondary phase, a lack of consistency in approach to promoting these skills means that they are not always promoted effectively enough across different subjects. This acts as a brake on accelerating progress at a faster pace in some subjects.
- The small number of students educated off site generally achieve well. The academy is rigorous in checking on their attendance and safety.
- The academy enters a small number of students early for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics. The results enable the academy to analyse specific weaknesses in individual students' understanding and to target them for improvement. Most students improve their grades as a result.
- The vast majority of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs achieve well from their individual starting points because of the highly effective support that they receive. Similarly, students who join the academy at other than normal times make good

progress, again, because of the strong support that they receive.

- Those students who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up programme receive additional support to improve their literacy skills. The academy's data show that the gap between them and others in their year group is being reduced.
- In the primary phase, the academy uses its extra sports funding to good effect to widen its range of sporting enrichment activities and to share expertise with other partner primary schools.

### **The quality of teaching**

### **requires improvement**

- In the secondary phase, although the quality of teaching is improving, there are still too many inconsistencies across year groups and within subjects; this results in uneven learning and achievement.
- Because the quality of teaching is inconsistent, some of the strengths in learning for some students are the things that are missing where students make slower progress. When learning is best: teachers' very strong subject knowledge is passed on effectively; skilful use of question-and-answer makes students really think deeply about what they are learning and what they need to do to improve further; excellent relationships create an atmosphere that is conducive to good learning; and some really helpful marking enables students to understand how well they are doing and what to improve.
- Where students make slower progress, some work is too challenging for the lower-ability students. Sometimes, some of the most able students are simply not challenged enough and the questions teachers ask are too easy and do not require them to think deeply enough. These factors have an impact on slowing the rate of learning that takes place in some lessons.
- Sometimes the progress that students make slows because lesson plans concentrate on activities that students are to tackle rather than on the impact that these activities will have on students' learning and progress. As a result, on the surface students appear to be working hard and getting on with things but are not necessarily making rapid progress.
- Many aspects of teaching in the secondary phase have improved across the academy. New initiatives and professional development have been taken on board and this has resulted in better teaching. However, some teaching has yet to make the link effectively between the quality of teaching with its impact on learning and progress.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in the primary phase is of consistently good quality. Teaching is planned well to make sure that pupils are appropriately challenged and have a good range of stimulating activities that drive learning at a fast pace. Relationships between teachers and pupils are consistently strong. Pupils work hard and with keen interest.
- In the sixth form teaching has improved securely and much is now good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and have increasingly high aspirations for the students.
- Although marking has improved across the academy and some is of excellent quality, it is not yet consistent in showing students what they need to do to improve their work. While many students present work in their books with pride and attention to detail, some work books are untidy and marking does not insist on improvement.

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

### **requires improvement**

- Behaviour requires improvement because, while most students in the secondary phase behave well in lessons and are keen to learn, some are inattentive and chat among themselves rather than paying attention to what teachers are saying or getting on with their work.
- At break times some Key Stage 4 students smoke on site, although the academy is officially a no-smoking site. This sets a poor example for younger students and shows a lack of respect for the academy and its rules. Supervision on playgrounds is not vigilant or assertive enough to tackle this with the necessary rigour to put a stop to it.

- Children and pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the primary phase behave very well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and respectful to each other and to the adults working with them.
- In the sixth form students behave well. They enjoy taking on responsibilities and regularly help younger students with their work.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students of all ages feel very safe in school. They have a good awareness of the different types of bullying and are keen to point out that there is: 'hardly any bullying at all now'. Detentions and exclusions are low, with no permanent exclusions in recent years. The number of fixed-term exclusions is declining rapidly.
- The academy leaves no stone unturned in its efforts to provide as well as it possibly can for the significant number of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Very careful and regular checks are made on the welfare and well-being of these students involving a wide range of specialist, outside support agencies.
- Students in all phases say that they enjoy coming to the academy. This is confirmed by a rapid and sustained increase in attendance in the primary and secondary phases, where attendance is now in line with the national averages. In Year 12, however, too many students are absent too often and some arrive late for the start of the day and for lessons.

### **The leadership and management**

### **requires improvement**

- Since the academy first opened, the Principal, with strong support and challenge from the governing body, has worked tirelessly to lay the necessary firm foundations for the academy's future success. Despite teaching still requiring improvement in the secondary phase, overall the quality of teaching has risen and the trend of achievement has been upward across all phases, demonstrating the school's capacity to continue to improve.
- The increasing popularity of the academy in all phases as the first choice establishment for parents shows that the Principal's efforts to improve the academy are starting to bear fruit in raising parental confidence in the academy.
- Leadership has now turned its attention to making sure that management at all levels is effective enough in driving the academy forward. A recent and wide-reaching reorganisation of the management structure of the academy and responsibilities of senior and middle managers has taken place. As a result, the focus on improvement has been further sharpened, although it is too early for the full impact to be felt.
- Senior leaders and managers know what the academy does well and where it could do better. However, in the secondary phase their view of the quality of teaching is somewhat optimistic and this gives a false sense of security about the performance of some subjects.
- Procedures for managing the performance of staff have been strengthened. There is a much closer link to the progress that students make to decisions about salary progression and the identification of further professional development.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils and students in the primary and secondary phases. The academy strives to provide equal opportunities for all its pupils and students. In the sixth form there is a good range of courses and qualifications for students, both vocational and academic. However, the academy accepts the need to tighten entry requirements to more academic courses and to guide some students more effectively to appropriate courses in Year 12.
- There is a good range of popular enrichment activities in all phases in sports and the arts. These make a positive contribution to students' personal development and to their generally satisfactory levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The academy sponsor provides effective support to improve the academy by buying in necessary advice and support, from a wide variety of individuals and organisations, to check on the academy's effectiveness and improve teaching.

**■ The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is sharp and well informed. It supports and challenges senior leaders in equal measure. Governors take regular part in training activities that give them a firm understanding of data to show them how well the academy is doing in comparison to other schools both locally and nationally. Governors receive and question regular reports from senior leaders about the quality of teaching across the academy. They understand fully the link between the appraisal of staff performance and the links with salary progression based on meeting specific targets. Since the establishment of the academy, the governing body has worked very closely with the Principal to battle and overcome a legacy of poor teaching, achievement and behaviour. The governing body has been at the centre of the improvements that have been brought about. The governing body has a firm grasp on the academy's finances, including the allocation and impact of pupil premium funding. Governors ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met.



## 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>	135981
<b>Local authority</b>	Bolton
<b>Inspection number</b>	430949

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–19
<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>	1,132
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	140
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Graham Burrows
<b>Principal</b>	Lee Harris
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 May 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01204 332533
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<b>Email address</b>	lharris@boltonstcatherinesacademy.org.uk

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