

The Featherstone Academy

Pontefract Road, Featherstone, Pontefract, West Yorkshire, WF7 5AJ

Inspection dates 3–4 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
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

- The 2014 GCSE results fell well below the national average and Year 11 leavers did not make the progress expected of them. Data shows that the progress of current Year 11 students is significantly improved.
- A gap remains between the achievement of boys and girls. The achievement of boys requires improvement to match that of the girls.
- The number of persistent absentees is above the national average.
- Some teaching requires improvement because it does not engage and involve all students in learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The Rodillian Multi Academy Trust is driving improvement at a very rapid pace and has transformed the academy in a very short time. It has provided proven systems and very practical support at all levels.
- The Executive Headteacher and the Chair of the School Improvement Board have used their nationally recognised expertise to develop and execute a plan to get the academy out of special measures. This has improved the quality of teaching and the achievement of students.
- The head of school and his leadership team have won the trust and respect of students by working very hard on their behalf and being fair, open and approachable.
- Teaching is improving quickly and there are pockets of good and outstanding practice across the academy.
- Aspirations and expectations are rising and there is an increasing sense of pride and self-belief that is carrying improvements forward at an increasing pace.
- Behaviour is vastly improved enabling quality learning to take place and making students feel safe.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was deemed a section 5 inspection at the third special measures monitoring visit.
- The inspector visited lessons in most subjects and all year groups. She also looked at students' work in lessons and observed an assembly and tutor sessions.
- Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, and the Chair of the School Improvement Board. The inspector also met with a group of students and spoke informally to other students during lessons and break-time.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents including minutes of meetings of the School Improvement Board and students' progress and attendance data. She also drew on findings from previous monitoring visits.
- There were only nine responses from parents to the Ofsted on-line questionnaire but the inspector looked at the findings from a series of parental surveys carried out by the academy this academic year.

Inspection team

Jan Bennett, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- At the time of the previous inspection the school was sponsored by E-Act and known as the Purston E-Act Academy. The Rodillian Multi Academy Trust replaced E-Act as sponsors in September 2014 and changed the name. The acting headteacher at the time of the last inspection left at Easter 2014.
- The Featherstone Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- A very large majority of its students are from a White British background and the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is very low.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding available for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs or supported at school action plus is above average. The proportion of students supported by school action is below average.
- The academy has a specially resourced provision for students with a physical disability. Currently there are four students attending this unit. They are taught in mainstream classes and are supported by the special educational needs department.
- At the time of the inspection, 11 students were attending alternative provision at different training providers.
- In 2014 the academy did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement, especially that of boys.
- Reduce the number of persistent absentees.
- Ensure that every teacher develops a positive climate for learning in lessons that keeps students, especially boys, motivated and engaged.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Every aspect of the provision has improved and leaders continue to push forward with uncompromising drive and determination. Students are extremely appreciative of the work done by the Rodillian Multi Academy Trust to improve the academy so quickly and they say that the Trust has saved their school.
- The executive headteacher and the Chair of the School Improvement Board moved extremely rapidly to secure improvements after taking over responsibility for the academy. They assessed the task ahead, prioritised well and charted the course out of special measures and beyond. Work began immediately and has continued at an unrelentingly rapid pace. Their vision for the academy is ambitious, clear and communicated very well.
- The head of school is highly visible around the academy and students trust him. He and his leadership team know the staff and students very well and are driving up the quality of provision on a day-to-day basis. They are successfully building much closer links with parents, the local community and post-16 providers.
- Improving teaching is a key priority. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated and the quality continues to improve. Leaders monitor teaching rigorously and take swift and decisive action if necessary. Two thirds of the teaching staff has changed since the last inspection. A well-planned programme of training underpins the improvement, and newly qualified teachers are supported well by the multi academy trust.
- The curriculum is well planned. The new curriculum, introduced this academic year, takes account of national changes. The rich curriculum in Key Stage 3 incorporates personal development and is tailored to meet the students differing needs. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is in transition and is currently focused on compensating for previous deficiencies. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has strong emphasis and students are well prepared for life in multi-cultural Britain
- Careers guidance is comprehensive and there are many new initiatives to raise aspirations and broaden horizons. Links with local colleges and training providers are good. The number of school leavers not in education, employment or training is very low.
- Additional government funding to support the disadvantaged students is spent wisely and the impact can be seen in improvements to disadvantaged students' achievement, attendance and attitudes to learning. The funding has provided tailored intervention classes for Year 11 students and small group mentoring. It is also used to finance the academy's reading club for Year 7 students which is very well attended and is improving reading skills in order to facilitate more effective learning across the curriculum.
- Leaders closely monitor students' attendance and behaviour at off-site alternative provision. They make sure that these students are safe and that they are developing their literacy and numeracy skills by providing additional English and mathematics classes.
- The academy's arrangements for safeguarding students meet requirements. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to help potentially vulnerable students or those who need additional support. Leaders tackle discrimination where it exists.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Chair of the School Improvement Board is a National Leader for Governance and uses his considerable expertise well to shape governance. He made the wise decision to introduce a School Improvement Board, made up of a small number of very experienced governors from the Trust, to oversee the journey out of special measures. Meanwhile, a local governing body has been formed. Its members are trained and shadow the work of the School Improvement Board prior to taking over full responsibility.
 - The School Improvement Board has an excellent grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy. They are fully aware of the financial challenges facing Featherstone and monitor spending closely. They receive comprehensive and clear reports about all aspects of the academy, including information about what is being done to reward good teaching and tackle underperformance. They ask very penetrating and challenging questions about any concerns. The Chair spends time in the academy talking to students, staff and parents in order to get first-hand evidence of how well the academy is improving.
 - Governors have a very good understanding of how additional government funding is spent to support disadvantaged students and they are monitoring the effectiveness of initiatives very carefully.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is good.
- The new behaviour system, introduced at the start of the academic year, has dramatically improved behaviour both in and out of lessons. The system is very clear and well understood, and it is applied consistently. Students respond quickly when warnings are given.
- Movement around the academy is calm and orderly. Students are polite, welcoming and show consideration for each other. Physically disabled students are integrated well and treated with respect and courtesy.
- Students arrive on time for lessons with the necessary equipment and they respond quickly to any requests from staff. They work well together in groups or pairs and there is very little low level disruption in lessons which leaves teachers free to concentrate on teaching.
- A small number of students need regular reminders to concentrate when teaching is at its least effective.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Students say that instances of bullying are extremely rare this academic year. Students understand the different forms of bullying and know who to turn to if necessary. They also know how to protect themselves from the dangers of drugs and alcohol abuse and are aware of the dangers of child sexual exploitation.
- Attendance rates are increasing and the academy is doing everything it can to bring about further improvement. Data are monitored and analysed closely, good attendance is rewarded and parents are informed quickly by text of any absence. However, the number of persistent absentees is still high, especially in Year 11; but home visits, support from external agencies and prosecution have begun to have an impact.
- Students say that they feel very safe in the academy.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Since the last inspection inadequate teaching has been eradicated and the dependence on supply teachers vastly reduced. Teaching continues to improve and as a result progress in literacy, reading and mathematics is accelerating.
- Teachers have high expectations of students, they plan lessons well and have good subject knowledge. When teachers are working with individuals, they use questioning well to check understanding and stretch thinking.
- Where teaching is most effective the pace of learning is lively and the teacher takes swift action if students' interest begins to slacken. Teachers create a very positive climate for learning by generating enthusiasm, using a rich variety of tasks and deploying good classroom management skills to move seamlessly from one activity to another. They make sure that all students are engaged by involving them in discussions and encouraging them to contribute. Boys make very valuable contributions to lessons in food technology, history and religious studies where teachers target questions very skilfully.
- Where learning is less effective, questions for the whole class are undirected and a few students shout out all the answers. These same students, usually girls, monopolise the teacher's attention while others, often boys, drift along quietly.
- The quality of marking is improving strongly as the year goes on. In line with the school's own policy most teachers are giving constructive feedback, students are responding by doing further work or corrections and teachers are checking any additional work. There are examples of good practice in English and science but this is not consistent across all subjects and teachers.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Achievement was below average in 2014 and the proportion of Year 11 students obtaining five GCSE passes at grade C or above, including English and mathematics, was particularly low. This was despite improvements in English and mathematics. The ill-advised choice of level 1 courses meant that a number of Year 11 students could not achieve five GCSEs or their equivalent. Changes to the curriculum made by

the new sponsor ensure that this will not happen again.

- In 2014 too few Year 11 students left the academy having made the progress expected in English and mathematics. The proportion making better than expected progress was very low.
- Year 11 students are expected to achieve much higher GCSE results this year. For example, 57% are expected to obtain five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics – an increase of 20%. Forecasts are based on the results of a series of standardised tests used across the multi academy trust. Marking is moderated by teachers from other academies in the trust and examiners. The forecasts have proved very reliable predictors of GCSE results in the past.
- Many more Year 11 students are also forecast to make expected progress in English and mathematics. The proportion is expected to increase by well over 20% in both subjects.
- Many initiatives, introduced this academic year are designed to promote equal opportunities for all students and are beginning to have an impact. However, disadvantaged students do not achieve as well as others. In 2014 disadvantaged students attained one and a quarter grades lower in GCSE English and just over one grade lower in mathematics compared to their classmates. These students achieved about one and two thirds grades below those of other students nationally in both English and mathematics. Each of these gaps is smaller than was the case in the previous year and the gap is expected to reduce further this year.
- Boys are not achieving as well as girls. In 2014 the gap between them was much wider than average and it is not expected to close this summer. Boys' achievement is getting better but they are not closing in on the girls who are also improving. There are indications that the gap will close more markedly in 2016. The academy is deploying a number of strategies to motivate and support boys including input from an external motivational speaker, extra sessions targeted according to need and competitions between different groups.
- The most able students, like most others, have not reached their full potential in the past. This year much higher targets are set and students are challenged and supported through focused intervention groups. New initiatives are raising aspirations. For example, 15 undergraduates from the locality visited the academy and worked with students for a day, talking to them about life at university and helping them realise that higher education is a viable possibility.
- Work done this academic year ensures that disabled students and those with special educational needs reach their full potential. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) from across the Trust has worked with the academy's SENCO to ensure that they are meeting new guidelines and that students are stretched and challenged academically.
- The work in students' books shows that the pace and quality of learning is improving quickly in response to better teaching, marking and behaviour. Students are growing in confidence as a result of the progress they are making. Boys do not always participate well in lessons and too often leave girls to take the lead or answer teachers' questions. This contributes to boys' weaker achievement.

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	138593
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	450650

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 alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	345
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Sheldrake
Executive Headteacher	Andrew Goulty
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2014
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