

Charles Read Academy

Bourne Road, Corby Glen, Grantham, NG33 4NT

Inspection dates 4–5 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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

- Teaching is not consistently good enough to make sure that all students learn well.
- Students do not make good progress in mathematics.
- The most able do not consistently achieve the grades of which they are capable, especially in mathematics.
- Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are not always high enough, and they do not always set work at the right level of difficulty. Sometimes the most-able students find the work too easy, while the less-able students find it too hard.
- Teachers do not do enough to check how well students are learning in lessons and tackle misconceptions. This slows down progress.
- Teachers do not always make good enough use of additional adults in their lessons and, as a result, some students do not get the extra help they need to be successful with their work.
- Although some teachers' marking is of high quality, students do not consistently get clear feedback on how they can improve their work. Teachers do not routinely check to make sure that students act on their comments and advice.
- Subject leaders are not yet effective in checking the progress of students or taking action to improve teaching in their subject.
- Leaders and governors have introduced a range of initiatives to improve teaching and raise achievement but they have not yet had a full impact.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy. Although they have further to go, they have already secured some key improvements, including in pupils' behaviour and in reducing absence rates.
- In 2014, students made good progress in English and results in this subject improved.
- Students are proud of their academy. It is a calm and orderly place where students behave well and feel safe.
- Students' attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average.
- The broad range of clubs and activities provided during the school day and after school in the enrichment programme promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Consequently, students are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The academy sponsor provides high-quality support and rigorous challenge to leaders. This is helping the academy to improve.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 18 lessons across all year groups. Eight observations were made jointly with senior leaders. The work in a sample of students’ books was evaluated. Inspectors attended an assembly.
- The inspection team observed the behaviour of students in lessons, during lesson changeovers and at break and lunchtimes.
- Discussions were held with staff; governors; the principal and other academy leaders, including heads of subject; and with a representative of the academy sponsor, the David Ross Education Trust.
- Inspectors met formally with two groups of students of different ages and abilities. They also had a number of informal discussions with students around the academy at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors took account of the 26 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and met with a small group of parents. They also took account of the 26 responses to staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including examination results and the academy’s own records of students’ progress. They scrutinised the academy’s policies and procedures for safeguarding and child protection. Inspectors examined records of students’ attendance and behaviour, the academy’s plans for improvement, and documents used by leaders to check the quality of the work of staff at the academy.

Inspection team

Frances Le Pla, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Alan Brewerton

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Charles Read Academy is a very small secondary school. It became an academy in 2011 as part of the West Grantham Academy Trust (WGAT). WGAT proposed to close the academy in September 2013. The academy remained open after it transferred to a new sponsor, the David Ross Education Trust (DRET) in June 2013.
- The principal was acting principal from April 2014 and in October 2014 was appointed permanently to the post. The other senior leaders joined the academy less than a year ago.
- Most students are White British.
- An above-average proportion of students join the academy at times other than the start of the school year.
- The proportion of disabled students or those who have special education needs, at more than half, is well above the national average.
- A third of students in the academy are eligible for pupil premium funding, which provides additional funding for those students known to be eligible for free school meals. This proportion is above the national average.
- A very small number of students attend the Pilgrim Hospital School full time.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress at GCSE.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, attainment and rates of students' progress, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve, so that they learn quickly and achieve more in lessons
 - teachers set work that matches the range of students' ability in every class, including the most able and those who find learning difficult
 - all teachers regularly check how well students are learning in lessons, and modify their teaching in line with students' understanding
 - all teachers make the best use of teaching assistants by planning carefully how they will support students' learning
 - all teachers' marking is as good as the best in giving students clear guidance on how to improve their work, and that teachers check students have acted on this advice.
- Strengthen leadership and management by making sure that:
 - all subject leaders make full use of assessment information, with a sharp focus on the progress of different groups of students, to identify gaps in students' learning and raise standards
 - all subject leaders closely monitor the quality of teaching in their subject, identify and share good practice, and challenge underperformance.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders have not yet had sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching and students' achievement so that they become consistently good. A small amount of weak teaching remains and, as a result, students' progress in some key subjects such as mathematics is not good enough.
- The leadership of teaching has grown in its effectiveness although the quality of teaching remains variable across subjects. Leaders carry out regular checks on the quality of teachers' work. Teachers are set targets based on students' progress. Any underperformance in teaching is being tackled robustly. Teachers now have good opportunities to improve their skills through events such as 'Throw Back Thursdays' which focus on identifying good practice. Although this is bringing about some improvements in the quality of teaching, best practice is not shared well enough between departments to bring about more rapid improvement.
- Senior leaders have improved the tracking systems for monitoring students' progress and attainment. Assessment information is gathered on a more regular basis and this is used to set challenging targets for students. However, teachers are not making enough use of this information to focus on the progress of different groups of students in order to plan suitably challenging work for students of different abilities.
- There have been recent changes in subject leadership and some leaders are new to their roles. They are playing a growing role in improving the academy but are still too reliant on senior leaders' support in their work. As a result, they are not sufficiently focused on making use of assessment information to evaluate the progress of students and identify gaps in learning in their subjects. They are not doing enough to challenge underperformance in their subjects and improve the quality of teaching.
- The new principal and the leadership team have a clear, shared vision of how to develop the academy, and an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. Plans for improvement are well organised and focus on the right areas.
- Leaders have successfully focused on strengthening a positive ethos in the academy after a period of turbulence and uncertainty about its future. They have raised expectations about behaviour, attitudes to learning and teaching. As a result, behaviour is now good, attendance has risen, the number of frequent absences has fallen quickly and exclusions have reduced greatly. Teaching is also improving.
- More rigorous performance management links the quality of teaching to salary progression. The great majority of staff who responded to the questionnaire were positive about leaders' work bringing about change for the better.
- Leaders spend additional funds from the pupil premium appropriately. This includes spending on additional classes in English and mathematics and on Student Progress Leaders who work closely with disadvantaged students who are frequently absent. As a result, attendance of these students has improved markedly. The spending is beginning to close the gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged students and others.
- The range of subjects and courses that the academy offers is broad and balanced, despite being constrained by the very small numbers of students taking part. Classroom learning is supplemented by a wide variety of clubs and activities provided during the daily enrichment time during the last lesson in the day. Students say they particularly enjoy having the opportunity to broaden their experiences by trying out different sporting activities such as rowing and fitness, as well as clubs such as photography, multicultural cooking and 'young journalist'. Students get effective careers advice and guidance to help them make the right choices at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. All Year 11 students have at least one interview with a careers adviser and, as a result, last year, all students, including those that joined the academy during the year, moved to education or jobs with training.

- The very small numbers of students attending the Pilgrim Hospital School are regularly monitored on their progress and attendance.
- The academy promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through assemblies, the enrichment programme, special events with other schools organised by the David Ross Education Trust, and well-planned provision in subjects and personal, social and health education. As a result, students develop a respect for and understanding of different faiths, cultures and lifestyles. This means they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The academy does not tolerate discrimination and is committed to making sure that all students have an equal chance to succeed.
- The David Ross Education Trust is providing effective support for leaders at all levels. The academy adviser visits regularly and this is helping to improve the way leaders make checks on teaching and student progress. Challenging targets for improvement have been set. The Trust arranged for the mock examination papers in English and mathematics to be marked externally to ensure accuracy of assessment. Strong links are being forged with other schools in the Trust to help senior and subject leaders develop their skills.
- Leaders are building good relationships with parents. Parents' confidence in the academy is demonstrated by the increasing numbers of students who want to join Year 7.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is effective. Governors are ambitious for the academy to do well and are clear about its strengths and weaknesses. The Chair of the Governing Body visits regularly and knows the academy well. Members of the governing body have a thorough knowledge about the quality of teaching because they cross-reference the information given to them by the academy with reports from the academy adviser. Governors compare the performance of the academy with national data and they challenge leaders, holding them firmly to account.
 - Governors understand the value of good teaching in raising achievement. With the support of the Trust, they manage the principal's performance closely. Challenging targets for improvement are set. The governing body's knowledge of performance management is good. This enables it to make the right decisions about pay awards for teachers. These are now only awarded if students achieve well because their teaching is effective.
 - Governors manage the finances of the academy well. They look closely at how additional government funding is spent and have a good overview of the impact this has on the achievement of disadvantaged students. The governing body makes sure that all statutory child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures meet current national standards.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. They are very polite, courteous, and friendly. Students of all ages mix and get on well together. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere around the academy.
- Students told inspectors that behaviour has improved a lot since September and learning is now rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. Academy records confirm this, and parents and staff also agree that behaviour is much better and is now good.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning. They are prompt to lessons, bring the necessary equipment and settle down to work quickly. Relationships with adults are positive. Students work well together and listen to each other, taking turns to make contributions to discussions. When giving feedback to their classmates on their work, students make sensible and helpful comments to each other.
- Students are proud of their academy and enjoy the many opportunities they have to represent their house in academy competitions such as football, 'Mastermind', table tennis and cooking.

- The academy provides good support for students who can display challenging behaviour. Good links with parents and external agencies, together with strong support from the Student Progress Leaders, result in clear, workable support plans that lead to improvements in behaviour. As a result, this year, there have been no permanent exclusions and the number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced dramatically.
- Students enjoy coming to the academy. Attendance has risen and is now in line with the national average. The academy carefully monitors the attendance of all groups of students. It takes prompt action on the first day of absence and works closely with the Education Welfare Officer. As a result, the number of students who are frequently absent has reduced sharply.
- **Safety**
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. The academy ensures that all safeguarding procedures are in place. All necessary checks are made on staff before appointment. Entry into the academy is secure and visitors are checked regularly.
- Students told inspectors they feel safe. Students are taught well how to keep themselves safe. They have a good understanding of the risks associated with using social networks and the internet. They have good awareness of the different types of bullying, such as cyber-bullying and racist bullying, but say it is very rare. If it did happen, they are confident it would stop if they told an adult.
- Parents overwhelmingly agree that their children are kept safe and are well looked after.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, although improving, remains variable. There are too many inconsistencies in the quality of teaching which are limiting the progress students make.
- Sometimes teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are not high enough. They do not always use information about what students already know to set work at the right level for students' different abilities. The most-able students are not always challenged enough because the work is too easy for them while others are held back because work is too hard.
- Teachers do not always check how well students are learning in lessons by, for example, asking questions to check what students understand. This means that teachers do not adapt their teaching by, for instance, explaining to all students a point which has not been well understood.
- Teachers do not always make the best use of teaching assistants in their classes because they do not plan their work with identified students carefully enough. As a result, some disabled students and those who have special educational needs do not get the targeted help they need to make good progress.
- Teachers give constructive verbal feedback to students but written feedback, in the form of marking, varies. In the best practice, in English, for example, teachers' written comments explain to students what they need to do to improve their work and contribute well to the progress that students make. Students value this kind of feedback, particularly when they are given the opportunity to reflect and act on the comments. However, this practice is not consistently effective across the academy. Not all teachers check that students have acted upon their advice.
- Teachers help students to improve their writing skills by reminding them of key words about their subject and by checking for spelling errors.
- In some lessons, teachers successfully plan demanding work which follows on clearly from previous lessons and which fully engages students' interest. In a Year 11 physical education lesson on fitness techniques, the students responded well to the teacher's high expectations and probing questioning and made good progress. This was because the teacher had planned for students to carry out several activities linked to their individual targets so that all were challenged. They discussed their techniques together, while the teacher continually evaluated their progress during the lesson, prompting them to extend their

thinking about the topic.

- Relationships between teachers and students are warm and respectful and, in this very small academy, teachers get to know the students well. As a result, almost all students respond well in lessons and want to do well.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students join the academy with standards in English and mathematics that are below average. Despite recent improvements to the quality of teaching, too many students are still not making good progress in all their subjects and leave with results that are below average.
- GCSE results improved in 2014 and were the best for three years but the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics was still below average. The proportion of students achieving five A* to G grades at GCSE was similar to the national average.
- In 2014, students' progress in English improved markedly when compared with 2013 and they made good progress from their different starting points. Students did not make good progress in mathematics. The academy's tracking information shows that students are now making better progress in mathematics. The vast majority of students are now on track to make at least the progress they should in both English and mathematics in 2015.
- The achievement of the academy's most-able students requires improvement, particularly in mathematics where too few make the good progress expected of them. The proportion of students achieving the highest grades at GCSE in most subjects is very low.
- In 2014, the academy entered about half the students early for GCSE examinations in mathematics. Although these students had the chance to re-take these examinations to try to gain a higher grade, too few of the academy's more-able students made the good progress that was expected of them and few gained the highest grades. The academy no longer enters students early for GCSE examinations.
- In 2014, students eligible for the pupil premium did almost as well as others in the academy in English but, in mathematics, they were a GCSE grade behind others. Compared to students nationally, the academy's disadvantaged students are slightly behind in English but more than a grade behind in mathematics. Academy data and inspectors' checks both confirm that disadvantaged students are now making faster progress than in the past, so gaps in attainment are narrowing, and are on course to close further by the end of 2015.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. The education provided by the academy meets their specific learning needs. Mostly, students are supported in lessons by teaching assistants, and a range of additional help is provided outside lessons.
- Students joining the academy partway through their secondary education settle in well and make similar progress to their classmates.
- The students attending the Pilgrim Hospital School make steady progress on their courses.
- Leaders make appropriate use of the additional 'catch up' funding for students who join the academy in Year 7 with the lowest starting points. They benefit from being in a small class with the same teacher for English, mathematics and humanities. Carefully planned topic work and many opportunities to practise their reading, writing and communication skills helps these students gain in confidence, settle in to the academy and make good progress.
- As a result of good attitudes to learning, improved teaching and accurate checks, students' progress is improving. The academy's own data on current students indicate their achievement is on course to rise in 2015. Checks made by inspectors confirm that rates of progress are now faster than in the past.

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	136479
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	453607

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	159
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Hancock
Principal	Robert Sloan
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2013
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