

# Cedar Mount Academy

Gorton Education Village, 50 Wembley Road, Gorton, Manchester, M18 7DT

**Inspection dates** 30 April–1 May 2014

| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Not previously inspected    |          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Requires improvement</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | 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

- Students' achievement overall, and particularly in mathematics, requires improvement.
- The quality of teaching varies considerably. Not enough marking provides students with the advice they need to improve their work.
- Some teaching in mathematics and science places too much emphasis on students learning routines rather than developing their deeper understanding of concepts.
- Students' communication skills sometimes limit their ability to answer questions that require extended answers. Teachers do not currently adopt a consistent approach to developing students' communication and mathematical skills across the academy.
- Although improving, students' behaviour is not yet consistently good. Too much time is lost during changeovers between lessons.
- The quality of middle leaders varies and not all have the skills of those in the strongest subject areas.

### The school has the following strengths

- Students achieve well in some subject areas, particularly English and humanities.
- Leaders have had notable success in improving attendance and reducing the proportion of students who are persistently absent.
- Students feel safe in the academy. They get on well with each other and appreciate that, when children are different from others, they still deserve respect.
- Leaders have had a positive impact on the quality of teaching, and outcomes overall are improving.
- Leaders and managers, including governors and sponsors, have maintained and/or improved provision and outcomes in the face of considerable staffing difficulties.

## Information about this inspection

- During this inspection, inspectors observed 29 part-lessons, including six that were observed jointly with senior staff at the academy.
- Inspectors held meetings with the acting Co-Principals, members of the governing body, senior leaders of the Bright Futures Educational Trust, staff and students. They spoke informally to several groups of students at break and lunchtime. Additional meetings were held with two senior leaders from Melland High School and one parent.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the academy’s data about the achievement, behaviour and safety of students. They also looked at management information such as minutes of meetings of the governing body. They took account of 13 responses to the on-line questionnaire Parent View, one email from a parent and 39 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Paul Chambers, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Alison Thomson

Additional Inspector

John Ashley

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Cedar Mount Academy opened in August 2012, sponsored by the Bright Futures Educational Trust. It is smaller than average in size for a secondary school.
- There are more boys than girls in the academy.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is high at over twice the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- Approximately 40% of the students are of White British heritage and roughly 10% are from each of Pakistani, African and Other White backgrounds. Several other ethnic groups are represented in smaller numbers.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is high.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A small number of students attend off-site provision at Rathbones and Work4U.
- In 2013, the academy did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy shares a building with Melland High School, which meets the diverse special educational needs of students between the ages of 11 and 19.
- The previous Principal left the academy in January 2014. The academy is currently run jointly by two acting Co-Principals.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is good or better by:
  - ensuring that more marking gives students clear advice about how to improve their work
  - giving more emphasis to developing students' communication and problem-solving skills, so that they are better prepared to provide extended answers to questions
  - ensuring that, in mathematics and science, teaching places a consistent emphasis on developing students' understanding, as well as their fluency with skills.
- Further improve students' achievement, particularly in mathematics.
- Improve students' behaviour by:
  - ensuring that all members of staff consistently apply the academy's policies
  - minimising the time lost in changeovers between lessons.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - developing and implementing strategies to improve students' communication and mathematical skills across the academy
  - further developing the skills of middle leaders so that all match the quality of the best.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students' progress is not consistently good across different subjects in the academy.
- Students enter the academy with attainment that is below average and the proportion of students entering with above average attainment is sometimes very low. Students make appropriate gains in their learning, but attainment on leaving the academy remains below average. The academy's records show that GCSE results are likely to rise in 2014, including in English and mathematics.
- Students achieve well in English. From their various starting points, the proportions of students making and exceeding expected progress compare favourably with national figures.
- Students' achievement in mathematics requires improvement. In 2013, too few of the middle-ability students made the expected progress. Although the academy's tracking and other inspection evidence indicate that current students are making better progress than those who left in 2013, students' progress in lessons and over time is not consistently good.
- In English, the 2013 gap between the attainment of those known to be eligible for free school meals and that of other students was about half a GCSE grade. In mathematics, the equivalent figure was one grade. The academy's tracking shows that gaps in attainment and progress are reducing for current students.
- The most able students make progress in English and mathematics that is broadly in line with similar students nationally. Teaching engages them by offering suitably challenging work.
- Students who speak English as an additional language are well supported. Overall, they achieve well and make better progress than other groups in the academy. There are no clear differences between the achievement of boys and girls.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make progress in line with other students in the academy. The small group supported through school action plus made inadequate progress in 2013; this was due to their poor attendance and, in some cases, an insufficiently demanding curriculum. The considerably revised provision for students with special educational needs, supported by expertise from Melland High School, has ensured that this group is no longer underachieving.
- The small group of students currently undertaking work-based learning off site develop their practical skills alongside studying English and mathematics and make appropriate progress.
- The academy has not had a policy of early entry to GCSE examinations.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- While there are examples of outstanding teaching in the academy, the quality of teaching requires improvement because not enough is consistently good or better, particularly in mathematics. In mathematics and science, some teaching places too much emphasis on developing students' procedural skills rather than their conceptual understanding and this limits students' achievement over time.
- Teachers' development of students' communication and mathematical skills is not consistent across different subjects. As a result, students sometimes lack the language or problem-solving skills they need to answer questions that require extended answers or several steps of working. Measures to encourage reading, for example in English, are beginning to have a positive impact.
- While marking provides students with feedback on the accuracy of their work and often includes encouraging comments, not enough marking provides students with clear advice about how they can improve their work.
- Strong teaching and leadership in English, history and geography contribute to students' good achievement in those subject areas.
- Where the quality of teaching is stronger, positive relationships with students are formed and

teachers convey their enthusiasm for the subject effectively. Activities engage students' interest and there is a productive working environment. For example, in business studies, students of different abilities were fully engaged and benefited from good-quality individual feedback on their learning. In other examples of good teaching, students learnt effectively through assessing their own work and reflecting on their progress against set criteria.

- Those parents who responded to Parent View expressed positive views about the quality of teaching.

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

### **requires improvement**

- The behaviour of students requires improvement.
- Inspection evidence from lesson observations, supported by the views of students and staff, indicates that behaviour is not consistently good and that some staff do not apply the academy's policies consistently. While most students show positive attitudes to learning, a few do not maintain concentration and so are not as productive as they could be.
- When the quality of teaching is good, students behave well. Behaviour over time is improving.
- Students behave well at break and lunchtimes. Different groups of students get on well together, including those from different ethnic backgrounds. The academy's mixed community helps students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well, for example by discussing differences in cultural attitudes. Students show excellent personal skills in accommodating the needs of students from Melland High School and engaging in shared activities.
- A minority of students are slow in moving between lessons and need considerable encouragement from staff to get to lessons on time.
- Students take pride in their appearance and respect the need to keep the academy buildings litter-free and in good condition. Most arrive at lessons with the equipment they need for learning.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students feel safe in the academy and this is confirmed by parents and staff. Students report little bullying and know that there is someone to turn to if they need support.
- Attendance is broadly average. While it was low in the last academic year, it has been close to average for an extended period of time. In particular, the academy's policy of ensuring that fewer students are educated off site has contributed to a large drop in the proportion of students who are persistently absent.

### **The leadership and management**

### **requires improvement**

- Within an improving picture overall, students' achievement is not yet good. In particular, leaders recognise that they have yet to secure sufficient improvement in provision and outcomes in mathematics.
- The acting Co-Principals have helped to clarify the academy's ethos and values so that staff are clear how they and their students can demonstrate values such as respect for all. Staff and students celebrate diversity effectively.
- Leaders recognise that the quality of middle leadership varies and are providing appropriate support, particularly in subject areas where outcomes are less strong. This training is beginning to show a positive impact.
- Self-evaluation is realistic, and improvement planning has a clear focus that is understood across the academy. Leaders and managers have made important improvements to provision, such as that for disabled students and those with special educational needs. They have also secured improvements in outcomes, such as students' attendance and their achievement in English.

- Students' achievement over time has been lowered by the frequent staff changes and other staffing difficulties that occurred in the academy's first year. Evidence presented by the academy shows that better attendance among staff and a reduction in the use of supply teachers, supported by appropriate professional training, are leading to better teaching over time. Where inspectors and academy leaders observed lessons together, there was broad agreement on the quality of teaching and how it could be improved.
- Leaders appreciate the need to develop further strategies to improve students' communication and mathematical skills across the academy and to monitor their effectiveness.
- The pupil premium has had a positive impact on some outcomes for the target group. The academy's records show that the achievement of current students supported by this funding is improving across a broader range of measures. Leaders use the pupil premium in a wide variety of ways and have appropriate plans to evaluate more effectively the impact of different initiatives.
- Year 7 catch-up funding has been used to boost the literacy and mathematical skills of those students who join the academy with skills below those expected. The academy's records show that the funding is beginning to have a positive impact on students' progress.
- The curriculum is balanced and offers opportunities for students to follow areas of interest. Until recently, too many students in Key Stage 4 were following alternative provision off-site and this had a negative impact on the achievement of these students. Leaders' recognition of this and the additional emphasis on inclusion across the academy demonstrate leaders' commitment to equality of opportunity. Recent changes in science mean that the curriculum now meets the needs of students more effectively. A high proportion of students go on to further education, employment or training.
- The sponsor has supported the academy effectively by ensuring an experienced headteacher provided support for the acting Co-Principals in their first months in post. The sponsor has also made training available for staff and governors and responded to the academy's need for stronger teaching and leadership in mathematics by seconding an experienced leader of mathematics. These measures are beginning to have a positive impact.
- The academy's safeguarding procedures are in line with all requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors come from a range of backgrounds and bring a range of skills to the role. Many members are relatively inexperienced and are developing their expertise. Governors support and challenge the academy's leaders effectively and have a good understanding of the key issues facing the academy. They understand where teaching is stronger and where it is weaker and ensure that pay rises are linked with performance. They understand how leaders use the pupil premium and its impact on students' progress; they are less familiar with how the Year 7 catch-up funding has been spent and its impact. They have ensured that the academy's finances are soundly managed.

## 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> | 138097     |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Manchester |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 408822     |

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>                 | 11–16                               |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                               |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 575                                 |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                  |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Jo Purcell                          |
| <b>Co-principals</b>                       | Karen Walsh/Rebecca Warhurst        |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | Not previously inspected            |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 0161 248 7009                       |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 0161 231 1831                       |
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