

The City Academy Bristol

Russell Town Avenue, Bristol, BS5 9JH

Inspection dates

21–22 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Sixth form provision		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Students do not make enough progress across the academy, particularly in Years 7–9, in mathematics, and in the sixth form.
- The quality of teaching is inadequate. Teachers' expectations of what students are able to achieve is too low.
- Disadvantaged students do not achieve as well as their peers nationally or within the school. The gap between their achievement and their peers is not closing.
- The most-able students are not sufficiently challenged to think deeply about their learning. Consequently, they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not provide adequate support for students with low literacy levels or those who are from ethnic minority groups and speak English as an additional language. As a result, these groups of students underachieve.
- The sixth form is inadequate. Students underachieve on academic courses. Teaching fails to develop the in-depth understanding of subjects required at this level.
- Students lack enthusiasm in lessons. They comply with their teachers' instructions but are uninspired by the quality of teaching that they receive. Students' work is often poorly presented or unfinished. Teachers do not demand high enough standards.
- Leaders do not monitor and evaluate aspects of the academy's work with enough rigour. They are uncertain of the impact of their actions. Their views on the quality of education provided at the academy are over-generous.
- Evaluations of the quality of teaching do not take into consideration the progress students make over time. As a result, leaders have an unrealistic view of the quality of teaching.
- Governors have been ineffective in ensuring that the academy improves. The academy improvement plan does not have regular targets or timescales against which leaders and governors can check on the progress being made.
- Governors are over-reliant on information from senior leaders. They have been too slow to halt the decline in the quality of education since the previous inspection.

The school has the following strengths

- Recent changes in leadership at the academy have raised staff morale.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well developed. Students from different backgrounds show respect for each other and work well together.
- Students speak positively about the academy. They conduct themselves well in lessons. Disruption to learning is uncommon.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out in response to a complaint made to Ofsted which raised serious concerns. The complaint was deemed to be a qualifying complaint and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the academy should take place to follow up the issues that were raised.
- Inspectors observed 37 lessons. Eight of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. There were also a number of short visits to classes.
- Meetings were held with the joint acting Principals, senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body and groups of students.
- Inspectors observed students' conduct and behaviour at the academy during break and lunch times.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including information on students' achievement, the academy's self-evaluation and improvement plan, minutes of meetings, and records relating to the monitoring of teaching, behaviour and safety.
- Only one response was received to the online Parent View survey.

Inspection team

Simon Rowe, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Helen Owen	Additional Inspector
Andrew Lyons	Additional Inspector
Hilary Green	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- The City Academy Bristol is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. It is one of two academies sponsored by The One World Learning Trust.
- There have been numerous staffing changes, including at leadership level, since the previous inspection. Two joint acting Principals took up post in September 2014.
- Most students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- Three quarters of students are eligible for the pupil premium. This is a high proportion compared to that found nationally. Pupil premium funding is additional government funding used to support students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- Around a fifth of students are disabled and/or have special educational needs. This is broadly in line with the national average.
- The academy did not meet the government's floor standards in 2013 which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A small number of students access part of their education at KTS Training and S & B Automotive Academy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, including in the sixth form, by ensuring that teachers:
 - use information on students' abilities and needs to provide adequate support for those that have low levels of literacy and/or weak English language skills
 - have the highest expectations of the amount of work students complete and the presentation of this work
 - provide suitable work for the most-able students to challenge them to think more deeply about their learning
 - effectively question students to assess their understanding of key concepts and ideas and to probe and deepen their learning
 - ensure that students act on the feedback provided to improve their learning.
- Raise achievement across the academy, particularly in Years 7–9, in mathematics and in the sixth form by:
 - implementing an effective and consistent approach to developing students' literacy and communication skills
 - raising expectations of what students are able to achieve
 - providing carefully targeted and effective support for disadvantaged students to speed up the progress they make.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that leaders:
 - develop a rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching by linking it closely to the progress students make over time
 - robustly analyse the impact of all extra support sessions so that students in them make good and better progress
 - link with leaders from a good or better school to learn from their effective leadership practice
 - set regular targets and timescales within the academy development plan to monitor the progress that the academy is making.

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

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Standards at the academy have been in decline since the previous inspection. While some outcomes for Year 11 students rose in 2014, they still underachieved compared to other students nationally. Students in other year groups make insufficient progress. Leaders have been too slow to address significant weaknesses in other aspects of the academy's work. As a consequence, the overall quality of teaching and students' achievement are inadequate.
- New senior leaders are committed to bringing about improvements. They do not, however, effectively monitor or evaluate important aspects of their work. It is unclear if initiatives they have implemented are having a positive impact or if improvements have taken root quickly enough to eradicate students' underachievement.
- Leaders' views on the quality of education provided at the academy are too generous. They do not have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. For example, written records of the quality of teaching fail to take into account the progress students make over time or the quality of work in students' books. As a result, too many teachers are deemed to be operating at an acceptable level when, in fact, the students they teach make poor progress.
- The programme of training to help teachers improve the quality of their teaching has not brought about the rapid improvement expected. Some teachers commented that they feel ill-prepared to meet the needs of students who may have limited command of the English language. Inspectors agree with this as, during observations, too many of these students made little or no progress because they did not understand the work provided.
- Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- The targets that are set for teachers have been strengthened so that they now closely link teachers' pay to the progress students make and to the quality of teaching. Some teachers have, consequently, been refused pay awards. However, because leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching are too generous, not enough teachers are being held fully to account for students' poor performance.
- Middle leaders lack opportunities to observe good and outstanding leaders. They monitor their departments through observations of teaching and by checking the work that students have produced. Improvements are limited, though, as not enough rigour is applied in following up underperformance. Too many books indicate that students are making poor progress and not enough is being done to rectify this.
- Additional funding is failing to raise the achievement of disadvantaged students. It is spent on a variety of extra sessions, staffing and support, but school leaders do not have a clear rationale for its allocation. Its impact is not monitored closely and leaders are unsure which, if any, of their initiatives speed up the progress of disadvantaged students.
- The curriculum includes a wide range of choices for students in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Careers advice is regular and informative. Students receive visits from outside speakers, a range of assemblies and support through sessions with their tutors to develop their understanding of the world of work. This well-intentioned provision is undermined, however, because some students are placed on inappropriate courses where they do not have the skills to succeed. Students', and groups of students', poor performance in mathematics and other subjects leaves many of them poorly prepared academically for the next stage in their education.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well developed. As a result of students' multi-cultural backgrounds, students have a good understanding of different faiths and beliefs. They show respect for people from different backgrounds and cultures. Discrimination is not tolerated. A range of sporting and cultural after-school opportunities are provided for students. Whilst this helps to prepare them well for life in modern Britain in many ways, their academic underachievement limits students' future potential.
- The academy's safeguarding procedures and checks on staff meet statutory requirements and are effective in keeping students safe. Record keeping is thorough and timely actions are implemented when required. Leaders closely monitor the progress, attendance and behaviour of students who attend alternative provision.
- The academy accesses support from other schools and consultants. While this support is providing some useful feedback on areas in need of improvement, it has not been implemented rigorously enough to ensure that the academy improves at a quick enough pace.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have been too slow to bring about improvement at the academy. They are committed to their role within the academy but are over-reliant on information from senior leaders. Governors acknowledge, rightly, that achievement in Years 11 and 13 in 2014 was not good enough. They do not, though, have an accurate understanding of current achievement and the quality of teaching. Governors are involved in assessing teachers' performance and in rewarding them and withholding pay awards. However, governors' lack of understanding about the quality of teaching and students' achievement means that teachers are not rigorously held to account for students' poor performance. They have limited understanding of the effectiveness extra government funding is having in raising the achievement of disadvantaged students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. While students comply with teachers' instructions in lessons they are not inspired by teaching and many lack enthusiasm for learning. As a result of teachers' low expectations, students' work is often poorly presented and unfinished.
- Students conduct themselves well. Lessons generally run smoothly and are not interrupted by poor behaviour. However, too many students fail to actively engage positively in their learning due to the poor teaching they receive.
- Students form respectful, working relationships with each other. They create a calm atmosphere around the academy and take care of the environment.
- The proportions of students who are excluded from school or sent to the exclusion room have decreased. Students and staff recognise that incidents of serious poor behaviour have reduced due to students' improved tolerance and respect for each other.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement.
- Attendance has risen but is low. The proportion of students who are persistently absent from school is high but reducing.
- Students understand how to keep themselves safe through regular lessons in school and from outside speakers and assemblies. They understand different types of bullying. If bullying does occur, students are confident the academy will deal with this urgently and effectively.
- Students who attend alternative provision are well monitored by the academy to ensure they attend, behave well, and feel safe. The progress they make is carefully tracked to ensure they achieve well.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teachers have very low expectations of what students are able to achieve. Poor presentation and the minimal quantity of work produced by too many students are not sufficiently challenged. Some teaching fails to interest students.
- Teachers do not use information on students' individual needs to plan appropriate work. Students with low literacy levels or weak English language skills receive insufficient support. The work in their books is sparse and often incomplete. They make very little progress.
- The most-able students are not sufficiently challenged to think deeply about their learning. Teachers fail to plan appropriately for them. This limits the progress they make. For example, too often, students complete the same work as others or spend too long on tasks that are too easy.
- Teachers do not thoroughly assess students' grasp of key concepts and ideas. Questioning approaches used by teachers are ineffective in probing students' understanding and in deepening their learning.
- There is not a consistent approach to developing students' reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills. As a result, students with low literacy and/or numeracy levels, and those who speak English as an additional language, have insufficient opportunities to develop these key skills.
- Teaching in Years 7–9 does not build on students' prior learning. Many students enter the academy below expected levels. They do not receive teaching that enables them to catch up. Too many fall further behind. Work in books lacks challenge and reveals large gaps in students' knowledge.
- Students do not routinely act on the teachers' feedback as to how to improve their work further. This limits their understanding of how to attain higher grades.

- Teaching assistants provide helpful support to students during lessons. This support, however, is not able to make up for the lack of progress students make as result of inadequate teaching.

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Students enter the academy with very low levels of attainment. In 2012 and 2013, standards across the academy declined. In 2014, the proportion of Year 11 students leaving the academy with five or more GCSEs graded A* to C including English and mathematics did rise slightly but remains too low compared to national averages. Students, and groups of students, make inadequate progress in many subjects, and year groups, and particularly in mathematics.
- Students do not make enough progress between Year 7 and Year 9. Work in their books indicates that many who enter the academy with low literacy levels and weak English language skills are not adequately supported. Teachers do not expect enough of them and they underachieve.
- Academy leaders assign significant resources to Year 11 students, including the most effective teachers. These teachers work hard to try to enable students to catch up on their underachievement lower down the academy. The academy has been successful in raising the attainment of some students in some subjects for example English language, photography and some foreign languages. In many other year groups and subjects across the academy, though, including in the sixth form, students significantly underachieve.
- Students who speak English as an additional language make poor progress compared to their peers nationally. Too often they are unable to access learning due to teachers not providing adequate resources and support. The academy does not have an effective approach to developing these students' literacy skills within lessons. Some of these students access additional support outside of lessons. These sessions are effectively delivered by a specialist teacher. The progress they make, however, is not maintained by their subject teachers.
- Disadvantaged students make poor progress. Academy leaders, and teachers, do not know their individual needs well enough. Extra support provided is ineffective and there is little to indicate that their progress is improving. In 2014, Year 11 students were almost two years behind their peers nationally and almost a year behind their peers within the academy in mathematics. In English, these students left with their attainment almost a year behind their peers nationally and within the academy.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs receive a range of extra support outside of lessons. The academy does not analyse the effectiveness of these sessions to ensure that these students make more rapid progress. In lessons, the work they produce indicates that they make the same poor progress as other students.
- The most-able students make inadequate progress. In the past, the academy has focused on students achieving a grade C, limiting the proportion of students attaining the higher grades of A* and A. Students have also taken their GCSE examinations early and this has limited the progress they make. The academy changed its entry policy last year but more able students are not, as yet, making the progress of which they are capable.
- The small number of students attending alternative provision are achieving well against their targets. They are placed on appropriate courses and receive better teaching at these providers.

The sixth form provision

is inadequate

- Students' achievement, the quality of teaching and the impact of leadership over time are all inadequate.
- Students on A and AS level courses underachieve. In recent years, Year 13 students' outcomes have been low compared to national averages and remain so. Students achieve in line with national averages in work-related courses. The advice and guidance students receive prior to commencing study in the sixth form does not always enable them to take appropriate courses. As a result, and when set alongside weak teaching, students make poor progress in too many subjects.
- Too many students who enter the sixth form without a GCSE grade C in English and/or mathematics fail to achieve this grade in Year 12 and Year 13.
- Teachers have sound subject knowledge and positive working relationships exist between teachers and students. However, teachers do not require students to think at a high enough level so that they can gain a deep understanding of their subjects. Leadership of the sixth form has failed to address the quality of teaching. Not enough is being done to develop teachers' skills in teaching at post-16 level.

- Students exhibit positive attitudes in the sixth form. They conduct themselves well and understand how to keep themselves safe. They are well supported in spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues and in applying to universities. Attendance has improved recently but remains low.

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	134221
Local authority	Bristol City
Inspection number	454666

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 sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	825
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Laycock
Joint Acting Principals	Paul Skipp and Caroline Down
Date of previous school inspection	21 March 2012
Telephone number	0117 9413800
Fax number	0117 9542857
Email address	warel@cityacademy.bristol.sch.uk

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