

Academy 360

Portsmouth Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR4 9BA

Inspection dates 18–19 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils make less progress in the secondary phase, than in the primary phase. From their starting points, pupils' achievement in the secondary phase is not yet good. This is because not enough teaching, including in English, mathematics and science, is good or better.
- Levels of attainment in Key Stage 4 are below average. Boys typically do less well than girls.
- Weaknesses in pupils' literacy skills in Key Stages 3 and 4 are hindering their progress. There are inconsistencies in the approaches used in the secondary phase to tackle this.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work and feedback in lessons are not always effective.
- Teachers do not always check well enough if pupils have understood fully what they are learning. As a result, some pupils are not able to put right quickly enough their mistakes and misconceptions.
- Occasionally, in the secondary phase, the behaviour of some students slows down learning for others. Not all teaching makes good use of contexts and examples that pupils find relevant and interesting.
- Some teachers who lead subject areas in the secondary phase are still developing their skills to do this well. This means they are not yet able to play a full part in improving teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils in the primary phase make good progress. This is because most teaching is good, and some is outstanding.
- Younger pupils have outstanding attitudes to learning. They are keen to do well and they are well prepared for secondary school by the end of Key Stage 2.
- The quality of leadership and management in the primary phase is outstanding.
- Pupils who are supported in 'The Hub' receive very effective help and so make good gains in their learning.
- The executive headteacher provides exceptional leadership for this improving academy. The board of governors is making a good contribution to academy leadership.
- In two years, senior leaders have dramatically improved students' behaviour in the secondary phase.
- Teaching is improving in both phases in the academy. Senior leaders have very effective systems to help teachers to improve their practice. Robust action is taken when teaching does not meet leaders' expectations.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 41 lessons and made a small number of shorter visits to sample teaching across the school. Seven lessons were observed jointly with members of the academy's leadership team. In addition, inspectors listened to a small number of pupils from Years 1, 5 and 9 read.
- Discussions took place with the executive headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders and various members of staff. Inspectors also spoke with many pupils, in meetings with them, at break and lunchtimes and during lessons. The lead inspector also met with three members of the board of governors, including the Chair of the Governing Board.
- Many samples of work were studied and also information about pupils' progress. Inspectors also scrutinised records of the academy's checks on teaching quality, academy improvement planning and minutes of meetings of the governing board.
- Safeguarding documentation and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance were also examined.
- Inspectors looked at the 10 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. A summary of parents' feedback gathered by the school was also considered.
- The views of staff were obtained and 62 responded to a staff written questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lee Northern, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Patrick Hargreaves	Additional Inspector
Anne Smedley	Additional Inspector
John Pattinson	Additional Inspector
Julie McGrane	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Although an all-through school, the academy is smaller than typical secondary schools. It was opened as a sponsor-led academy in September 2008, sponsored by Sunderland City Council, Sir Bob Murray and 'Gentoo', a social housing group that contributes to the regeneration of the surrounding area.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is well-above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well-above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic communities is very small. There are no pupils currently on the roll of the academy who speak English as an additional language.
- The academy houses a local authority resource base known as 'The Hub'. This provision currently caters for 32 pupils with severe learning difficulties, all of whom are registered on the roll of the academy.
- In September 2012, the academy established its own in-house facility offering alternative provision for small numbers of students in Key Stages 3 and 4 whose behaviour might typically have led to fixed-term or permanent exclusion. This provision is known as 'The Achievement Centre'. In addition to this, 14 students from Key Stage 4 attend Level 1 and 2 vocational courses at Sunderland City College for a small part of their timetable.
- Shortly after the previous inspection, the then Principal left the academy having been in post for only nine months. The governors secured the appointment of the current executive headteacher, who joined the academy at the end of the summer term in 2012. He is a National Leader of Education and was knighted for services to education in 2013. Of the three associate headteachers, one is seconded full-time from Harton Technology College and another is seconded part-time from Jarrow School. A commitment to these arrangements has been secured by the board of governors of Academy 360 until at least August 2016.
- The academy works in close partnership with other schools through the Harton Teaching School Alliance. For example, Specialist Leaders in Education from Harton Technology College and from Jarrow School provide support for teaching and leadership at the academy.
- In 2013, the academy did not meet the government's current floor standards at Key Stage 4, which represent the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. However, the academy did meet the current floor standards for achievement at the end of Key Stage 2.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, particularly in the secondary phase and for boys, by:
 - rapidly improving the progress students make in the secondary phase in English, mathematics and science
 - ensuring a systematic and consistent approach to improving pupils' literacy skills in all their subjects, building on successful approaches in the primary phase
 - eliminating the remaining instances of low-level disruption to learning which slow pupils' progress in some lessons.
- Improve teaching so that it is at least good and more is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that teachers regularly check and extend pupils' understanding during lessons,

- remedy mistakes and misconceptions and move learning on more quickly
- making good use of relevant, engaging and interesting learning tasks and contexts
- making sure that marking and feedback help all pupils, including the most able, to improve their learning and make better progress
- strengthening the contribution of subject leaders to improving the quality of teaching.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' progress and their attainment are improving, but they are not yet consistently good across both phases of the academy. Younger pupils in the primary phase make markedly faster progress than students in the secondary phase. This is because more teaching is consistently good or outstanding in the primary phase.
- Most children start the academy with skills and abilities that are low compared to those that are typical for their age. They make good gains in their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and most children are well prepared for the start of Key Stage 1. This good progress continues as pupils move through the primary phase and, by the end of Key Stage 2, pupils reach levels of attainment that are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. The most able pupils in the primary phase also make rapid progress as a result of the good levels of challenge provided in lessons.
- As a result of good teaching, most primary phase pupils are adept and capable readers for their age. They can apply their phonic knowledge (letters and the sounds that they make) to read confidently and fluently. However, in a few instances, reading books are not changed often enough, so some pupils have books to read that are too easy for them and this slows down their progress.
- By contrast, as a result of a number of significant factors that have affected the academy in the past, there has been recent and significant underachievement by the end of Key Stage 4. Since the arrival of the executive headteacher, senior leaders in the secondary phase have taken a series of determined and robust actions to bring about improvement. As a consequence, current students are now making better progress, particularly in Key Stage 3.
- Despite this, achievement in the secondary phase requires further improvement. Levels of attainment in Key Stage 4 remain below average and boys' achievement is typically lower than that of girls. This is because not enough teaching, particularly in English, mathematics and science, is yet good or better. However, across the academy, leaders have not shied away from taking decisive action to address weak teaching, even where this has led to considerable staff turnover.
- Weaknesses in students' literacy skills in the secondary phase often hinder more rapid progress. Opportunities for pupils to develop their reading, writing and speaking skills are inconsistent across the academy and there is not yet a systematic approach to building these skills as students move through the secondary phase. By contrast, in the primary phase, teaching is very successful in helping pupils to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy.
- Nevertheless, inspection evidence confirms the academy's view that progress is speeding up for pupils currently on roll at the academy. The proportion of good teaching is increasing and this, together with pupils' much improved behaviour and a curriculum that develops the skills and knowledge they need, means that, by the end of Year 9, pupils are now close to national standards in English, mathematics and science.
- In a similar way, improvements are also evident for the most able pupils. More teaching now challenges the most able pupils to deepen and extend their learning, although this is not yet consistently the case across the academy. However, the academy has stopped early entry to GCSE examinations in order to give pupils more time to reach higher grades.
- This improved progress is also the case for disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs. For example, in 'The Hub', the support that pupils receive is closely matched to their specific and highly individual needs. As a result, many pupils who access this provision make good and sometimes outstanding progress.
- Through the work of the 'Achievement Centre', many students are helped to engage more positively with learning and to attend the academy more frequently. Most go on to achieve worthwhile qualifications that help them to progress successfully to the next stage of their employment, education or training. In a similar way, students who spend part of their time at Sunderland City College also benefit from vocational programmes that enable them to access

appropriate employment or training when they leave the academy.

- Students supported by Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium funding are also making better gains in their learning than before. In 2013, the difference in attainment between students supported through the pupil premium and other pupils was nearly two GCSE grades in English and just over one GCSE grade in mathematics. However, as a result of carefully targeted additional support, this gap is set to reduce significantly for students currently in Year 11.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching in the secondary phase does not yet match that in the primary phase. While almost all teaching in the primary phase is good and much is outstanding, assessment information, work in students' books and observations of learning show that teaching in the secondary phase is not yet strong enough to lead to sustained good achievement.
- Where teaching is of good quality, teachers provide meaningful and interesting contexts in which to develop learning. They have high expectations and provide just the right amount of challenge for all groups of pupils, including for boys. Teachers encourage participation and enjoyment through the questions they ask and the activities they provide.
- For example, in the primary phase, there is a good focus on developing pupils' skills in calculation and problem-solving, often in interesting and enjoyable contexts. However, in the secondary phase, too little emphasis is placed on helping students to understand the mathematical techniques they learn. As a result, progress slows when students struggle to recall or apply one of a series of rules they have learnt and which they have not properly understood.
- Where teaching is at its best, teachers are quick to spot the errors and misconceptions that slow or hinder learning. They are alert to the errors pupils make and know how to help them put things right. Where it is less effective, teachers do not adjust their teaching well enough to take account of responses from pupils. Similarly, inspectors also noted pupils' work that showed a series of similar, uncorrected, mistakes or weaknesses.
- Teaching in the primary phase provides very good support for developing pupils' literacy skills. Pupils' work shows that they make good progress from simple sentences to using more complex forms. Pupils in Key Stage 2 use clauses, paragraphs and connectives with confidence and their writing gradually becomes more descriptive and creative.
- In the secondary phase, support for literacy is less effective, particularly for boys. A scrutiny of students' work shows that, on occasion, too much teaching relies on simple worksheets, expects too little of students' extended writing skills or does not pick up enough on poor standards of presentation, grammar or spelling. Teachers do not always encourage students to develop and extend their responses to teachers' questions in class.
- Most teachers mark pupils' work regularly and provide helpful guidance about how learning can be improved. Leaders check that marking meets the academy's expectations. However, in the secondary phase, the checks made by subject leaders do not pick up well enough on the impact of marking on improving students' learning.
- In most lessons throughout the academy, relationships between pupils and their teachers are positive and productive. In the primary phase in particular, pupils' attitudes to their learning are frequently outstanding. In the secondary phase, where teaching sometimes fails to engage or sustain students' interest, students' progress can be disturbed by behaviour that gets in the way of learning.
- Teaching assistants and other adults typically make a valuable contribution to learning. This is particularly the case in 'The Hub', where pupils do well largely due to the sensitive and skilful nature of the support they receive.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Since the arrival of the executive headteacher, the behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the

academy has been transformed. On his appointment he inherited a situation in which, in the previous 12 months, there had been nearly 500 fixed-term exclusions. In the secondary phase, students' sometimes chaotic behaviour had had a dramatic and corrosive effect that had led to a rapid and sustained deterioration in the quality of learning for all groups of pupils.

- Following this, senior leaders have successfully established a positive climate for learning throughout the academy. As a result, the behaviour of the great majority of pupils has improved significantly and, in the primary phase, it is often outstanding. Through the contribution of the 'Achievement Centre' and as a result of the support provided by leaders for classroom teachers, there has not been a single fixed-term exclusion from the academy for nearly two years.
- Despite these successes, it has taken longer for some students in the secondary phase to adjust to higher expectations. In their discussions with inspectors, older students said that some of their lessons were still disturbed by off-task behaviour that was not always well dealt with by staff. This was confirmed through a scrutiny of the academy's behaviour records and is the chief reason why the behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- However, the work of the academy to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Although still below the national average for secondary and primary schools, levels of attendance at the academy have improved significantly since the last inspection. Academy leaders work hard with parents and pupils, and with external agencies, to continue to reduce overall levels of absence and persistent absence. As exclusion is no longer used as a sanction, pupils are not at risk of harmful or criminal activity in the wider community when they should be at the academy during the school day.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at the academy, and that bullying and aggressive behaviour is now typically rare. The academy's behaviour records confirm this pattern. Through tutorial time, assemblies, in lessons and on trips and visits, pupils have a good appreciation of the importance of safe behaviour. This includes, for example, the potential dangers of the internet and mobile technologies. However, not all pupils appreciate the impact of some forms of discriminatory language, such as the use of homophobic language.
- At the time of the inspection, arrangements for safeguarding and safer recruitment met all government requirements.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher provides exceptional leadership for this academy. He has established a leadership team whose members demonstrably lead by example and who work with great energy towards a vision for the academy that the executive headteacher has clearly articulated. Despite a restructuring programme, which has led to a large number of redundancies, staff morale has risen significantly.
- Strong leadership of the academy as a whole has enabled leaders in the primary phase to flourish. For example, the associate headteacher who leads this part of the academy is a highly effective leader. This can be seen in the rapid and sustained improvements to teaching, an increasing proportion of which in the primary phase is now outstanding. There is a very strong team spirit and a shared determination to further improve outcomes for pupils by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Since his arrival, the executive headteacher has ensured a relentless focus on building the foundations on which to secure rapid improvement. This can be seen in the significant turnaround in students' behaviour in the secondary phase and in the robust approach taken to root out weak and inadequate teaching. In addition, the Key Stage 3 curriculum has been remodelled to ensure a sharper focus on the skills that students need for success in their GCSE courses. However, although there are plans in place to further extend the range of courses provided, higher-attaining students in Year 9 are not yet able to choose appropriate single science GCSE options in Key Stage 4.
- Despite these essential changes, improvements in pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 have emerged only slowly. This is because of the depth and severity of the underachievement

affecting the secondary phase of the school at the time of the executive headteacher's appointment. Nevertheless, inspection evidence confirms that, as improvements have become established, students' progress is rising throughout the secondary phase.

- Senior leaders have implemented robust and rigorous processes for checking the quality of teaching. In partnership with other schools that form the Harton Teaching School Alliance, targeted support for individual teachers has had a notable effect on improvements to teaching. Staff do not receive pay awards if the quality of their teaching does not meet leaders' expectations.
- While there are clear strengths in the primary team, subject leaders in the secondary phase are not yet contributing strongly to improving teaching. Although they are involved in scrutinising students' work and observing teaching, some subject leaders lack the skills and experience to more effectively influence improvements in teachers' practice.
- There is a strong focus on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils who spoke to inspectors did so with evident pride for their academy and their community. The many thought-provoking and colourful displays around the academy provide useful stimuli for discussion and debate.
- The primary sports funding has been used to support a wide range of opportunities for pupils to get involved in sporting activity, and over 50% of primary pupils now do so. In addition, teaching staff have benefitted from training provided to increase their confidence and expertise.
- The executive headteacher has ensured a strong, personal interest in engaging with the community served by the school. This is most noticeable in the academy's much improved relationship with representatives of the Pennywell Residents Group. Nearly all the responses to the Parent View survey indicated a high level of satisfaction with the work of the academy.
- The local authority has little direct involvement in this academy school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing board is well informed about the performance of the academy. Its members are able to use information about pupils' achievement to challenge academy leaders about the outcomes for different groups of pupils, rightly recognising that these variations are often 'hidden behind an average'. They understand the impact of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the academy and how appraisal procedures ensure that only good or better teaching is appropriately rewarded. They know how pupil premium money is spent, and are developing their understanding of the link between how this funding is allocated and its impact on pupils' achievement. They are strengthening the ways in which they gain a better understanding of the academy's work, including through the role of link governors. The links with the academy's main sponsor ensures that pupils at the academy have access to a good range of work-related learning opportunities.

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	135622
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	430937

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	802
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Walls
Headteacher	Sir Ken Gibson
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2012
Telephone number	0191 561 6832
Fax number	0191 534 1187
Email address	enquiries@academy360.co.uk

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