

# University Academy Kidsgrove

Gloucester Road, Kidsgrove, Stoke-on-Trent, ST7 4DL

**Inspection dates** 25–26 February 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
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.

- Leadership and management are inadequate. Standards of teaching and achievement were low when the academy opened and improvements have been too slow and inconsistent.
- Leaders have failed to act to bring about essential improvements to the sixth form. The sixth form is inadequate. Achievement in academic subjects is too low and has been allowed to decline. Too few students attain the highest grades.
- The multi-academy trust has failed to act quickly enough in supporting and challenging leaders to make improvements.
- Achievement is inadequate. Too few students make enough progress in English or mathematics from their individual starting points. Students' attainment is well below average when they leave the academy.
- There are wide variations between the achievement of different student groups. Boys, middle-ability students and the most able underachieve.
- Although disadvantaged students make better progress in English and mathematics than they have done in the past, they do not achieve as well as others in the academy or nationally. Those with average attainment on entry to the academy continue to make weak progress.
- Teaching is inadequate. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what students can achieve in lessons.
- Teachers do not use the range of information they have about students well enough to plan lessons that meet the needs of their students. As a result, students do not make the progress over time of which they are capable.
- Behaviour requires improvement because some students are not motivated enough or inspired to achieve well.

### The school has the following strengths

- The academy's work to keep students safe is good.
- The multi-academy trust has now commissioned external support. The pace of improvement has begun to quicken as a result.
- A new local governing body, from September 2014, is monitoring the performance of the academy more closely and holding leaders to account for making improvements.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 33 lessons. They carried out some joint observations with senior leaders. Observations of other aspects of the academy’s work were also made, such as tutor time and assemblies.
- Inspectors also looked at students’ books and folders during lessons and as a separate activity.
- Meetings were held with groups of students and academy staff, including senior and middle leaders. Discussions were also held with representatives from the multi-academy trust, the University of Chester Academy Trust and leaders from St John Plessington Teaching School Alliance, who have been commissioned to offer support to academies in the trust. A meeting was also held with the statement of action committee who are the local governing body.
- There were 10 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire that provided evidence for the inspection. Inspectors also took into account surveys of parents’ views carried out by the academy.
- The views of 18 members of staff were analysed in response to Ofsted’s questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the academy’s self-evaluation and improvement plans, academy policies, and minutes of meetings of the statement of action committee. Information about students’ progress, attainment, attendance and exclusions were also examined as were the academy’s records of safeguarding, and of teachers’ performance linked to salary scales.

## Inspection team

Chris Chapman, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Margaret Eldridge-Mrotzek

Additional Inspector

Helen Reeves

Seconded Inspector

Richard White

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

- University Academy Kidsgrove converted to become an academy on 1 June 2013. When its predecessor school, Maryhill High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require improvement, grade 3, overall.
- The academy is part of the University of Chester Academies Trust.
- The academy is a smaller than average secondary school with a small sixth form.
- Sixth form provision is offered as part of a consortium with three other secondary schools, known as the Trinity Sixth Form. Some students attend courses at other sites.
- One quarter of students are disadvantaged. These are students who are eligible for support from the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government for students known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after in public care), which is broadly average.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs is below average.
- The overwhelming majority of students are from a White British background. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The achievement of students following alternative provision will not be evaluated in this report as there were too few students to consider without directly identifying them.
- The academy is receiving support from the St John Plessington Teaching School Alliance.
- In 2014, the academy met the current government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Urgently improve leadership and management, so that actions secure a rapid and sustained rise in standards of teaching and achievement by:
  - ensuring that plans for improvement and actions taken by leaders tackle the full range of weaknesses in the academy, including those of the sixth form
  - securing rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures at all levels so that all leaders are able to gauge how successful they have been in bringing about improvements and can hold all teachers to account
  - ensuring that all leaders, including subject leaders and pastoral leaders, have the skills and capacity to deliver essential improvements to the quality of teaching and to the achievement of students
  - rigorously checking that policies and procedures are adopted consistently across the academy.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that all students make good or better progress by:
  - taking into account the impact of teaching on students' learning and progress over time when evaluating the quality of teaching
  - using the range of information available about students, including their progress, attainment, prior knowledge and understanding, to match work to their needs
  - ensuring that teachers have high expectations of all students in all lessons and challenge them, including the most-able students, middle-ability students, boys, and disadvantaged students, to excel
  - using questioning to check that learning is secure, and to extend and deepen students' knowledge and understanding
  - ensuring that students improve their work based on the guidance offered by their teachers.

- Improve achievement, including in the sixth form, so that standards reach or exceed those of other students nationally for all groups by:
  - rigorously tracking the progress of all students, and groups of students, across the academy so that underachievement is identified early, tackled swiftly, and gaps between different groups of students are closed
  - further developing approaches to improving students’ literacy skills across subjects, so that boys, disadvantaged students and middle-ability students make rapid gains in reading and writing.

An external review of governance, and of the academy’s use of the pupil premium, 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

- In the year that the academy opened, standards of achievement were well below that of other schools nationally. Leaders' actions aimed at improving the academy's performance yielded inconsistent results in 2014 and achievement continues to be inadequate. Standards are not rising rapidly or securely enough to demonstrate that current leaders have the capacity to deliver the urgent improvements that are needed to the quality of education that the academy provides.
- Leaders have failed to tackle underachievement in the sixth form. Self-evaluation and improvement planning lack focus on the sixth form and standards have been allowed to decline.
- Despite considerable weaknesses in the academy's performance in 2013, the University of Chester Academy Trust did not offer the support or challenge needed to academy leaders.
- The academy is under increasing financial strain. Resources allocated have been insufficient to allow leaders the time they need to perform their duties effectively. This further limits their capacity to deliver improvements.
- Leaders are not clear enough about the impact of their actions. Plans for improvement are not linked closely enough to measurable targets. This means that leaders are unable to gauge how successful they have been.
- Since September, a considerable number of systemic changes and new initiatives have been implemented. The academy trust has commissioned much needed support from St John Plessington Teaching School Alliance. New local governance structures have also been put into place. These systems and structures have increased the pace of change in the academy. However, these changes expose the weaknesses and shortcomings of previous systems and of current leaders, who are now heavily reliant upon this external support to bring about improvements.
- Leaders have, with guidance, implemented new procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching in the academy. These include checks on the day-to-day teaching, known as 'snapshots' and scrutiny of students' work. However, leaders do not systematically draw together the full range of information they gather to form a realistic view of the quality of teaching. For example, leaders do not take sufficient account of the impact teachers have on the learning and progress of students over time.
- Teachers' salary progression is linked to their performance and evaluated against the professional teaching standards. Teachers are held to account for improving their teaching and for the achievement of the students that they teach. Nevertheless, this has not secured high enough standards of teaching and achievement across the academy.
- Teachers' assessments of students' attainment in the academy have been inaccurate. For example, results in English in 2014 were lower than those expected. External checks of teachers' assessments have been undertaken. It is too early to establish whether these checks are yielding accurate assessments of students' performance.
- The inconsistencies in students' achievement across different subjects reflect the variable impact of subject leaders. Subject leaders and pastoral leaders are now beginning to benefit from external support and training programmes. They are increasingly using information about students' progress to identify students at risk of underachievement and participate in a range of forums to put actions in place to prevent this. They are also increasingly checking the work of their teams, but not all do this rigorously. Consequently, policies, such as the marking policy, have not been implemented consistently.
- Students have the opportunity to study a broad range of subjects. Some adaptations are made to provide extra time for students with low-levels of basic skills on entry to work on developing these skills. More time has also been devoted to the teaching of English for all students to support necessary improvements in this subject. Lower-ability students also have the opportunity to follow some vocational courses at Key Stage 4 and a growing proportion of students now follow suitably challenging academic subjects. Twenty-five minutes each day is devoted to academic review time. Inspectors found that form tutors do not always ensure that this time is used constructively enough to be of value.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding and preparation for life in modern Britain is developed through religious education, 'PACE' lessons and special 'collapsed' curriculum days. Students learn about democracy, justice, the law, human rights, how to tackle discrimination and how to stay safe. These values are also promoted through assemblies, considerable fundraising activity, the work of the student council, a range of visits to museums to explore British heritage, sporting and dance provision and participation in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Leaders do not evaluate all aspects of this work carefully enough, or track students' participation in wider curriculum opportunities so that they can be sure that it has the intended impact on students' learning, values and attitudes. When inspectors spoke to

students, there were clear variations in students' experiences and understanding.

- Students have access to independent careers advice and guidance. During 'collapsed' curriculum days students have opportunities to develop employability skills, explore future choices and engage with universities, the careers service and employers. The proportion of students who have not remained in education, or gone into employment or training once they have left the school is now in line with the national average, demonstrating the successful impact of this work.
- The variation between the achievement of different groups of students demonstrates that the academy is not successful in realising leaders' aspirations to promote equal opportunities in the outcomes for students.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged students is used to provide extra tuition, additional support in classes, smaller class sizes and access to revision resources. Leaders are increasingly tracking the progress of disadvantaged students. Evaluations of actions, such as extra support in reading, English or mathematics, show that more students are on-track to meet their targets as a result of this work. Nevertheless, despite these improvements, disadvantaged students continue to achieve less well than others in the academy.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Procedures to keep children safe are clear and understood by all staff. This is strength of the academy's work.
- The small sample of returns to Ofsted's Parent View survey show mixed responses to the work of the academy. Parent surveys conducted by the academy, capturing a much broader range of responses, show a far more positive view, with the majority of parents supportive of the academy.
- Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

#### **The governance of the school:**

- Considerable changes have taken place to governance. The former governing body was dissolved towards the end of the last academic year and a new governing body, the statement of action committee, has been put in place by the academy trust since September. This small group is led by a National Leader of Governance, and is comprised of experienced governors. As a result, this group is focused sharply on bringing about improvements to the academy.
- Monthly meetings enable the committee to monitor leaders' progress in relation to the academy improvement plan and track students' achievement against targets that have been set. Members of the committee hold the principal to account and receive detailed reports about the academy's performance, from both the principal, vice-principal and from subject leaders. They have rightly prioritised and sought assurances that information about students' progress presented by the academy is accurate.
- The committee has an overview of pupil premium spending and the impact of actions funded by this. Committee members ask pertinent questions that have challenged subject leaders to account for how well they are closing the gap between disadvantaged students and others in the academy.
- The committee also has a clear view of how teachers' performance is overseen and managed and of the quality of teaching. The chair of the committee has scrutinised all information about pay progression and recognises the shortcomings of some of the targets that were previously set.
- Although the committee is closely monitoring the work of the academy, it is too early to establish the impact of these arrangements on outcomes for students.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

#### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students requires improvement.
- Students say that standards of behaviour across subjects and between different teachers are inconsistent. Not enough students have acquired the right behaviours for learning or the motivation to enable them to succeed and achieve well. In a small number of lessons, off-task behaviour and low-level disruption is not challenged quickly enough.
- Although procedures are in place to tackle incidents of lateness, students' punctuality is currently not as good as it was earlier in the academic year.
- At informal times of the day, students behave sensibly. They move around the site in an orderly manner and generally wear their uniform with pride. There was little evidence of litter around the site during the inspection, although students say that this can be an issue.
- The academy's records demonstrate that behaviour over time is improving. Fewer students are taken out of lessons for disruptive behaviour. Fixed-term exclusion figures are lower than the national average.

- Case studies of students show that effective additional support that is well matched to students' needs has improved the behaviour and attendance of some students who were previously disengaged.
- The limited sample of parents who responded to the Parent View survey had mixed responses to students' behaviour in the academy, and a significant minority believed that the academy did not make sure its students were well behaved. The academy's own records of parent views show that the large majority of parents feel that behaviour in the academy is much better than previously.

## Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students, including vulnerable students, say that they feel safe. They say that if they report concerns to teachers, they have the confidence that issues will be resolved quickly.
- Students learn about a broad range of risks including the risks of social networking, road safety, drugs and alcohol and peer pressure. They also learn about discrimination, including issues such as homophobia and religious discrimination.
- Attendance is above the national average and has risen for some vulnerable groups, including those students with disabilities and special educational needs. In addition, the proportion of students that is frequently absent has been slightly smaller than the national average for secondary schools since the academy opened. However, improvement in the attendance of this group is more variable.
- Bullying is rare at the academy. Students spoken to throughout the inspection confirmed this.
- In lessons such as design and technology and science, students sensibly respond to the risks around them, using tools and equipment safely.
- Procedures to keep children safe are effective. This has also been confirmed by recent external reviews. Staff have received relevant training. The academy is engaging with the 'Prevent' strategy to raise staff awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
- A large majority of parents say that their child feels safe and well looked after.

## The quality of teaching

### is inadequate

- Teaching has not enabled students to make the progress over time that they should. There is too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching, and expectations are not high enough to drive standards up in all areas.
- In the vast majority of lessons seen, teachers gave the same work to all students, taking little account of their different needs or starting points. Discussions with students during the inspection also confirmed that this was typically the case. Work given to the most able is not challenging enough to allow them to make the progress that they are capable of. The least able sometimes find work too hard and their progress is slowed as a result. This accounts for the variations in achievement between different groups of students over time.
- The academy's marking policy is not applied consistently or effectively by all teachers. Students' responses to their teachers' feedback are mixed. Some make corrections and improve their work, but students often simply acknowledge their teachers' comment, rather than acting on the advice. Teachers do not always ensure that students follow this guidance. This means that the current policy is not always having an impact on students' progress.
- In some lessons, there is a lack of focus on how well students are learning. Teachers do not use questioning well enough to check the progress and learning of students before they move on to the next stage of the lesson. As a result, misconceptions are not identified and corrected in a timely manner. Questions can also be too superficial and do not challenge students to think more deeply or offer more detailed explanation.
- Expectations are not high or consistent enough for all students. There are clear differences, for example, in the quantity, quality and presentation of work produced by boys in the academy and that of girls. Boys in particular make insufficient gains in their knowledge and understanding over time.
- In some lessons, teachers set a clear direction for learning and challenge students by encouraging them to think hard. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics mastery lesson, students were engrossed in problem-solving activities because they had to rise to the challenge of applying the skills they had learnt to new contexts.
- Leaders have made the development of students' literacy skills in lessons an academy priority. There is a literacy weekly focus on this. Inspectors saw how teachers focused students on their use of capital letters in lessons. Teachers are increasingly correcting students' literacy errors in their work. In some lessons,

teachers shared and reinforced technical or subject-specific vocabulary with students. These strategies have not had time to show impact on students' writing skills. Little has been done to develop the teaching of numeracy across the curriculum.

- Teaching assistants are skilled at supporting students in lessons. They know about the needs of their students and are so able to support them well in areas such as reading. In some lessons, in English for example, they are also deployed to offer effective support to other groups who are vulnerable to underachievement, such as disadvantaged students.

## The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- Pupils' achievement was too low in the year that the academy opened, and remains so. Students enter the academy with levels of attainment that are broadly average. The proportion of students who achieved five or more A\* to C grades including English and mathematics in both 2013 and 2014 was significantly below average. This is because students are making inadequate progress during their time in the academy.
- Too few students make acceptable progress in English or mathematics. While the overall proportion of students making expected progress in mathematics rose in 2014, the proportion making better than expected progress was considerably lower than the national average.
- The proportion of students making expected progress in English declined in 2014 and was significantly below that of others nationally. Information about the progress of current students in the academy shows that progress in English continues to lag behind that of mathematics.
- There are wide differences in the rates of progress made by girls and boys, particularly in English. Boys perform below girls in the academy and make significantly less progress than other boys nationally. The academy's records and scrutiny of students' work show that these wide gaps look set to continue.
- Middle-ability students make poor progress over time. In English, less than half of these students made expected progress based in the last set of examination results. They also made less progress than other students nationally in mathematics and the humanities.
- In the year that the academy opened, the achievement of disadvantaged students was extremely low. Some improvements were made in 2014. Gaps in attainment in English between disadvantaged students in the academy and their peers reduced from more than one grade to less than half a grade. The gap also reduced in relation to other students nationally by the same amount. A similar rate of closure was seen in mathematics in-school. The gap with other students nationally, at two grades in 2013, was very wide, and reduced to less than one grade the following year.
- Although disadvantaged students are making better progress, particularly in mathematics, progress is too slow for students who enter the academy with a Level 4 in English or mathematics. Academy records also show that disadvantaged students currently in Years 10 and 11 continue to make less progress than the others. Additional support and tuition is leading to quicker improvements for some students.
- The most-able students do not achieve as well as they should. They make poor progress over time in mathematics, but make better progress in English. The proportion of students securing the highest grades varies in other subjects. As a result of these inconsistencies, the performance of most-able students across their best eight subjects was lower than in other schools.
- Across subjects, achievement is variable. Attainment in history and art declined in 2014. Attainment was also weak in religious studies, media studies and sociology. While attainment in geography rose, students sitting this course performed a grade lower on average in this than they did in other subjects. Attainment was better in information technology, science, sport, languages and the performing arts.
- The progress of disabled students or those who have special educational needs has been too uneven. In the year that the academy opened, students made poor progress in mathematics in relation to other students in the academy and nationally. In 2014, this improved, but progress rates in English declined for these students. As a result of better focused support and closer monitoring, current students in the academy are making more progress than they have done in the past.
- Reading programmes and additional support for those students with weaker reading skills are having a positive impact on improving the reading ages of these students.
- The academy no longer enters students early for GCSE English or mathematics.



**The sixth form provision is inadequate**

- Leadership of the sixth form is inadequate because leaders have not tackled weaknesses in students' achievement in academic subjects. There has been insufficient focus on making improvements in this area.
- Students' attainment was well below average in the year that the academy opened and remained well below average in 2014. From broadly average attainment on entry, students achieve on average one grade less than other students nationally by the end of their time in the sixth form in A-Levels. The proportion of students securing A\* to B grades is also significantly below that of other students nationally. Data presented by the academy show that a number of students are currently not on track to secure their A or B grade targets.
- Students' progress in academic courses declined in 2014. Overall progress rates were significantly below those of other schools nationally for both A-Level and AS-Level. The very large majority of courses performed below that of other schools nationally and a number significantly so.
- Too few students who enter the sixth form without a grade C or above in English or mathematics successfully reach this standard in re-sits.
- Progress is better for the small number of students who follow vocational courses. It is broadly in line with that of other students nationally.
- The proportion of students who stayed on at the sixth form between Year 12 and 13 was very low in the year that the academy opened, but information provided by the academy shows a rise in 2014.
- Checks undertaken on the quality of teaching and of students' progress have not been rigorous enough to secure improvements and overcome underachievement.
- Collaborative arrangements for the sixth form provide students with access to a broad variety of courses. Some courses in which students have underperformed in the past have been removed from the curriculum.
- Students speak positively about the quality of information, advice and guidance they receive. As a result of this work, the proportion of students entering education, training or employment is higher than that of other schools. The proportion moving onto to higher education, such as university, is however, much lower than the national average.
- Students access a range of leadership and enrichment opportunities, including supporting younger students in the academy and the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, that enable them to develop important non-qualification skills. A small number undertake work experience.
- Some teaching uses a range of resources and activities to involve students in their learning. For example, inspectors saw students engaging well with mark schemes and example answers so that they had a clear understanding of how they would be assessed in the examination. However, the pace of learning is sometimes too slow and the most able are not set more demanding work to support them in progressing to the highest grades. As a result, some students are still not making the gains they should do.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is good and students are generally positive about their experiences. Sixth form students' attendance is slightly lower than that of other students in the academy.

## 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>	139708
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	453497

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>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	608
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	37
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Charles Nevin
<b>Principal</b>	Fiona Hewardine
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected as an academy
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 948250
<b>Fax number</b>	N/A
<b>Email address</b>	communications@uakidsgrove.org

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