

Cathedral Academy

Thornes Road, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF2 8QF

Inspection dates

24–25 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Too few students in Year 11 in 2014 achieved five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics.
- There is too much variation in achievement across different subjects, and between different groups of students. Not enough students make good progress in mathematics.
- The gaps in between the attainment and progress of disadvantaged students and those who are not widened in 2014.
- Not all teachers have an accurate understanding of how well students are learning nor provide activities which challenge and support students of all abilities to make good progress.
- The quality of marking is variable. Not all students are clear about of how well they are doing, know how to improve their work or given time to respond to teachers' advice.
- Students do not always show positive attitudes to their work. Students sometimes find learning uninteresting, become bored and lose focus. As a result, behaviour requires improvement.
- Attendance, although improving steadily, remains below average. Too many students are regularly absent. As a result, the school's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement.
- Although the academy is improving, it is doing so at a steady rather than good rate. Actions planned by leaders are not clear enough clear in how their impact on students' learning will be measured.
- Not all middle leaders have the necessary skills to reach an accurate view of the quality of teaching in their subjects nor to hold teachers to account for students' progress.
- Governors do not yet offer effective challenge to leaders about the academy's performance.

The school has the following strengths

- The sixth form is outstanding. As a result of excellent leadership and teaching, students achieve extremely well over time. They love learning and are exceptionally well prepared for their next stage in work or education.
- Students achieve well in English. From very low starting points when they start in Year 7, students make good progress. Attainment at GCSE is broadly in line with national average.
- Leaders ensure that policies for the development of literacy are clear and applied by all staff. Opportunities for students to practise their basic literacy skills, including across curricular subjects, are good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 30 lessons taught by 29 different teachers. Four of these lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors observed students' behaviour around the academy as well as in lessons. They talked with students informally about their learning, as well as holding more formal meetings with groups of students of different abilities and from all three key stages.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, members of the teaching staff, and the governing body. In addition, inspectors held a discussion with the academy improvement partner.
- The views of 18 parents who responded to the online parental questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, as well as information collected by the academy about the views of parents. In addition, inspectors scrutinised responses to a staff questionnaire.
- The inspection team examined a range of documentation, including data about students' achievement from internal tracking systems and analysis provided by academy leaders. Inspectors also scrutinised leaders' monitoring records, including minutes of governing body meetings and information provided relating to attendance, safeguarding and behaviour.

Inspection team

Christine Birchall, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Steven Goldsmith	Additional Inspector
Edwin de Middelaer	Additional Inspector
Peter Monfort	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Cathedral Academy is a smaller than average sized secondary school.
- The large majority of students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium funding is well above average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is increasing, mainly as a result of new arrivals from Eastern Europe.
- The proportion of students who are supported through school action is slightly below average. The proportions supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs are average.
- The academy does not make regular use of alternative provision. However, two students are currently dual registered; one with a pupil referral unit and one with a hospital.
- The academy does not enter students early for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics. For some subjects, students sit GCSE before Year 11 because they have allocated curriculum time to complete the course in a year.
- The academy has a specialist performing arts provision at post-16 (CAPA). There are currently 97 students on roll, 76% of whom travel from outside the local authority, having undertaken auditions to meet the entry criteria.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress at the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good and that students make at least good progress, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have an accurate understanding of how well students are learning and provide activities which appropriately challenge and support students of all abilities to make good progress
 - teachers' questioning of students effectively probes their understanding and encourages them to extend and explain their thinking
 - all teachers have high expectations of what students are capable of achieving, including the amount of work completed and its presentation
 - students are given the opportunities they need to show their mathematical understanding and apply their knowledge and numeracy skills to solving real-life problems, including across the various curricular subjects
 - the quality of marking is consistently good and that all students are clear about of how well they are doing, know how to improve their work and are given time to respond to teachers' advice.
- Develop students' attitudes to learning so that they take responsibility for their own progress.
- Improve attendance and reduce persistent absence so that it is at least in line with the national average.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels, including governors and particularly middle leaders, in order to speed up the rate of improvement, by:
 - ensuring that all middle leaders have the skills to reach an accurate view of the quality of teaching in their subjects, and to hold teachers to account for the progress of students in their classes
 - ensuring that actions planned by leaders are very clear and specific in how their impact will be measured, particularly in the learning and progress of students
 - making sure that governors provide an effective level of challenge and support to academy leaders, particularly about the information they receive, so that they have an accurate view of how well the

academy is performing and that this is reflected in the minutes of governing body meetings

- ensuring that the best teaching practices which exist within the academy, particularly in the sixth form, are widely shared among staff.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leaders and governors are passionately committed to the academy and want the best for the students. However, although they understand the academy's overall strengths and areas for development, their view of how well it is performing is over-generous. They have ensured that students' good achievement in English has been maintained, but have been less successful in bringing about rapid improvements in mathematics, or in some other subjects, such as humanities.
- Teachers say they are well supported by a range of training opportunities. Records indicate that they are set appropriate targets for improving their teaching. Although the teaching practices of some teachers have been developed and improved, teaching is not yet consistently good, particularly in mathematics. The best teaching practices that exist within the academy, particularly in the Sixth Form, are not yet widely shared among staff.
- There is a range of plans in place with appropriate actions to bring about improvement. However, leaders are not clear or specific enough in how the success of their impact will be judged, especially on the learning and progress of students.
- Senior leaders do not routinely record outcomes of meetings held with middle leaders, including any agreed actions and this makes it difficult to rigorously hold middle leaders to account for the quality of their work. Not all middle leaders have the skills they need to reach an accurate view of the quality of teaching in their subjects, and they do not yet hold teachers fully to account for students' progress.
- Leadership of English is good, ensuring that there is a clear policy in place to promote literacy across the academy, which is consistently implemented by all staff.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, particularly those based on the performing arts, which broaden students' academy experience. One class in each year group in Years 7 and 8 follows a specialised curriculum, known as CAPA Juniors, which includes an extended day with a focus on high-quality performing arts. Opportunities to develop students' literacy skills, including reading, are well promoted throughout curriculum subjects and, as a result, students achieve well in English. However, the curriculum requires further improvement to ensure that students' numeracy skills develop at a good rate.
- The curriculum makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are provided with opportunities to reflect on moral issues and develop a good understanding of life in modern Britain.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a clear understanding of what is happening in the academy because they are provided with detailed information by the headteacher. However, minutes of governing body meetings do not clearly demonstrate that they ask challenging questions about the information they receive, and they have an over-optimistic view of how well the academy is performing. They understand how the pupil premium funding is spent, but are less clear about its impact, including the fact that gaps in attainment in school compared to non-disadvantaged students nationally widened in 2014. They check that performance management systems are robust and that teachers are set clear targets for improvement. They ensure that weak teaching is tackled and any progression through the pay scales is granted only where teachers' performance has a good impact on improving students' achievement. Governors ensure that safeguarding requirements are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement because students do not consistently display positive attitudes to their learning. There are occasions when students get bored and lose focus on what they should be doing. Very occasionally, a few students do not listen to their teacher and this slows learning. Work in students' books indicates that students do not always tackle their work to the very best of their ability, nor complete as much as they should. Some rely heavily on the teacher to tell them what to do, and do not fully understand that they must take some responsibility for ensuring their own progress.
- Academy records indicate that there has been a reduction in the number of general behavioural incidents over time. This is supported by the views of both students and teachers, who say that, over the last couple of years, behaviour has improved. Behaviour outside lessons, such as at break and lunchtimes, is calm and there is little indication of litter or lack of care for the academy environment.
- Students are courteous and friendly. They enjoy school and were keen to tell inspectors about all the

positive things which go on. They feel well supported by their teachers, and are appreciative of the range of opportunities, including extra-curricular activities available to them.

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement. This is because, despite recent improvements, attendance remains below average. The proportion of students absent regularly is reducing, but is still above average.
- Students say that they feel safe in school. Bullying is infrequent and dealt with effectively by adults. Students have a good understanding of the different forms which bullying may take, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying. They know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when using the internet.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because over time it has not enabled students to make good progress, notably in mathematics. As a result, too few achieve five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics at the end of Year 11.
- Teachers do not always have an accurate understanding of how well students are learning. As a result, they are sometimes unable to provide activities which ensure the correct challenge or support for the different abilities of students. This means that the most able are not always stretched, while the least able do not receive the support they need. Questions asked do not always probe students' understanding well enough or encourage them to develop and explain their thinking. Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are sometimes too low to lead to good progress.
- The teaching of mathematics requires improvement. Teachers do not always give students enough opportunity to show their mathematical understanding by applying their skills to solving real-life problems, including across the various curriculum subjects.
- The teaching of literacy is a strength in the academy. In all subjects, teachers take care to correct spellings and grammar, and to give students opportunities to develop their reading skills. Students are challenged to use technical vocabulary with accuracy.
- Teachers do not always use their subject knowledge effectively to involve students and excite them about their learning. As a result, some students can drift off task when they lose interest.
- The quality of marking is variable. There are examples across the academy, notably in English, of exemplary marking and feedback. At its best, marking provides students with a clear understanding of how well they are doing and precise guidance about how to improve their work. Students are given time to respond to teachers' advice, and make good progress as a result. However, this is not consistent across the academy, and feedback from some teachers has little impact on students' progress.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- When students join the academy in Year 7, their attainment is much lower than is expected for their age. In 2014, unvalidated school data shows that in Year 11, 40% of students attained five good GCSEs, including in English and mathematics. This is well below the 2013 national average and represents a significant decline in the academy's results in 2013. It is also well below that predicted by senior leaders. Although, overall these students made expected progress from their individual starting points, achievement in mathematics was weaker and, as a result, requires improvement.
- There is variation in the achievement of students across different subjects and across different year groups. For example, students typically make better progress in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3 and while students achieve well in English and the performing arts, achievement in other subjects, such as mathematics and humanities requires improvement.
- The achievement of the most able students requires improvement. Too few reach the highest grades at GCSE. This is because teachers do not routinely plan challenging activities to develop and secure their knowledge and understanding. Students do not have sufficient opportunities to apply their skills across a range of subjects, particularly in mathematics in order to reach the higher levels.
- The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs requires improvement, particularly in mathematics. In Year 11 in 2014, too few of the least able students made expected progress from their previous starting points. However, the academy's internal data that tracks how well current students with special educational needs are achieving, indicate that more students are now

making better progress.

- The achievement of disadvantaged students requires improvement. In GCSE results in Year 11 in 2013, students supported by the pupil premium funding attained about one-third of a grade lower in English and a half a grade lower in mathematics compared to others in the academy. Their attainment was about half a grade lower in English and nearly a whole grade lower in mathematics, compared to non-disadvantaged students nationally. School data and inspection evidence shows that these gaps within the academy widened further in 2014. Evidence from across the academy shows gaps between the progress of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students in a number of subjects.
- Achievement in mathematics requires improvement. Although students can follow processes in mathematics, they do not have a clear understanding of the concepts which underpin them. This means that they do not always have the skills to apply their knowledge to solving real-life mathematical problems, and they are not given sufficient opportunities to do so.
- Students make good progress in English. They often join the academy in Year 7 with weak literacy skills, including the ability to spell and to use grammar and punctuation properly. They achieve well in both Key Stages 3 and 4 so that at the end of Year 11, they attain GCSE grades in line with national average. The academy has very effective policies for promoting the development of literacy skills across the curriculum, and this is successful in closing previous gaps in their basic skills with those seen nationally. Students are encouraged to read in all subjects, and say that they enjoy it. Additional government funding designed to support students who join the academy in Year 7 with below average attainment in literacy is used well to ensure that these students catch up and make good progress.
- The very small proportion of students who speak English as an additional language, including new joiners from Eastern Europe, are well supported and make good progress. In particular, they quickly develop the literacy skills they need in order to be able to access the curriculum.
- Students who are dual registered make good progress because they are well supported by the academy, Links with the other institutions are clear and well organised.

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The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- Students in the sixth form achieve exceptionally well. The academy offers a small number of specialist performing arts courses and entry is by audition. Students make excellent progress from their starting points to achieve outcomes above the national average and have been increasing for the last three years. They are extremely well prepared for the next stage in work or education, and a number of them go onto to train or study at high-ranking performing arts institutions. Although only a very small number of students sat GCSE mathematics or English in 2014, they all achieved a grade C, which represented good progress from their lower starting points.
- Teaching in the sixth form is outstanding. Teachers all have professional performing arts backgrounds, and use their impressive subject knowledge to challenge students to reach the highest standards. Expectations of what students can achieve are very high. Teachers assess students' work very skilfully to ensure that they all have an accurate understanding of how well they are achieving and exactly what they need to do to improve. Students are provided with ample opportunities to improve their work and this contributes to their rapid and sustained progress.
- Students' attitudes to learning are outstanding. They take great pride in their work and in the academy, and are determined to achieve. They take up all the opportunities that are available to them with great enthusiasm and put on a range of high-quality performances throughout the year. They make excellent use of independent study time; often working collaboratively to help each other assess and improve their work. They contribute well to the school community by mentoring students lower down the academy, and are involved in activities outside the school.
- Leadership in the sixth form is outstanding, ensuring that there is highly effective team work, with an unrelenting focus on ensuring students can all achieve their best. Students' progress is tracked well and support is put in place swiftly where required.

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	137764
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	448951

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	746
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	97
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Parton
Headteacher	Tay Warren
Date of previous school inspection	11 July 2013
Telephone number	01924 330640
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