

# Castle Hall Academy

Richard Thorpe Avenue, Crowlees Road, Mirfield, West Yorkshire, WF14 9PH

**Inspection dates** 24–25 February 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires Improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
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

- Strong leadership and effective management and governance have been key in bringing about improvement in teaching and students' achievement and behaviour since the previous inspection.
- From their different starting points, students, including disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs, make good progress in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics. The proportion of students attaining five or more good GCSE grades by Year 11 is well above average.
- Teachers have responded well to the greater challenge by improving their performance and teaching is now good. Interesting tasks and activities capture students' imagination and motivate them to learn. Work provided is mostly well matched to students' varying abilities.
- Better opportunities for students to use and apply their literacy skills across the curriculum subjects have brought about increased achievement.
- Students enjoy coming to the academy. Attendance has improved and is above average. Students are respectful towards each other and adults. Students are punctual to lessons and follow instructions promptly.
- Students behave well and feel safe in the academy. They have a very clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills are well developed and they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Systems to check on students' progress are rigorous. Leaders swiftly identify any students who may be falling behind and provide additional support to help them to catch up.
- The principal and governors have developed a strong sense of purpose among staff. Aspirations for the academy's future performance are high. The academy continues to improve at a good rate.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of marking and feedback provided to all students is not consistently high. Students are not always clear about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Work for the most able students sometimes lacks the challenge needed to ensure that they reach the highest grades.
- Students' numeracy skills are not always promoted effectively across all areas of the curriculum.
- The achievement of boys, while improving, lags behind that of girls.
- Not all subject leaders are equally effective in improving teaching and in holding teachers to account for students' progress. Subject leaders' skills in doing so, particularly for those new to their roles, are still developing.
- Procedures for managing students' behaviour in lessons are not followed consistently by all adults.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in different subjects and across all ages and abilities in a wide range of lessons. Four lessons were observed jointly with the vice-principal and an assistant principal. Inspectors reviewed work in students’ books in a range of subjects and listened to students read. Inspectors also visited an assembly.
- Meetings were held with groups of staff, students, seven members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a small group of parents.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to 52 staff inspection questionnaires. The results of 33 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were also considered, alongside feedback from parents to the academy’s own parental questionnaires.
- At different times in the day, inspectors observed students moving between activities inside and outside the academy and at breaks in the dining hall and outside leisure areas.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work and considered a number of documents, including the academy’s own view of its performance, the academy improvement plan, a local authority report, minutes of governing body meetings and achievement and behaviour data for current cohorts of students.

## Inspection team

Helen Gaunt, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Francis Cain	Additional Inspector
Lenford White	Additional Inspector
Adam Ryder	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Castle Hall is a slightly smaller than average-sized school.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is more than double the national average. The proportion who speaks English as an additional language is increasing and is now almost three times the average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is just below average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- At the time of the last inspection, the governing body had recently been reconstituted and a new senior leadership team formed. Since then, there has been a high turnover of staff and a number of new subject leaders and teachers have been appointed.
- The academy has maintained a commitment to teaching a language to all students in line with its predecessor school's policy as a specialist language college.
- The academy works in partnership with a number of local schools, including Shelley College.
- A small number of students in Years 7 to 11 are offered an alternative curriculum and attend off-site provision for a small part of the week. Providers include Nexus in-School and Changing Attitudes.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the attainment and progress of all groups of students, especially boys and the most-able, in all subjects, by improving the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding by:
  - ensuring marking and feedback provided to all students is consistently of a high quality in all subjects, so students are always clear about what they need to do to improve their work
  - ensuring work is always sufficiently challenging and enables the most able students to reach the highest grades
  - further developing the promotion of numeracy across all areas of the curriculum.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management by:
  - further developing the consistency and quality of subject leadership, so all these leaders are equally effective in improving teaching and in holding teachers to account for students' progress
  - ensuring procedures for managing the behaviour of students are followed consistently by all adults during lessons.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- As a result of a relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching, teaching has improved over the past two years and is now good and students now achieve well as a result.
- The principal, senior leadership team and governors have a clear understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses and have taken action to improve teaching through the performance management of staff. Teaching in several subjects, including science, humanities and physical education is improving strongly. There are more rigorous procedures in place to monitor the quality of teaching through lesson visits, checking the standard of work in students' books and undertaking joint lesson observations with external consultants and staff from a local outstanding school.
- The high level of staff turnover has been managed well over the last two years. Staffs are positive about the journey of improvement that they are on. They appreciate the challenges they are given and speak well of the training and support they receive to improve the quality of their teaching.
- The leadership of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good. There is a very thorough understanding of students' individual needs. The programme of support offered results in them making good progress across the different subjects.
- Senior leaders check on the work of middle leaders much more rigorously than at the time of the previous inspection. Middle leaders are now more effective because they are held accountable for their responsibilities. Most now check on the work of their staff in greater detail. As a result, teaching and student achievement are good overall. There is strong leadership particularly in mathematics, English, modern foreign languages, religious studies and a number of other subjects. There are, however, some inconsistencies in the quality of leadership of subjects. Not all leaders are equally effective in improving teaching and in holding teachers to account for students' progress. New leadership and new staff in some subjects, for example in geography, are still developing their skills in doing so. The academy's information systems for these subjects show that improvements are, however, now starting to show.
- The curriculum provides a good range of subjects for students. Students are given good guidance in selecting appropriate courses to study in Key Stages 4 and 5. As a result, almost all students leaving the academy at the end of Year 11 continue their learning, many of them progressing to academic sixth forms and then on to university.
- Increased expectations of students' attendance and general conduct are outlined within the academy's behaviour policy, along with details of sanctions and rewards. This has led to improvements in attendance, reductions in the numbers of students who are regularly absent, fewer incidences of bullying and a reduction in the number of external and internal exclusions. A small minority of parents and staff expressed concerns about inconsistencies in the way in which behaviour is managed by different members of staff. Not all adults apply the academy's system of sanctions, as set out in the behaviour policy, consistently.
- Academy visits, the wide range of visiting speakers to deliver assemblies on different topics, the personal and social education course, along with a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including charity fundraising, sporting competitions and academy productions all contribute well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are well prepared for life in modern Britain and appreciate the values held within British society.
- Discrimination is not tolerated and this can be seen in the good relationships that exist between students of different cultures and backgrounds. The academy provides a harmonious learning environment in which all students are encouraged and supported to do their best.
- Leaders and governors are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all students and are making effective use of student achievement data to target students who may need additional support or intervention. Leaders have identified the need to improve the achievement of boys and the most-able in some subjects and have put in place strategies to do so.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to ensure that disadvantaged students make good progress. Leaders have increased the number of adults supporting individuals and small groups in classrooms. This is proving to have a very positive effect in helping these students make more rapid progress across the full range of subjects.
- Leaders place students' safety high on their list of priorities. Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and are effective.
- Academy leaders are working closely with parents in order to secure better achievement for all individual students and for particular groups of students. For example, parents of the Year 8 'Achievement for All Group' are engaged, alongside their children, in a range of activities to promote the development of

students' confidence and learning skills.

- Leaders carefully monitor the progress, attendance and behaviour of students attending alternative provision. Courses are tailored to meet the particular needs of students and, as a result, they achieve well.
- The local authority has supported the academy well in developing the quality of teaching in science and an annual visit is made to the academy. The local authority has supported the principal in seeking out 'best practice' in other schools to strengthen teaching and leadership in the academy.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance has improved since the previous inspection. An audit of the expertise of governors, along with a reorganisation of roles and committee structures and more effective systems in place to check each aspect of the academy's performance means that governance now holds the academy effectively to account. Governors now visit the academy more often and give greater consideration to aspects of its work through discussions with leaders, teachers and students, a scrutiny of documentation, and visits to lessons. Governors ask senior and middle leaders searching questions at formal meetings. This is impacting positively on improving the quality of teaching, achievement and students' behaviour.
  - Governors have a good understanding of the performance of different groups of students, including through reviewing school and nationally published data. Governors challenge academy leaders to explain what strategies are in place to improve the achievement of groups of students and to demonstrate that they are working. For example, governors know that the pupil premium funding to support the achievement of disadvantaged students has had a good impact on their achievement.
  - Governors have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. Independent consultants and colleagues from neighbouring outstanding schools are routinely employed to validate the academy's own judgements of teaching. Governors support the principal in tackling any underperformance in teaching and ensure that teachers who perform well are rewarded. They have a good knowledge of teachers' performance-management targets and how these relate to students' achievement.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students, parents and staff have the same positive views about students' behaviour.
- Students enjoy coming to the academy. They are punctual to the academy and to their lessons. They make sure they have the right equipment for lessons and are ready and keen to learn. They follow the instructions of their teachers and enjoy sharing ideas to support their learning.
- Uniform is worn with pride, students are dressed smartly and they look after the academy environment. Litter is rarely seen. Students are pleasant, polite and courteous to visitors. Around the academy they are well behaved and students of all ages and backgrounds work and socialise well together.
- Students say that behaviour has improved over the past two years and that the majority of staff are now applying sanctions more consistently. Occasionally, when the work set for them is too easy, or when teachers do not apply the academy's behaviour management policy consistently, a small number of students can sometimes lose concentration, leading to some low-level disruption.
- The academy's 'learning support unit' has helped some students to manage their behaviour much more successfully. Effective support has led to a reduction in the level of exclusions, which are now below average. Attendance is above average and still rising. During this term, attendance is better than it was for the same time last year.
- Students from both key stages report that expectations of them have greatly increased in the past two years. They say they now feel they are more likely to succeed in their learning and are more eager to be in, and take part in, lessons. Their attitudes to learning are positive and the majority of students present their work neatly.
- Students appreciate the opportunities to hold leadership roles because this makes them feel like important members of the community.

### Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. The overwhelming majority of parents agree. All students spoken to by inspectors said they felt safe in the academy. They know who to turn to if they wish to discuss any matters regarding behaviour and safety. Students feel well cared for and appreciate the extra help and support received from teachers and other adults.
- Students understand the different forms of bullying and know it is not tolerated. They say that on the rare occasions it occurs, it is dealt with successfully by academy staff. Students have a good understanding of

Internet safety and all students undertake a project on this topic when they join the academy in Year 7.

- The academy's programme for personal and social development makes a strong contribution to students' understanding of how to keep safe. Members from the local police force have delivered assemblies to students about how to assess risk and on the topics of terrorism and extremist behaviour.
- Arrangements to support vulnerable students are good. The academy's 'learning support unit' provides a calm environment that is well resourced to support the learning of these students. Links to outside agencies are effective.
- There are clear and effective arrangements with providers to check the safety and attendance of students studying off site.

## The quality of teaching

is good

- Weaknesses in teaching have been addressed successfully since the last inspection and teaching is now good overall and leads to good progress for students in both key stages over time. A more rigorous approach to monitoring the quality of teaching, along with additional training for staff on delivering effective lessons and beneficial partnership work with staff in other high performing schools has brought about good improvement in teaching quality.
- Improvements in teaching are reflected in the work in students' books which shows that, over time, students are now developing their skills at a good and increasingly good rate.
- Good relationships and good use of praise to engage students are strong features in lessons. Interesting tasks and activities capture students' imagination and motivate them well. For example, in French in Year 9, students were learning new vocabulary in relation to holidays and travel within Europe. Students were encouraged to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of European Community membership. They were strongly focused on their work, eager to do well and made good progress as a result.
- Evidence in students' books shows that the quality of marking and feedback has improved greatly in the last 18 months. Throughout the academy, there are many examples of where students' work is marked regularly and often with clear suggestions for improvement. Some practice is excellent. In Year 11 science books for example, students are provided with very clear advice on how to improve their work and students respond to it so that their learning is extended further. Spelling and grammatical errors are identified and corrected meticulously. However, not all marking is of a consistently high quality and some inconsistencies within and across subjects remain. Consequently, not all students are clear about what they need to do to improve their work.
- The academy is promoting reading well through small-group teaching for younger students and a wide range of opportunities for students to read in lessons. In small-group sessions, students' reading is listened to by teachers and teaching assistants who check on students' understanding well.
- Generally, students are clear about what is expected of them. Their progress is checked on regularly while they work and when they are stuck, they are given good support to enable them to learn effectively.
- Learning support assistants are well managed and make a strong contribution to students' learning. Learning support assistants work skilfully with individuals or groups of students, both inside and outside the classroom. The 'learning support unit' is managed effectively and staff within this unit make a good contribution to students' progress.
- Planning of learning takes students' prior learning and understanding into good account. This ensures that tasks are generally matched well to students' needs and abilities. Sometimes, however, work is not always sufficiently challenging to ensure that the most able students to reach the highest grades.
- Some students sometimes lose their concentration in lessons and this slows the pace of their learning. Not all teachers apply the academy's procedures for managing the behaviour of students during lessons consistently or quickly enough and therefore some low-level disruption can arise as a result.
- Students' literacy skills are supported and developed well across the full range of subjects, a priority for the academy as more students arrive with low-level skills, particularly in writing. In most subjects, key words are highlighted and correct spelling is emphasised. This was seen at the start of a mathematics lesson where students beginning a new topic on vectors were tested on their ability to spell key words. In a range of subjects, students have good opportunities to write at length. Although there are examples of students being encouraged to develop their numeracy skills, such as in food technology and in science, generally the promotion of numeracy across all areas of the curriculum is not as widespread as in literacy.



**The achievement of pupils is good**

- Students, including disadvantaged students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs, achieve well in both Key Stages 3 and 4. From their different starting points, students make good progress across a range of subjects, including mathematics and English. The proportions of students gaining A\* to C grades in five subjects, including English and mathematics, has been well above average for the past two years.
- The proportion of students achieving the English Baccalaureate benchmark by the end of Year 11 is well above average. All students study a modern foreign language at GCSE and they make good progress.
- At the end of Year 11 in 2014, achievement in a wide range of subjects was good and sometimes outstanding. There was outstanding achievement in mathematics, religious studies, French and German, because of high quality teaching. Improvements to teaching, which have come about as a result of staff changes and partnership work with Shelley College, are helping to improve the rates of progress for students in science and in physical education. Students currently in the academy are making good progress in these subjects.
- In 2014, some students were entered early for GCSE English and mathematics in November and some of these students were entered again in June. The academy no longer uses early entry to GCSE examinations.
- Academy information shows that disadvantaged students are benefiting well from the additional support they receive and making good progress across a wide range of subjects. Disadvantaged students at the end of Year 11 in 2014 were less than half of a grade behind other non-disadvantaged students in the academy in English and less than three quarters of a grade behind in mathematics. Compared to other students nationally, disadvantaged students in the academy were less than half a grade behind in both English and mathematics. Gaps in attainment between disadvantaged students and others both in the academy and nationally are closing.
- Year 7 catch-up funding (government funding for those entering secondary school with below average standards in English and mathematics) is helping students to improve their literacy and mathematical skills well.
- Students for whom English is their second language and who are from minority ethnic groups make good progress in line with other students in the academy. Strengthened provision for these students has improved their achievement since the previous inspection.
- At the end of Year 11 in 2014, the achievement of boys was not as good as for girls in some subjects, for example in geography. Leaders, having identified the reasons for this, have put in place a range of strategies, including additional literacy support, smaller class sizes and additional adults to support learning for boys. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the standards reached by boys currently in the academy. Although gaps in attainment between boys and girls are reducing, they have not closed fully.
- Some of the most able students do not always reach the highest grades in examinations. This is because teachers do not always provide sufficiently challenging learning opportunities for these students.
- The small number of students who attend alternative provision achieve well because courses are tailored to meet their individual needs.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137399
<b>Local authority</b>	Kirklees
<b>Inspection number</b>	453628

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	868
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Chris Sutcliffe
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andy Pugh
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 March 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01924 520500
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