

Peak Academy

Drake Lane, Dursley, Gloucestershire, GL11 5HD

Inspection dates

17–18 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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

- Students' achievement is too low and they make inadequate progress in English and mathematics. Their progress shows little sign of improvement at Key Stage 4. Students supported by the pupil premium do not make as much progress as others.
- Students' skills in communicating, including reading and writing, and in mathematics are not strong enough to help them to succeed in the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Most teachers do not have high expectations of the level and amount of work students can achieve. They are not checking students' progress enough during lessons and adapting the work, their questions and the pace to ensure that all students make good progress.
- Too many lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour because staff are not consistent in the way they manage rewards and sanctions.
- Attendance is poor, especially at Key Stage 4, because the curriculum does not meet students' needs, interests and aspirations.
- Interim leadership has tackled some inadequate teaching and poor behaviour, but not enough to improve achievement or establish a positive ethos for learning.
- Leadership skills have not been developed across the academy to strengthen the capacity of the new senior leadership team to improve the academy's effectiveness quickly enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Due to the recent introduction of a more rigorous system for checking progress, students' progress is beginning to improve at Key Stage 3.
- Teachers' marking in some subjects, such as mathematics, helps students to know what to do to improve their work
- Students say they feel safe in school and they are confident that teachers will address any concerns they may have.
- The new Principal is ambitious for the academy. With the support of the sponsor, he and the new Chair of the Governing Body have quickly gained an accurate view of the school and know what needs to be done.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out jointly with the inspection of Greenfield Academy, which is also a secondary special school that caters for students with behavioural, emotional or social difficulties. Until a new school is built for Greenfield Academy, the students are taught alongside students in The Peak Academy, under the same leadership, management and governance. To support the leadership team in managing the two inspections, the lead inspectors for each inspection worked closely together and produced almost identical reports.
- The inspectors observed 12 lessons taught by 12 teachers. They also heard a few students reading.
- The inspectors held meetings with groups of students, teachers and teaching assistants, senior and subject leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, and a director from the academy sponsor responsible for both establishments.
- The inspectors observed the academy's work and examined a range of documents, including information on the checking of students' progress and the quality of teaching, the monitoring of students' attendance and behaviour, systems for the performance management and development of staff, the improvement plan and documents relating to the safeguarding of students.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey. Inspectors telephoned a few parents for their views and took account of questionnaires completed by 19 members of staff.

Inspection team

Denise Morris, 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 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

- The Peak Academy was opened in September 2012 as part of a federation with Greenfields Academy and a primary academy. The three special schools are sponsored by Academies Enterprise Trust (AET).
- All students at the Peak Academy have a statement of special educational needs due to behavioural, emotional or social difficulties. A few students have additional difficulties, mainly autism spectrum disorders.
- All except two students in Key Stage 4 are educated off-site in alternative provision in an annexe several miles from the main school. The staff at the annexe are employed by the school.
- There are many more boys than girls at the academy.
- The large majority of students are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for children in the care of the local authority, children of parents or carers in the armed forces, and students known to be eligible for free school meals. In this school, it is used to support children in the care of the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Due to leadership issues when the academy first opened, an interim leadership team from a successful school in another local authority was put in place, and an interim executive board established. The board was replaced by a governing body in March 2014 and a new principal was appointed in June 2014. The Principal was in post 12 days prior to the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to good or better by:
 - raising expectations of the level and amount of work students can produce
 - developing teachers' skills in checking students' understanding during lessons and adapting the work, their questions and the pace of learning so that all make good progress
 - sharing the best practice in marking students' work and helping them to know how to improve it.
- Improve achievement, especially at Key Stage 4, by:
 - extending students' skills in communication, including reading and writing, and in mathematics across all subjects
 - using the pupil premium funding, specifically, to enable eligible students to catch up with others.
- Improve students' behaviour and attendance, by:
 - raising the expectations of staff and making sure they consistently apply agreed strategies for managing behaviour, including the use of rewards and sanctions
 - reviewing the curriculum so that it meets students' needs, interests and aspirations.

- Increase the capacity of the leadership team to bring about rapid improvement by:
 - appointing and developing leaders and managers with responsibility for specific areas of improvement, across Key Stages 3 and 4
 - producing, monitoring and evaluating a clear plan for improvement that is shared with all staff and governors.

An external review of governance and of the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- From their different starting points, students are making inadequate progress in English and mathematics. The academy's information indicates that progress is beginning to improve at Key Stage 3, especially in mathematics. This is due to more rigorous checking of the progress of individuals and groups of students. However, the system for tracking students' progress is not used in the off-site provision in the annexe and the progress of students at Key Stage 4 shows little sign of improving.
- Students who are eligible for support through the pupil premium and Year 7 catch up funding are not making as much progress as others, and there is little evidence to indicate the gap is closing.
- Students with additional learning difficulties are not progressing as well as others because they are not helped to communicate their ideas.
- Girls achieve better than boys in English, but there is little difference in their achievement in mathematics.
- The most able students in the school are making at least adequate progress in English and good progress in mathematics lessons at Key Stage 3 as the teachers have high expectations of them. At Key Stage 4, the most able students are not challenged to make good progress. None attained GCSEs at A* to C grades in 2013.
- Students' weak literacy and mathematics skills are a barrier to their learning across subjects. The academy has increased the number of books in its library to encourage students to read. However, students cannot draw on a wide range of skills, including phonics (the sounds that letters make), to read fluently.
- At Key Stage 4, students take a wide range of nationally recognised qualifications, but too few students take GCSE examinations. Of the students that do take GCSE examinations, none is entered early as the academy's policy is for the students to complete the full course.
- The academy has made sure that all current Year 11 students have a place at college or with a training provider to meet the raising of the participation age in education to 17 years in the next academic year.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- As a result of weak teaching over time, students, including those with additional difficulties, those eligible for support from the pupil premium and the most-able students at Key Stage 4, are making inadequate progress.
- Teachers do not all have sufficiently high expectations of the level and amount of work students can achieve. Teaching over time in some subjects, particularly at Key Stage 4, fails to interest and engage them. Students lose interest and become too reliant on support staff in lessons that do not challenge them to think and learn. In such lessons or where they cannot see how the lesson relates to them, their behaviour and attendance deteriorate.
- Until recently, the academy did not have robust information on students' starting points or clear expectations of what they could and should achieve. While this is now in place, many teachers are not using it to plan lessons to meet the different starting points in each class.
- Most teachers are not checking students' progress enough during lessons and adapting the activities, the pace of work, and their questions to ensure that all students make good progress.
- Where teachers adapt their lessons to meet the range of learning needs, students are interested, eager to learn and behave well. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson where students were learning to calculate the circumference of circles, the teacher used his bicycle to show why such calculations are important. He assessed whether or not students could apply their new skills

in measuring circles of different size, and supported those who struggled by helping them to measure the circumference of his bicycle wheel. By asking questions at different levels of challenge, he enabled all the students to make rapid progress from their various starting points. The students clearly enjoyed the lesson and were proud of their achievement.

- In marking their work, the mathematics teacher writes comments which help students to know what to do to improve it. Not all teachers are following the academy's marking policy in this way, and students' progress is uneven across subjects.

Students cannot communicate, read, write, or apply mathematics as well as they should. The academy is beginning to provide training for staff so that these skills are taught across subjects, but this is too recent to show any impact on students' achievement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- The behaviour of students is inadequate. Students' lack of engagement and persistent low-level disruption contribute to inadequate progress in too many lessons. This is because of the inadequate quality of teaching, low expectations and uneven behaviour management by staff.
- Some parents and the majority of staff raised concerns about behaviour. Students at Key Stage 3 say the new Principal is strict and behaviour is improving. The academy has put in place a system of rewards and sanctions to encourage good manners and to create a positive ethos. However, staff are not applying it consistently.
- Teachers often give rewards when they are not justified, and unacceptable behaviour is not always followed up with suitable consequences. For example, Year 10 students showed a lack of respect to staff by arriving late and swearing in a lesson, but were told their reward was a water sports trip on Friday. Students were not motivated to behave well to earn their trip.
- Students' targets for behaviour are not specific enough to help them to know what to do to improve their behaviour.
- Staff demonstrate a calm and patient approach to managing poor behaviour, but procedures are not always followed. This results in behaviour quickly getting worse and leads to a high level of physical restraint and exclusions. Incidents are not always recorded well or trends analysed to identify and tackle the issues.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement. Students, including the few girls and those educated off site in the annexe, say they feel safe in school and that they can discuss any concerns with their teachers. The parents who were contacted confirmed this. Students are confident that bullying is tackled effectively by the staff. They are well supervised at breaks.
- However, limitations in the curriculum mean that students are not taught systematically in personal, social and health education lessons how to keep themselves safe, for example from bullying, or about areas such as sex and relationships.
- Attendance is consistently low and shows little sign of improving, especially at Key Stage 4. The academy has identified the need to review the curriculum in order to meet the needs, interests and aspirations of all students, and to keep them engaged in education.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Interim leadership and governance arrangements have not ensured that achievement, the quality of teaching and behaviour of students are adequate, or developed sufficient capacity to sustain improvements in the academy. This team managed the temporary amalgamation of the two federated academies, tackled some of the inadequate teaching, and put systems in place to ensure behaviour was not a threat to the safety of students and staff. However, improvements have been too slow and not enough.
- The decision to house Key Stage 4 students in an annexe several miles from the main school

with a separate and small team of staff has resulted in inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning between the two key stages.

- The interim team established a system for checking progress and appointed a senior leader to the academy with responsibility for developing teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, teaching and learning are beginning to improve at Key Stage 3. The systems for checking progress and for training staff are not used in the annexe, and the achievement of students at Key Stage 4 is showing little sign of improvement.
- Too many responsibilities rest with the new Principal and senior leader to enable them to bring about the required improvements with the necessary urgency. The academy is beginning to strengthen its capacity for improvement by developing subject and other leadership skills, but this is at an early stage.
- The academy's arrangements for safeguarding students currently do not meet statutory requirements. The designated officer for child protection and safeguarding recently left the academy. While the sponsor has made arrangements for this responsibility to be covered by a neighbouring school until the newly appointed safeguarding officer takes up post, there is no trained officer on either site. Inspectors are satisfied that the designated officer will take up post in the very near future.
- Self-evaluation by the sponsor is informed by suitable systems for checking students' progress, behaviour, attendance and the quality of teaching. It has enabled the new Principal and new Chair of the Governing Body to quickly gain an accurate view of the academy. They know what needs to be done. For example, plans are already in place to review the curriculum so that it meets students' needs more closely and contributes to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, the improvement plan does not have any targets to enable senior leaders and governors to check the impact of improvements on students' achievement.
- The new Principal has a clear vision for improvement and is beginning to raise expectations of achievement and behaviour. Staff, students and parents have noticed this change. The Principal is committed to engaging parents in the work of the academy.
- The sponsor's support for the academy, in providing interim leadership and an interim executive board, has not been effective in raising achievement or in meeting students' behavioural, emotional or social difficulties. The sponsor has put in place suitable procedures for monitoring the academy's work. These are not yet applied consistently.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - has not held the interim leadership team to account effectively for the standards the academy has reached, even though it has an accurate view of the academy's performance
 - has not checked regularly that interim leadership has provided clear enough direction for the staff, particularly at Key Stage 4 and in managing students' behaviour, through evaluation of the improvement plan
 - has not made sure that the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is used to improve the achievement of eligible students
 - has improved the performance management of staff so that it is now more closely linked to students' achievement
 - has established a new governing body with appropriate expertise.

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	138429
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	440137

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	31
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philippa Dancey
Principal	Richard Lewis
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01453 542130
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