

Farringdon Community Academy

Allendale Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR3 3EL

Inspection dates 16–17 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	This inspection:	Requires improvement 3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement 3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good 2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement 3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement 3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Leadership and management, including governance, require improvement. Inconsistencies in the effectiveness of middle leaders' work with senior leaders to drive improvement across the school are resulting in too much variation in the quality of teaching and in students' achievement in some classes and subjects. Consequently, both teaching and achievement require improvement.
- Improvement plans' targets are not sharp enough to enable governors to challenge leaders robustly about the impact of the actions taken on students' achievements.
- The good practice in teaching and developing students' literacy skills across the curriculum, which is evident in some classes, is not shared widely enough to improve weaker practice.
- A few teachers' expectations of what their students can achieve are not high enough. Some do not challenge poor presentation or ensure marking and feedback help students understand what they have done well, what to correct, or what they need to do next.
- The gap between the attainment of students known to be entitled to free school meals and that of other students, although narrowing in Key Stage 3, was too wide for Year 11 in 2014.
- A few students with special educational needs do not make good enough progress in lessons.
- Governors have not ensured the school's website fully meets the Department for Education's requirements.

The school has the following strengths

- Where leaders focused their actions as a new academy last year, there has been improvement, as seen in the Year 11 separate science GCSE results and in students' hastening progress in Key Stage 3.
- Strong leadership, high-quality work, support and partnership with parents ensure students in the autistic spectrum provision make good progress in their learning, are safe and included into school life successfully.
- Strong pastoral care helps to secure students' good behaviour, safety, positive attitudes and stated enjoyment of school. This is reflected in the improving attendance rates and lower-than-average exclusion rates.
- Students are taught well about British values and life in modern Britain. This, together with the wide range of extra-curricular cultural, arts and sports activities, visits and links with villages in Gambia, ensures students' good moral, social and cultural development.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at no notice under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. It was subsequently deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.
- Inspectors observed 25 part lessons, three of which were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also visited a range of other lessons for short periods, including intervention groups, and heard a number of younger students read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and staff, and representatives of the governing body.
- Inspectors spoke informally to students in lessons and at various times during the inspection. They also spoke to groups of students formally on the second day of the inspection.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documentation including the school's information aimed at keeping students safe, governing body minutes and the school's improvement plans.
- They reviewed a range of data and information including the most recent provisional GCSE results for summer 2014 and the achievement and progress information of students in other year groups. They also reviewed some case studies of students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.
- Forty-six responses to the online inspection survey 'Parent View', responses to the school's own parent and carer survey and 90 responses to the Ofsted staff survey were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Margaret Farrow, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alexandra Hook	Additional Inspector
Clive Petts	Additional Inspector
Jim Hall	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Farringdon converted to an academy school in July 2013. When its predecessor school was last inspected, it was judged to be good. It is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Virtually all students are of White British heritage. An above-average proportion of students is known to be entitled to free school meals.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs supported at school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. This is because the school has specially resourced provision for 34 students aged 11 to 16 years, with an autistic spectrum diagnosis.
- Five students attend the Pupil Referral Unit in the city. This provision is subject to its own inspection and it was judged to be good when last inspected in 2013. Students from across Sunderland attend this provision.
- Farringdon teaches a Construction qualification that its own students and students from the local area undertake. The school also delivers sports expertise to eight local primary schools.
- At the time of the inspection, the school had submitted a number of summer 2014 Year 11 examination papers to the examination boards for re-marking.
- Published Key Stage 4 performance information indicates the school meets the government's floor standards, which set out minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Tackle the variability in the quality of teaching urgently so that it is good or better across all departments to ensure every student can make the best possible progress in lessons, by:
 - insisting that all teachers have sufficiently high expectations of what their students can do, including students' presentation skills
 - ensuring the good practice in teaching, marking and feedback currently in some departments is embedded across the school; taking urgent action when improvement is not good enough
 - ensuring teachers become adept in developing students' literacy skills across the curriculum
 - making certain teachers use information on students' achievements to plan lessons that enable them to make the progress they are capable of, particularly for the small group of students with special educational needs whose progress is not as good as it should be
 - narrowing the gap between students entitled to free school meals and other students.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management across the school by:
 - ensuring all middle leaders take responsibility for improving teaching and students' achievements in their departments and for driving improvement across the school
 - improving the rigour and impact of the monitoring of teaching and learning
 - making certain that improvement plans contain precise timescales and targets against which the governing body can hold all leaders to account for the impact of their work
 - ensuring governors carry out their duty to provide a school website that fully meets the Department for Education's requirements so that parents and carers are well informed about key policies and information about the effectiveness and impact of the school's work.

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

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Systems to hold departmental and middle leaders to account for the impact of their departments' work in hastening students' progress in lessons and improving the quality of teaching are not working consistently well. Some departments, including humanities and modern foreign languages, are not pulling their weight. The quality of teaching is inconsistent and, as a result, some students do not achieve as well as they should.
- Leaders' own evaluation of the quality of teaching is too generous because arrangements for monitoring teaching and learning are not consistently robust. Not enough account is taken of the progress students make over time when judging the quality of teaching.
- Improvement planning is detailed and built on senior leaders' clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas that need to be better. Priorities are appropriate but there are few measurable targets or timescales within the plan so it is difficult for senior leaders to check when actions should have been completed and the expected impact of those actions.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced but there is too much variation in the quality and impact of subjects taught. Students are well taught about British values, being part of modern Britain and being active members of their school and local community. Links developed with young people in Gambia enhance their understanding of their place in a global community.
- The personal, social, citizenship, health education curriculum, assemblies and rich and varied range of extra-curricular arts, cultural and sporting activities contribute well to students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The curriculum for students who are most at risk of not attending or being excluded has been adapted well to keep them coming to school and re-engage them with learning, with courses that help them to make successful steps into education or training. The school's Construction course for students here and in other schools is building students' skills as well as their confidence.
- Careers information, advice and guidance to students from Year 9 are strong and contribute to positive next steps for virtually all students who leave the school. Recent developments are helping to inform younger students about choices and future decisions they may want to take.
- This is an inclusive school. Every effort is taken to ensure equality of opportunity for all and students report discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. However, because of the variations in achievement of groups of students identified above, work to ensure equality is not yet good.
- The academy has recently bought in support from Durham local authority specialists to improve leadership of, and teaching in, weaker subjects. It is too soon to see the impact of this work.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Discussions with governors and minutes of their meetings show they discuss achievements of students and the quality of teaching regularly. Information provided helps them know how the extra government funding for students entitled to free school meals is spent. However, their ability to challenge leaders fully is limited. Improvement plans that they review do not have clear timescales and targets for improvement against priorities and actions; therefore, it is difficult for them to check if actions have been successful in driving the required improvement. For example, there are no targets to enable them to check regularly the impact of the school's actions to narrow the achievement gap between the students eligible for free school meals and those who are not. Governors speak knowledgeably about the performance management arrangements for staff, make sure that pay progression is linked to teachers' performance and insist on time-limited support plans when weaknesses have been identified. Governors ensure safeguarding procedures are robust and meet requirements. However, they have failed to ensure the school website meets the Department for Education's requirements. At the time of the inspection, guidance for parents on the curriculum was limited, as was information on the impact of the school's work for students entitled to the pupil premium, or the comparison between the school's achievements and national averages.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are polite and friendly towards each other, adults and visitors. They move around the site maturely; this is particularly important in the school's narrow corridors. Break times on the yard are discretely supervised by staff and students say the good behaviour seen during the inspection is typical. They report lunchtime arrangements are good and well organised, with

time to eat and take part in extra-curricular activities if they wish.

- Students' attitudes to learning are good and they actively contribute, even in the more mundane lessons. They come to lessons promptly, well prepared, smartly dressed in line with the school's high expectations of uniform and are quick to settle down. Their attendance rates have improved and are now average.
- Students report there has been a step change in behaviour over the last year; it is usually good with few lessons where misbehaviour hinders learning. They report a more consistent approach to teachers' implementation of the school's behaviour policy. This can be seen in the below-average number of fixed period exclusions and the lack of permanent exclusions.
- Virtually all parents who completed the inspection questionnaire report that their children are safe, behaviour is good and bullying is dealt with effectively.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students report that they are taught well about risks to their personal safety, including misuse of drugs and alcohol. They are aware of e-safety. They talk authoritatively on the actions they take themselves, as a result, to minimise risks.
- All types of bullying, including racist or homophobic bullying, are discussed regularly in assemblies, personal, social, citizenship education lessons and in pastoral work. Students report that occasionally there are incidents, but they are confident that when they report them to anyone, they get sorted. Any incidents are carefully recorded and resulting actions taken identified.
- Pastoral support is a strength. Case files, observations and discussions show the wide range of actions taken and the external agencies the school works with to support students and their families quickly in times of greatest need.
- Students in the specialist provision are supported well in a caring and calm atmosphere. This adds to their stated enjoyment of school and to their good achievements.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good enough over time to eradicate the underachievement of older students known to be eligible for free school meals or ensure that students leave Year 11 with overall attainment that is at least in line with that found nationally.
- There are examples of good and outstanding teaching in English, mathematics and science that ensures students thrive in their learning and make rapid progress in these lessons. This good practice is not shared well enough across the school to raise expectations, train and develop all staff. Improvements to the way the teaching of English and mathematics is organised and improved leadership of these subjects are also contributing to students' improving skills and knowledge and better progress in lessons.
- Good relationships between students and adults typify most lessons along with students' good attitudes to learning. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support students from the specialist provision who join in lessons with their peers.
- Outstanding practice in one mathematics lesson illustrated wonderfully students' real enjoyment and thirst for learning. All were fully involved because of enthusiastic and knowledgeable teaching and insightful, probing questioning. Students who made rapid progress in one activity then thrived in the challenge of solving much harder problems set. The teacher quickly gathered together students who found the task more difficult and developed strategies with them to deepen their understanding before moving on successfully to the next challenge.
- Not all teachers use the information they have about students' current achievements to plan lessons that take account of any different starting points. For example, in a Year 8 geography lesson, students who said they were working at Level 5 last term had the same work as those who were at Level 4 and work in their books was of no better quality or depth.
- A range of reading activities and interventions, including use of the Year 7 catch-up grant is enabling weaker readers to improve their skills successfully. Some teachers are developing students' literacy skills in subjects other than English well but this is not always the case. Consequently, there are missed opportunities for all staff to raise students' expectations and skills in spelling, grammar, presentation and punctuation in other subjects.
- There is too much variation in the quality and usefulness of marking and feedback to students. High-quality marking in the outstanding mathematics lesson left students in no doubt about how well they were doing, what they had to put right or had misunderstood and gave them some real challenges for their next steps. In some books and classes, marking is cursory and serves little purpose. While students report they have targets in such lessons, they are unclear about what they are and what they need to do to reach them.

The achievement of pupils**requires improvement**

- Strategies developed by leaders to raise students' achievement across the school following the establishment of the academy last year have been inconsistent in their success, and some did not have enough time to impact fully on the achievements of Year 11 students.
- The school rarely uses early entry for GCSE students. Provisional information indicates that the proportion of students gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics in 2014 remains below average.
- The gap between disadvantaged students and other students, which had narrowed in 2013, widened in the unvalidated data for 2014. Provisional results indicate around 25% fewer disadvantaged students gained five good GCSEs including English and mathematics than other students.
- Strategies have been more successful in physics, biology and chemistry across the school and for year groups lower in the school in English and mathematics. The proportion of Year 11 students gaining grades A* to C in separate science subjects has risen significantly this year, as has the proportion taking these subjects at GCSE.
- Leaders' sharper focus on meeting the needs of the most able students has resulted in a larger proportion of students gaining higher levels in science subjects, business and English GCSEs. Work is taking place currently to ensure more able students lower down the school are also given the opportunity to achieve highly but this is still too patchy across subjects.
- Observations of learning during the inspection and school information on students' progress in Key Stage 3 currently and over the past year show that students are making faster progress in lessons and the gap between students entitled to free school meals and other students is narrowing effectively. Students in Years 10 and 11 are also making better progress in English, science and mathematics lessons particularly.
- There remain gaps between the progress of a small number of students with special educational needs supported at school action plus and that of other students, because in some lessons teachers do not plan learning activities that take account of their current achievements.
- Conversely, students with autistic spectrum diagnosis supported in the unit make good progress because of the specialist support provided and the carefully planned activities that are based on detailed assessment and awareness of their current knowledge, skills and understanding so that students are eager to get on with their work.

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	139852
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	452703

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	770
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Glynis Hossack
Headteacher	Howard Kemp
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
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