

# Grasmere Academy

Grasmere Court, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE12 6TS

## Inspection dates

23–24 April 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
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 has serious weaknesses.

- The attainment of Year 6 pupils who left the academy in 2013 was significantly below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Too many pupils did not make enough progress from their starting points.
- The achievement of pupils currently in the academy is inadequate from Year 1 to Year 6.
- Pupils' learning is inadequate because teachers do not have accurate knowledge of what pupils already know and can do, and what they are ready to learn next.
- A significant proportion of Key Stage 2 pupils have many gaps in their mathematical knowledge and reading skills. This is a result of inadequate and inconsistent teaching over time and it prevents pupils from making sufficient progress.
- Behaviour requires improvement. A small minority of pupils have not responded to the academy's high expectations for behaviour.
- Recently appointed middle leaders have not had sufficient time in post to develop the necessary skills that will allow them to make a full contribution to helping the academy improve rapidly.

### The school has the following strengths

- The current headteacher has moved quickly and purposefully to tackle weaknesses in the school. She is fully supported in her ambition to develop a good academy by all staff and governors. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are showing signs of improvement.
- Provision for pupils in the additional resourced provision (ARP) effectively promotes pupils' confidence and basic skills.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe is good.
- Senior leaders have a clear picture of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. They have identified the right priorities to move the academy forward quickly.
- Governors provide good support and challenge. They have effectively stabilised the staffing and provided stronger leadership in the academy over the last year, so that it is in a better position to improve.
- Parents are highly supportive of the academy, and welcome the many improvements to behaviour seen this year.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 11 lessons or parts of lessons, two of which were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, senior staff, one middle leader, staff and pupils.
- The inspector observed the academy at work and looked at a range of documentation including: that relating to the academy's safeguarding policies and procedures, information about pupils' progress and attainment, the academy's evaluation of its performance and the improvement plan.
- The inspector examined work in pupils' books and listened to pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 read.
- The inspector took account of 10 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and also the school's recent survey of parents when conducting the inspection. She also took into account of the views of staff expressed in 13 questionnaires that were returned.

## Inspection team

Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.*

### Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is well above average; so too is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special education needs. An above average proportion of pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British heritage, with few pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The academy does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The academy provides additional resourced provision, commissioned by the local authority, to provide six places for pupils with moderate learning difficulties.
- Grasmere Academy, converted to become an academy in September 2012. When its predecessor school, Moor Edge Primary, was last inspected by Ofsted in 2010, its overall effectiveness was judged to be satisfactory.
- The academy is currently the only school in the North Tyneside Academy Trust.
- The academy has experienced an unusually high volume of staffing turbulence in the last year. In May 2013, the permanent headteacher was unavoidably absent for a long period. She was replaced by an acting headteacher until October 2013, when the permanent headteacher then resigned.
- In October 2013, the current temporary headteacher was appointed. Since then, one teacher has left the school and has been replaced by newly qualified teachers. One assistant headteacher was unavoidably absent for the spring term and has now returned to the academy.

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

- Urgently improve teaching and learning to be consistently good or better, in order to rapidly accelerate pupils' progress and raise their attainment, by:
  - improving teachers' assessments of pupils' learning so that they always provide the right level of work for new learning to take place
  - ensuring that pupils are given regular opportunities to make corrections and improve their work
  - regularly monitoring these aspects so that the emerging good practice is captured and shared for the benefit of all pupils.
- Urgently improve pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics by:
  - conducting rigorous assessments of what pupils in all classes know and can do to discover where there are gaps in their learning which are preventing good progress

- devising a programme to rapidly improve pupils' knowledge of number from the Nursery class to Year 6
- developing teachers' mathematical subject knowledge and their knowledge of what pupils are expected to know in each age group, so that they can plan work that steadily develops pupils' skills and understanding
- monitoring teachers' planning to ensure that it always provides a good level of challenge for all pupils in the class.

■ Urgently improve pupils' progress and attainment in reading by:

- conducting a rigorous review of the recently introduced phonics programme (which teaches letters and the sounds they make) to discover what is working well and what needs to be improved
- providing further training for staff so that there is greater consistency in their expectations of the progress pupils will make
- providing appropriate resources for staff so that they can accelerate and consolidate pupils' learning more effectively
- accurately assessing the reading skills of older pupils to discover where there are weaknesses in their reading and spelling
- providing comprehensive teaching and support to ensure that identified pupils are robustly supported to reach the level expected for their age in reading.

■ Improve leadership and management, and thereby accelerate the academy's progress to good by:

- providing training and support for recently appointed middle leaders to ensure they are able to carry out their responsibilities effectively
- establishing regular checks on the effectiveness of teaching and learning so that all leaders play a full part in identifying weaknesses in the school, and develop the skills to produce appropriate plans for improvement
- providing sufficient time for middle leaders to carry out their role
- ensuring appropriate support and consequences are consistently implemented for the small minority of pupils whose behaviour occasionally does not match the good behaviour of the large majority.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- Pupils' achievement is inadequate between Year 1 and Year 6 because of weak teaching over time. Too many pupils have significant gaps in their learning because of this, and because of the number of staff changes in the last year.
- Progress for Year 6 pupils is slowed by their widespread past underachievement. A significant number of pupils across Key Stage 2 still struggle with basic mathematics and writing. Nevertheless, inspection evidence suggests that this year's national test results are on course to be an improvement on last year's, although still below the expected levels for the pupils' age.
- Progress in Years 1 and 2 has been significantly reduced by inadequate teaching at the start of the school year. However, there are signs of improved learning and progress for pupils in these year groups as a result of staffing changes in November 2013.
- Results in the phonics screening check in Year 1 in 2013, were well below the national average. The recently introduced programme to improve pupils' phonic skills is uneven in its effect. Senior staff recognise that more training and resources are needed to improve the effectiveness of the programme.
- Children join the Nursery class with skills that are below, and sometimes well below those typical for their age. By the time they start Year 1 most have reached the expected level for their age, except in literacy and numeracy skills where many have not.
- The development of pupils' mathematical skills is currently inadequate, mainly because staff have not fully assessed where the gaps are in pupils' learning that are hindering their better progress. Senior staff have devised an appropriate action plan to deal with this weakness, including programmes to urgently improve pupils' knowledge of number and teachers' mathematical knowledge.
- Pupils' reading skills are beginning to improve because of regular opportunities provided for them to practise and improve those skills. Support programmes are provided for pupils in Key Stage 2 who have not yet developed the ability to read by themselves. Despite this, there are still many pupils who have not reached the expected level in reading for their age.
- Not enough of the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged, especially in mathematics and writing. Several Year 6 pupils commented that work was often too easy. This is beginning to improve as more regular checks on their progress are embedded.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals make the same progress as other pupils. There is currently no gap between the attainment of these pupils and their peers in school by the end of Year 6 in English or mathematics. In the 2013 national assessments however, their attainment was almost two years behind that of all pupils nationally.
- Disabled pupils, and pupils with a statement of special educational needs who attend the specially resourced provision, are very well supported to acquire a good range of basic skills and confidence for learning.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language are supported in class to make the same progress as their classmates, although many in Key Stage 2 needed a lot of support to overcome their low levels of attainment when they left Year 2.

### The quality of teaching

### is inadequate

- Teaching is uneven in quality, ranging from occasionally outstanding to too much that requires improvement or is inadequate. The headteacher is providing regular support and training to help staff improve their skills, and this is beginning to improve the overall quality of teaching, but much of pupils' underachievement is a result of weaker teaching over time.
- The recently introduced programme to teach letters and the sounds they make (phonics) is still not yet firmly in place. Progress in developing reading skills through phonics is uneven as some groups do better than others. This is because there has been too little monitoring of lessons to

capture and share the most effective teaching methods.

- Teachers do not make consistently accurate assessments of pupils' learning through their marking or in-lesson checks. Work in books shows either that too many pupils spend time on low-level tasks in mathematics when they are clearly capable of more difficult work, or that some pupils cannot attempt the work because it is too difficult for them.
- Teachers consistently and conscientiously follow the marking policy introduced by the headteacher. However, in too many cases pupils are not given the opportunity to follow up advice in marking, so that teachers' efforts are not resulting in the improvements they should.
- A major obstacle to pupils making better progress is the significant scale of the gaps in their learning from previous weak teaching. This is particularly noticeable in Key Stage 2 classes. The extent of these gaps has not been established accurately for each class, which seriously hinders teachers' ability to plan for pupils to make regular progress in developing basic skills.
- In the Nursery, Reception, and the mixed Year 1 and 2 classes teachers plan more effectively for pupils' needs because the gaps in their learning are smaller or do not exist. More accurate lesson planning provides more closely for the needs of different groups so pupils are able to work at a better rate.
- Older pupils comment on how improvements to behaviour have helped to make it easier to get on and learn in lessons. Staff manage pupils' behaviour well to create a calm, purposeful atmosphere for learning. This is an achievement, given the history of poor behaviour in the academy and the high proportion of pupils who have emotional or behavioural difficulties. Parents who responded to the online questionnaire unanimously agree that behaviour is well managed.
- Learning in the Nursery and Reception classes is hampered by a lack of appropriate resources, there is too little to tempt children to learn. When this is overcome, for example, when children created a snail house from grass and stones in the outdoor area, they develop social and communication skills at a good rate and are delighted with their results.

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

### **requires improvement**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The large majority of pupils are well behaved in class and around the academy. They take good care of classrooms and around the school, are proud to be a part of the academy and take care of its much-improved environment. However, behaviour records show that while behaviour has improved very well in the last year, a small minority of pupils persistently misbehave in the playground and occasionally in lessons, which reduces the impact of the good behaviour of the majority.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are not consistently good because they are not always well prepared for tasks and are sometimes either unsure how to begin or find the work too easy. This reduces their motivation for learning and slows their progress.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Staff are well informed about pupils' individual circumstances and alert to any changes in mood or concentration.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including on the internet. They say that bullying does occur, but it is only a very few pupils who bully others, and this is much less than previously. They understand the different forms bullying can take. While recognising the huge improvements in behaviour in the last year, pupils in Year 6 are eager to see bullying reduced even further.
- The academy provides a caring, supportive environment for pupils. Those whose circumstances might put them at risk of becoming vulnerable are well served by the academy's nurture provision. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in the academy and that they trust adults to give them support should they need it. Pupils' attendance is average.
- Effective systems have been established by the special educational needs coordinator to identify pupils' additional needs more quickly and provide well-matched support to improve pupils' rates

of learning and to fill any gaps in their knowledge.

- Links with parents have increased significantly since the current headteacher took up post, and they welcome the opportunities the academy now provides to help them support their children.

## **The leadership and management**

## **requires improvement**

- The headteacher has been relentless in her determination to improve pupils' behaviour and achievement, and the quality of teaching and learning. Together with senior leaders, she has significantly improved pupils' behaviour in and out of classrooms to provide a safe and secure place in which to learn. Developing the role of middle leaders is a priority for senior staff in order to achieve the faster rate of improvement required for the school, currently this role is under-developed and this limits the pace of improvement.
- Robust systems to check on pupils' progress have been established and time is needed to enable teachers to develop the necessary accurate knowledge and skills to use these systems effectively. Teachers make regular checks on pupils' learning which are helping to improve current progress. However, widespread gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills from weak teaching over time sometimes hamper teachers' ability to consistently set the right level of challenge.
- The drive to extend leadership and management roles to middle leaders is beginning to pay off with a more detailed picture of the school's weaknesses emerging. Recently appointed middle leaders have not yet had enough training and support to provide consistently good leadership for their areas of responsibility and to thus accelerate the school's progress.
- Senior staff make regular checks on teaching and learning. However, judgements about the quality of teaching are sometimes over-generous because they rely too much on what the teacher does rather than what pupils learn in a lesson. While the checks made are bringing about some improvement, the links between the quality of teaching observed, work in pupils' books and teachers' half-termly assessments of pupils' progress are not established rigorously enough to uncover why teaching is not enabling pupils to make more rapid progress.
- The improved systems for checking on pupils' learning and progress are improving leaders' ability to ensure all pupils have an equal chance to succeed. Currently, there are no significant gaps in the rates of progress for different ability groups or pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium.
- The headteacher has developed the wider curriculum well to give pupils better opportunities to practise and improve their literacy and numeracy skills and to be more involved in their learning. Work seen, including the interesting Roman Museum display, shows that increased opportunities for writing are beginning to improve pupils' skills. Pupils report that they look forward to 'topic work', 'because 'you can ask the questions and find out what you want.'
- The academy has received sustained and continuing support, arranged by the governing body, from the local authority to improve the quality of teaching and learning. School-to-school support has also been used to develop teachers' skills and to establish systems to check on the work of the school.
- The primary school sport funding is used appropriately to provide coaching to improve pupils' involvement in sport.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are highly supportive, knowledgeable and united in their determination to improve the academy. Collectively, they bring a good range of experience and expertise to the service of the academy. They have been effective in holding the academy to account since it was formed and in challenging current and previous leaders positively to bring about improvement. Governors have been very effective in resolving staffing issues which have hampered the school's improvement. Governors now hold teachers to account over pupils' progress and link their performance to salary progression, although they are hindered in this by some inaccuracies in leaders' judgements about the quality of teaching and learning. Governors ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met. They oversee the spending of pupil premium funding and are aware of the positive impact this is having on the achievement

of those eligible pupils.



## 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>	138576
<b>Local authority</b>	North Tyneside
<b>Inspection number</b>	440141

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	107
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lynn Goossens
<b>Interim Headteacher</b>	Kerry Lilico
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 200 8343
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