

Tarleton Academy

Hesketh Lane, Preston, Lancashire, PR4 6AQ

Inspection dates

4–5 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- From their broadly average starting points, students in Key Stages 3 and 4 make good progress. By Year 11, standards in GCSE are typically above average.
- Good and sometimes outstanding teaching means that students make good progress, especially in English and, in 2013, in mathematics. In these subjects, interesting tasks taught in a lively way challenge students of all abilities.
- Overall, the behaviour of students is good. They show pride in being part of Tarleton Academy and enjoy good relationships with their teachers.
- Students, parents and staff agree that students are kept very safe. Attendance is above average and fixed-term exclusions and permanent exclusions are low.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher, with the support of the governing body and senior leaders has taken decisive action to improve standards of teaching, the achievement of students and their attitudes to learning.
- Senior and middle leaders ensure that the pupil premium is well used. The gap between the progress of disadvantaged students and their peers is closing rapidly.
- Governors hold the headteacher and senior leaders to account very effectively. They have a detailed knowledge of how well the academy is performing and, with the headteacher, are ambitious for its future development.
- The academy plays a major role in the community through use of its performing arts and sports facilities. The swimming pool is well used by local primary schools and other facilities are open for community use in the evening and at weekends.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The progress of middle ability students is not as strong as the achievement of other students in the academy or nationally.
- Due to a legacy of weaker teaching, students' achievement in some subjects is still not as good as in most.
- There is some low-level misbehaviour in some lessons, which slows the progress made by students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 parts of lessons taught by 28 teachers. Six lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher and senior leaders.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior and middle leaders about teaching, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding and about students' progress and assessment.
- They also talked to students in lessons, informally and to three groups of students, with some governors and the local authority School Improvement Partner.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of written work, data from assessments and academy records and policies to review improvements in students' progress, behaviour, teaching, the curriculum and safeguarding requirements. They also examined the academies own evaluation of its work and its plans for further improvement.
- The responses of 51 staff to the inspection questionnaire were considered, along with 105 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also considered emails and telephone calls from two parents.

Inspection team

Timothy Gartside, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Stephen Wall	Additional inspector
Victoria Atherton	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Tarleton High School converted to become an Academy on 1st January 2012. When its predecessor school Tarleton High was last inspected in January 2010, it was judged to be good overall.
- It is smaller than the average sized secondary school.
- Most students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium funding is well below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The academy currently provides alternative provision for students at Shaftesbury High School and Acorns School.
- The academy does not enter any students early for GCSE examinations.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations of students' attainment and progress.
- The academy is a partner of Runshaw College, a local college of further education.
- The academy is a member of the West Lancashire partnership of secondary schools and academies, the Chorley and South Ribble network of secondary schools and the Tarleton and Hesketh Bank cluster of primary schools with Tarleton Academy, all of whom promote the professional development of staff across the area.
- The current headteacher was appointed in 2011.

What does the academy need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement further by:
 - making sure that all students are sufficiently challenged so that they can make even faster progress, especially middle ability students
 - eliminating the small amount of low-level misbehaviour which occurs in some lessons
 - making sure that students achieve equally strongly in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leaders at all levels are fully united behind an ambitious programme for rapid and sustained development of the academy, which is in the process of being realised. They set high expectations for staff and students and value the role the academy plays in the wider community.
- Since her appointment, the headteacher has set an uncompromising agenda for improvement and all areas of academy policy and practice have been reviewed. The headteacher knows the staff and students well and recognises what still needs to be done to improve the achievement of middle-ability students still further. Inspection evidence shows the progress of students currently in the academy is continuing to rise because leaders and managers have set much more demanding targets for progress and achievement; all are now expected to make at least the progress expected of them from their individual starting points and an increasingly high proportion is expected to and are doing better than this.
- The leadership of teaching is outstanding because in recent years senior leaders and managers have tackled weaknesses in teaching rigorously and successfully. This has resulted in a significant improvement in the quality of teaching which, in turn, is driving up achievement rapidly and securely.
- The rigour and regularity with which the quality of teaching and learning is monitored has also improved. The outcomes are used to identify the professional training needs of staff and to raise the profile of the importance of consistently good and outstanding teaching to which staff now aspire. Senior leaders also monitor the quality of provision, attendance and behaviour of those students attending alternative provision, regularly and thoroughly.
- There is consistently at least good subject and departmental leadership which has supported senior leaders in the drive for improvement. The newly energised leadership of those subjects in which students have previously relatively underperformed is now bringing about good improvements in achievement in these subjects.
- A strong and effective commitment to providing equality of opportunity and to using pupil premium funding effectively, ensures that any gaps in achievement between disadvantaged students and their peers both in the academy and nationally is closing rapidly. The good use of the funding received to help those students who enter Year 7 with lower than expected levels of attainment in literacy, particularly reading, enables them to make rapid progress through creative teaching supported by well-chosen resources and effective teaching assistants.
- The curriculum is led and managed exceptionally well to provide students with an appropriate range of subjects and qualifications. The academy is increasingly ambitious in its expectations of students who are now studying more academic GCSE's. More students study Double Award science, both English Language and Literature and a modern foreign language than before. Computer science has been introduced and is proving to be a popular option. Initiatives such as the introduction of a nurture class in Years 7 and 8 have improved some students' basic literacy and numeracy skills significantly.
- The programme of careers education and guidance prepares students very well for the next phase in their education. The academy is a partner of the nearby Runshaw College and many students choose to continue their studies there, whilst others progress to other colleges of further education or to local schools with sixth forms.
- The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and British values and preparation for life in modern Britain are promoted very effectively. Thoughtful planning by leaders and managers has ensured that all themes are integrated into the pastoral and academic curriculum resulting in an increasingly positive impact upon the attitudes of students towards their education and towards life in a multi-cultural society.
- The leaders of the academy maintain cordial and productive links with the local authority and other local schools through regular meetings with the School Improvement Partner and membership of the West Lancashire, Chorley and South Ribble and the Tarleton and Hesleth Bank primary schools with Tarleton Academy partnerships.
- Parents' views are very positive. They recognise the current improvements being made at the academy and the impact it is having on the progress of their children. The vast majority would recommend the academy to others.
- Safeguarding procedures meet current requirements and the school ensures students attending alternative provision are safe.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governance of the academy is outstanding. Governors have a detailed knowledge of the academy and how well it is doing. They share the headteacher's ambitious vision for its development and have

worked closely with senior leaders in the thorough review of policies and practice; including the quality of teaching.

- Governors hold the headteacher and all leaders and managers to account. They visit the academy regularly and receive thorough reports from the headteacher and senior and middle leaders. Such reports are not taken at face value but are subjected to rigorous questioning. Governors know the right questions to ask because over recent years they have received a wide range of training from the local authority and other sources, for example, in analysing national comparative data.
- Governors support the headteacher in tackling any weaknesses in teaching and ensuring that good and outstanding teaching is rewarded through implementation of the rigorous performance management system.
- Governors monitor the progress of disadvantaged students. They know not only where the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is allocated but also their impact upon the good achievement of those students who require additional support with literacy and numeracy when they join the academy in Year 7 and the good progress of students in receipt of pupil premium funding

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. They arrive promptly to lessons and ready to work. In lessons, they generally show good attitudes to learning by listening carefully and respectfully to their teachers and to each other, contributing constructively when required and working well with their peers.
- On rare occasions, especially when teaching is less effective, some students lose concentration and begin to chat amongst themselves or shout out answers to questions inappropriately and this slows their progress and the progress of other students in the class.
- Students behave well beyond lessons. They wear their uniform with pride as they move calmly from building to building between lessons. They mix well at break and lunchtime and the system of form tutoring which brings together students of all ages certainly helps to develop a caring community. Relationships between students and those teachers on break and lunch duty are good humoured, although there is some frustration amongst younger boys that due to the confines of the site they are currently not able to play football in the winter months in the outside recreation areas.
- Behaviour is also good because students involve themselves enthusiastically in the extra-curricular activities that are available, including a 'lunch club' in the sports hall, a wide range of sports, music, arts and drama clubs, subject clinics and the debating society.
- There have been only two permanent exclusions in the past three years and fixed-term exclusions are few and have declined over time.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Policies are clear and well understood by both teachers and students. Procedures for maintaining the academy's records of staff are meticulous and excellent links with local health and social care services mean that any issues of concern are dealt with effectively and with sensitivity.
- Students report that they feel safe and the views of parents and staff concur with that view.
- Incidents of bullying are rare and when they do occur they are dealt with effectively. Students show a good understanding of issues such as homophobia and racism and they speak highly of the comprehensive system of personal and social education which emphasises the importance of British values such as tolerance, diversity and democracy.
- Attendance is above average and is continuing to improve due to the very efficient system of record keeping and the vigilance with which any unexplained absences are followed up and because students are more motivated by the recent changes to the curriculum and the improvements in the quality of teaching. Parents value the care and support offered by the pastoral team at the academy when students face personal difficulties which affect their attendance.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is increasingly effective which means that overall students across the academy make good and sometimes better progress. The tasks set generally enthuse and challenge students of varying abilities. Students' work in their exercise books shows that teaching over time has a positive impact of their progress.

- Students in lower ability groups in English and mathematics grow in confidence because their lessons are well planned, explanations are clear and presented in an interesting way and students trust and respect their teachers. As a result, they make good and sometimes outstanding progress.
- The most able students enjoy the challenge of lessons which move at a brisk pace and which ask them to reflect upon difficult concepts or ethical issues. They have responded well to the higher expectations of a more challenging GCSE based curriculum.
- On occasion, where the level of challenge is not so high, students, especially middle ability students make less progress. The work expected is sometimes not matched well enough to the different abilities of students so some find it too difficult, whilst for others it is too easy. Where this is the case, students' attitudes to learning and the quality of oral and written work is weaker than in the vast majority of lessons.
- Teachers promote literacy well in their lessons by emphasising the meaning and spelling of key words specific to their subjects. Students are confident in their use of spoken English and so articulate their ideas well to the rest of the class, whilst the others listen carefully. The quality of extended writing in most subjects is good as a result of good teaching. Numeracy is also developed well across a range of scientific and technical subjects.
- The new policy for marking students' work is having a very positive impact upon the quality of feedback students receive from teachers. Teachers give students constructive advice about how they can improve their work. Analysis of students' work by inspectors showed that across almost all subjects the policy was being applied consistently and students appreciate the help provided by their teachers. Occasionally, the feedback for middle ability students was not specific enough to help them improve.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Overall, students join the academy with attainment in English and mathematics that is broadly average. From their individual starting points, students make good progress in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. By the time they leave Year 11, the overall standards they reach are above average, although the achievement of middle ability students is not as strong as that of others in the academy.
- In 2012 and 2013, the proportion of students achieving five A*-C in GCSE, including English and mathematics, was above average. This reflects the strong progress of all students in English, which has been a consistent feature of the academy since its conversion. In mathematics in 2013, the proportion of students making the expected rate of progress improved to be above average, although the proportion of students doing better than this was slightly below average.
- Unvalidated GCSE results for 2014 show that there has been a slight dip in the attainment of students in English and mathematics, especially in that of the middle ability students. Despite this, overall this group of students made good progress from their starting points in the academy. The academy's own data, supported by a range of inspection evidence, show that the current Year 11 students are on track to achieve, and in some cases exceed their targets, indicating accelerating progress.
- Achievement is good in science. The academy's policy now requires more students to study either two or three GCSE science subjects. Even so, in 2014 attainment and progress in the sciences was good.
- The most able students are suitably challenged and their progress is good. This is especially the case in English, mathematics, sciences and physical education lessons, which offer opportunities for able and talented students to extend their knowledge and skills. However, in technology and modern foreign languages the proportion of students achieving the highest grades, although improving, is average rather than above average.
- The progress of disadvantaged students is good. In English, the academy's data show that the gap between their attainment and the attainment of non-disadvantaged students in the academy and students nationally has closed from about one grade in 2013 to about half a grade in 2014. In mathematics, the gap between disadvantaged students and non-disadvantaged students in 2013 was about a grade, but in 2014 there was no difference in the attainment between the two groups of students.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve well. From their different starting points they make similar progress to students nationally. They are supported well by specialist teaching assistants and their progress in literacy and numeracy is very good due to some very effective teaching.
- The achievement of the small number of students who attend alternative provision is good because they are supported appropriately.

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	137768
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	448877

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	573
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Dicker
Headteacher	Lesley Gwinnett
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2010
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