

Hope Academy

Ashton Road, Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside, WA12 0AQ

Inspection dates

27–28 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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.

- Student achievement is poor. Too few students make the progress, or attain the grades expected of them, across the greater majority of subjects at GCSE.
- The achievement gap between boys and girls remains wide and is not closing. Higher-ability students are not being challenged and few attain the highest grades.
- Overall performance of sixth-form students is inadequate both at A-level and in vocational courses. Inconsistent and sometimes poor quality teaching does not support good learning and outcomes are unpredictable.
- The high turnover of staff in a significant number of classes is a barrier to good learning.
- There is low-level disruption by students in too many lessons, and this is not always challenged or tackled.
- The quality of teaching is too inconsistent across the academy, including in the sixth form. Too many students, especially boys, are failing to make progress in too many subjects.
- Marking is generally ineffective. In too many classes work in books remains unmarked or is marked inaccurately.
- Insufficient attention is being paid to develop writing, oracy or mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- Although improving, attendance remains below the average.
- Leaders and managers are having too little effect on improving outcomes for students and on the work of the academy. Their ability to bring about the required improvement is weak.
- Leaders and academy governors have not focussed sharply enough on improving the quality of teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- Pockets of good teaching exist, notably in English.
- Outside of lessons, students generally behave sensibly. Inspectors found them to be friendly and courteous.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons across all the faculty areas, including six joint observations with members of the academy’s senior team. They saw registration periods and observed how students behaved out of lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Principal, a representative of the local authority, representatives of the academy sponsor and governing body, senior staff, middle leaders and other academy staff. Informal discussions also took place with staff and students.
- Discussions were held with groups of students across the academy about their educational experience and behaviour. Samples of students’ written work were also scrutinised, including in lessons. Inspectors listened to younger students reading. A telephone conversation was also held with the National Leader in Education at the Heath School, Runcorn, who is currently supporting and advising the academy, as well as with a parent.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents including the academy’s self-evaluation, development planning, pupil tracking, monitoring of teaching, performance management, staff training, and records of governors’ meetings. They also looked at records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspection took account of 133 responses to the on-line questionnaire for parents (Parent View) and one letter from an individual parent.

Inspection team

Leszek Iwaskow, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Alison Thomson

Additional Inspector

Gary Kelly

Additional Inspector

David Woodhouse

Additional Inspector

Bernard Robinson

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

- Hope Academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The academy is sponsored by the Catholic Archdiocese of Liverpool, the Church of England Diocese of Liverpool and Liverpool Hope University.
- Most students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average. (The pupil premium is specific funding provided to support the education of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years, children who have been looked after continuously for a period of six months and children whose parents are currently serving in the armed forces.)
- The proportion of students that the academy has identified as disabled or having special educational needs, therefore requiring extra support through 'school action' or 'school action plus' is below the national average.
- A smaller than average proportion of students has a statement of special educational needs.
- A small number of students attend courses off site at the PACE and Launchpad pupil referral units, St Helen's College and the Building Futures vocational skills centre.
- On-going staffing turbulence is continuing to disrupt learning for many students, particularly in Key Stage 3, because more experienced teachers have to concentrate on examination classes.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching throughout the academy, but especially in Key Stage 3 by:
 - ensuring that teachers continue to develop their subject knowledge to ensure that they are able to teach their subjects with confidence
 - developing teachers' skills in using a range of appropriate strategies to enable them to engage with students and impact more effectively on their learning and progress
 - focusing in lessons on developing students' skills, knowledge and understanding in the subject rather than merely completing tasks
 - ensuring that marking is regular, of high quality and informs students on how they can improve their work.
- Improve the progress and achievement of all groups of students, including those in the sixth form, in all subjects, but especially those students supported by pupil premium, boys and the most able by:
 - making sure assessment and monitoring of student progress is accurate and rigorous to enable appropriate work to be set in order that good learning can take place
 - checking the progress of individuals and groups of students regularly and robustly so that leaders and teachers can take swift action to address any underachievement

- providing more opportunities for students to develop and apply their skills in mathematics and writing to other subjects
 - giving higher level, more demanding work to more-able students.
- Improve the behaviour and safety of students by:
- eradicating poor behaviour in lessons to ensure that students’ opportunities to learn are not compromised through low-level and persistent disruption
 - ensuring that, as a matter of priority, all students involved in off-site education are safe by making sure that their attendance is recorded and reported to the academy within an hour of when they are due to attend each off-site session
 - ensuring that students attend the academy on a regular basis and that any absenteeism is chased up as a matter of routine.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by:
- increasing the rigour with which teaching is monitored to ensure that teachers are perfectly clear about which aspects need to be improved and why
 - ensuring that monitoring focuses clearly on how well students learn
 - taking swift action to eradicate inadequate teaching
 - making use of the training, resources and advice offered by the various subject associations to provide subject leaders with the knowledge and expertise to enable them to offer appropriate advice to their colleagues on how to further improve their planning and practice
 - requiring all subject leaders to be fully involved in checking that students are making good progress in lessons and that teachers’ planning promotes learning which builds on previous lessons
 - making sure that performance management links teachers’ pay progression more closely to improvements in the classroom
 - evaluating the impact of pupil premium funding on students’ learning to ensure that it is being spent wisely and provides good value for money
 - ensuring that governors act on the recommendations of the forthcoming independent review of governance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Despite entering the academy with standards in reading, writing and mathematics which are broadly average, too few students make the progress, or attain the grades expected of them across the greater majority of subjects, at both GCSE and in post-sixteen examinations.
- The proportion of students attaining GCSE grades A* - C (including English and mathematics) in 2013 remained significantly below the national average. There was an improvement in English, but attainment in mathematics remained low. Attainment in science, languages and humanities is significantly below average for almost all groups of students.
- Current academy data suggest that there will be an improvement this year, although attainment will still be below national averages. However, despite the time, training and effort which have been put in recently into improving assessment of students' work, there remain concerns about the reliability of these forecasts.
- Too many students struggle across a range of subjects at GCSE because of a legacy of poor teaching in previous years. As a result, many do not possess the skills, knowledge or understanding necessary to tackle harder work with confidence. In too many lessons, higher-ability students, in particular, are not being provided with suitably challenging work. As a result, few attain the highest grades.
- The achievement gap between boys and girls remains wide and is not closing. Boys generally take little pride in their work, far too much of which is unfinished and poorly presented. Poor literacy skills prevent many students from making the progress they should.
- The average GCSE points scores of students known to be eligible for free academy meals are below those attained by students nationally. These students attain about one and a half grades lower in English and nearly one grade lower in mathematics than other students in the academy. The overall gap has closed slightly compared to 2012. However, the academy's own predictions indicate the gap will increase in mathematics this year.
- In general, most disabled students and those with special educational needs make better progress than their peers do because the work set is better suited to their needs.
- The academy uses the Year 7 catch-up funding to provide extra support for students who join the academy with skills and abilities that are below those expected for their age in literacy and numeracy. Little accurate analysis is available to show how these students are progressing. Observation of pupils being taught in the nurture group (students with learning difficulties, or special educational needs, who need extra support settling into the academy) showed heavy reliance on adults to support their writing. These students have generally positive attitudes to reading, but the experiences they receive are not consistent.
- The academy's isolation and internal exclusion room is dysfunctional. It is related to controlling behaviour rather than supporting learning. Work set is frequently of poor quality and often intended merely to occupy students. Many of the occupants are students eligible for support through the pupil premium and this group is not making any progress. The academy recognises this and has plans in place to replace it.
- Overall performance of sixth-form students is poor, both at A-level and in vocational courses. Very small numbers are entered for a wide range of examinations. Inconsistent and sometimes poor quality teaching does not support good learning and outcomes are unpredictable.
- Students attending off-site provision, including vocational courses, generally make the progress expected of them.
- The academy no longer enters students early for GCSE examinations in mathematics or English.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Although some good teaching was seen notably in English, teaching is too inconsistent across

the academy, including in the sixth form. Too many students, especially boys, are failing to make progress in too many subjects. As a result, teaching is inadequate overall. Parents are also concerned, with 36 per cent of those who replied on Parent View unhappy about the quality of the teaching.

- The high turnover of staff in a significant number of classes is a barrier to good learning. Students commented that in lessons where temporary or supply teachers were present there was often significant disruption due to poorer behaviour.
- Too often in lessons there is a focus on doing the task rather than the learning. Students are given work which occupies them but does not necessarily stimulate or stretch them. This particularly affects the more-able students who often find the work too easy. In too many lessons pupils were either losing interest or plodding along through the task at a slow pace.
- The academy has very recently provided training for teachers in how to ensure that tasks set are better matched to student needs. Unfortunately, too many teachers remain insecure in this process and often provide inappropriate resources.
- In some lessons opportunities to extend the students' learning are lost when the teaching adheres to a set lesson structure rather than, where appropriate, responding to the learning needs of the pupils at the time. For example, the good learning observed in one lesson was interrupted by a teacher stopping the students in full flow in their writing to ensure a plenary took place. In other lessons, students were expected to peer-assess their work when they had little knowledge or understanding of how to do so and unnecessary time was wasted.
- The marking of students' books continues to be variable, despite a recent whole-academy initiative, supported by training, to improve this aspect. In some classes work in books remains unmarked or is marked inaccurately. In others, where appropriate comments have been written, students appear to ignore them because similar mistakes continue to be made.
- Insufficient attention is being paid to developing writing and oracy skills. At Key Stage 3, especially, there were few opportunities identified in books, especially in language rich subjects such as the humanities, for students to practise and apply writing skills. Poor teaching in mathematics means that students' overall grasp of basic mathematical skills, especially across Key Stage 3, remains insecure.
- Presentation in books is poor in many classes, especially among boys who show little pride in their work. In those classes where the teaching is poor, much work is often left unfinished, writing can be illegible and little thought is put into correct spelling, punctuation or grammar. Overall, girls take more care over their work.
- The use of teaching assistants to support learning is also variable across the academy. Teaching assistants are not equipped to deal with the requirements of a wide range of interventions and in-class support. The academy recognises this and has planned for further training in the near future.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- The academy's new behaviour, rewards and sanctions policy is not being applied consistently by all teachers to impact on rapidly improving teaching and learning. There is low level disruption in too many lessons, and this is not always challenged or tackled. As a result, behaviour is inadequate.
- Parents expressed concerns about behaviour in the academy. Thirty nine per cent of responses on the on-line survey felt that poor behaviour was an issue, inhibiting learning and the care and safety of their children. Students were more positive and felt that recent improvements were beginning to have an impact, although they too identified on-going inconsistencies across the academy.
- Around the academy students generally behave sensibly and are well presented with all wearing academy uniform. Inspectors found them to be friendly and courteous. Movement between lessons can, on occasions, be boisterous, although this was generally well supervised during the inspection.

- Students generally feel safe. They did acknowledge that bullying is still prevalent, including name-calling and homophobic bullying, although they also identified that it was declining. They felt that, in most cases, this was dealt with suitably quickly by adults in the academy. Poor behaviour on academy buses did cause some concern, especially for younger students. The perceived frequency of bullying still remains an area of concern for many parents.
- Attendance remains below average, although some improvements are becoming evident. The academy acknowledges that a whole-academy approach has only recently been put in place. This involves more immediate intervention including working with families and other agencies as well as improved systems for tracking and monitoring behaviour, safety and attendance. There is increasing accountability and there is some evidence for impact. For example, the attendance of students so far this year is slightly better than at the same point last year. Even so, too many students, especially boys and those eligible for support through the pupil premium funding, do not attend regularly and this has a negative impact on their achievement.
- The safety and attendance of students who are taught off site did raise some concerns for inspectors. The academy is not being kept informed of when a student is absent from off-site provision until the afternoon. This could have serious implications if a student is missing and cannot be accounted for. Equally, inspectors raised concerns about students' boisterous behaviour in some lessons, such as design and technology, where potentially dangerous equipment was being used. As a result, the academy's work to keep students safe and secure is inadequate.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leaders and managers are having too little effect on improving outcomes for students and on the work of the academy and their ability to bring about the required improvement is unproven. Standards remain well below average in most subjects, excluding English, and the strategies for improving the quality of teaching are patchy and are having only a limited impact.
- A large minority of parents have expressed concerns about the academy with 43 per cent in the on-line survey expressing that they would not recommend the academy to another parent. Also, 44 per cent feel the academy is not led or managed well.
- A series of recent appointments has been made to strengthen senior leadership. Temporary roles, positions and responsibilities have also been re-assigned at middle leadership level. Although there is increased enthusiasm and optimism, many of these new managers have not been in post long enough to have any significant impact.
- Support has been recently brokered from a National Leader in Education in a successful school in the region. Preliminary discussions have taken place and a strategy is being put in place to support leaders at all levels, but this is too early to have had any real impact.
- Leaders have not focussed sharply enough on improving the quality of teaching. Weaknesses in teaching have not been tackled successfully to this date to compensate for a legacy of poor practice. There has been an over-generous view of the quality of teaching and too many middle leaders are loath to challenge weak practice in their area of responsibility.
- Teachers' poor performance is now being tackled by senior leaders, but this has caused considerable disruption and uncertainty. Several staff have left and long-term absence continues to disrupt the academy. A number of new appointments have been made on short-term contracts. More experienced teachers are often deployed in examination classes and weaker teaching pervades several curriculum areas, particularly at Key Stage 3.
- Currently, teacher appraisal and pay progression is not rigorous enough. Teachers are not set clear targets for their performance which are based on students' achievement. A range of training to support teachers' professional development is now being provided, but the impact of this is sporadic and not always clearly aimed at specific individual needs.
- While equality of opportunity is generally adequately supported through the work and the Christian culture of the academy, many students, especially boys and those supported by pupil premium funding, do not achieve as well as they should. Therefore the promotion of equality of

opportunity is inadequate overall.

- The academy receives significant additional pupil premium funding. A large amount of this is spent on providing additional in-class and intervention support and is delegated to faculties around the academy. While there is a record of expenditure, there is no clear evidence to show that it is being used effectively or that it is being spent wisely, especially since many of these students continue to underachieve.
- Although policies and procedures to safeguard students are in place, these are not always adhered to and there is cause for concern, especially for off-site provision.
- The curriculum is currently being restructured to provide more appropriate pathways and progression routes for students. The thematic curriculum in Key Stage 3 is poor, disjointed and does not support students' learning in a range of subjects. Participation in after-academy clubs is now being monitored and analysed to see which groups and individuals attend. However, strategies to encourage greater participation are not in place.
- Leadership of the sixth form is also inadequate because outcomes for students are poor and the quality of teaching is variable and is not monitored effectively. Students in the sixth form were generally positive about the support and guidance they received. Too many students fail to complete their course and transition rates from Years 12 to 13 require improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are becoming more actively involved in the life of the academy. They have taken on board the criticism that they were unable to challenge academy leaders rigorously because they did not have a secure understanding of performance data. Governors have received training and are better placed to ask questions of senior managers. Governors and sponsors have established a monitoring group which meets every fortnight to assess progress. Discussions are more focussed on improvement and there is good evidence to suggest that they are holding senior managers more to account. They are increasingly aware of issues linked to achievement and teaching and learning. However, they have not challenged senior leaders to explain the impact of the pupil premium funding or the weaknesses in the appraisal of teachers. A review of governance is due to be undertaken in the next few weeks.

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	136421
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	443050

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,314
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bart McGettrick
Headteacher	John Gannon
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2013
Telephone number	01744 671930
Fax number	01744 671931
Email address	hopeacademy@sthelens.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

