

Firbeck Academy

Firbeck Road, Wollaton, Nottingham, NG8 2FB

Inspection dates 10–11 March 2015

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Not previously inspected as an academy | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--|----------|
| | 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 |
| Early years provision | | Inadequate | 4 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- The pupils' achievement is inadequate. Their attainment is low and they do not make enough progress to make up for gaps in their learning.
- The most-able pupils make much less progress than they should.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make less progress than other pupils at the academy.
- Leaders and managers have not focused sufficiently on improving the quality of teaching. They have not evaluated the quality of teaching rigorously enough. This has led to their judgements being inaccurate. As a result, the quality of teaching varies too much and does not secure good progress for the pupils.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectations regarding pupils' presentation of their work and the quality of pupils' spoken responses in lessons.
- Teachers do not use information about pupils' learning and progress well enough to ensure that all groups of pupils are provided with work that challenges them sufficiently. The pupils are not given precise enough information and guidance about how well they are doing and how to improve.
- The same weaknesses are evident in the early years provision. As a result, the children do not make enough progress to reduce the gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding, so that they are not fully ready to begin Key Stage 1.
- When lessons are poorly organised or not challenging enough, pupils become inattentive. Teachers do not address these lapses in concentration well enough. As a result, pupils' behaviour requires improvement.
- Leaders and managers do not routinely analyse the information they hold about any accidents or injuries. This hinders their ability to plan improvements. As a result, the academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers, including governors, have established an inclusive ethos at the academy. As a result, relationships are good and pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds get on well together.
- The provision for the pupils in the special resource meets those pupils' needs well and they make good progress.
- The curriculum provides the pupils with a good range of interesting experiences and makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.
- The academy site is secure and, as a result of that and the care provided by the staff, the pupils feel safe and happy and develop positive attitudes to learning and life. They are, typically, polite and friendly.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 14 lessons, involving all classes, some twice, and the special resource and including one jointly with the headteacher. They observed one-to-one support and small-group sessions, and carried out other visits to classrooms to check on the pupils' work and behaviour. They listened to pupils reading and scrutinised examples of the pupils' work.
- The inspectors held meetings with leaders and managers, representatives of the governing body, and other members of staff. They spoke by telephone with a representative of the local authority. They analysed questionnaires completed by 36 members of staff. They spoke with many pupils in groups, in lessons and around the school.
- The inspectors checked the 13 responses on Parent View, spoke with parents at the beginning and end of school, and took account of information provided by the academy.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the academy's development and action plans, policies, records relating to the support provided by the academy to individual pupils, records relating to the pupils' behaviour, the school's information on the pupils' achievement and attendance, safeguarding, and external reports about the academy.

Inspection team

Clive Moss, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stephen McMullan

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kathleen Yates

Additional Inspector

Lynn Stanbridge

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 academy is of average size for primary schools.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The academy includes specially resourced provision for deaf pupils from Nursery to Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding from the government for pupils eligible for free school meals and looked after children) is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is broadly average.
- Some of the group sizes are very small and, within individual year groups, may be as few as one pupil.
- Early years provision is part time in the Nursery and full time in the Reception class.
- The academy does not meet the current government floor standards for the progress and attainment of the pupils.
- The academy opened in July 2013. It is sponsored by the Nottingham University Samworth Academies Trust.
- Substantial building works were being carried out at the school at the time of the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, including in the early years, by:
 - using assessment more effectively to identify the particular learning needs of the pupils
 - ensuring that the work provided for the pupils is focused on meeting their particular learning needs
 - ensuring that the work provided for the pupils builds on their prior learning and allows opportunities for them to extend or deepen their learning
 - ensuring that the work provides sufficient and appropriate challenge for all groups of pupils, in particular the most-able pupils
 - providing the pupils with precise information about how well they are doing and how they can improve, with reference to the relevant knowledge, skills and understanding
 - challenging and promoting the pupils' oracy and literacy consistently when commenting on the pupils' responses in lessons
 - establishing consistently high expectations of the pupils in relation to the presentation of their work
 - being more alert to and challenging any behaviour when pupils appear to be losing concentration or motivation
 - ensuring that classroom routines and the organisation of the pupils' work does not slow or interfere with learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including in the early years, by:
 - focusing unequivocally on improving the quality of teaching
 - setting out a clear strategy and direction for improving the quality of teaching
 - ensuring that plans spell out clearly and precisely what actions will be taken to improve the quality of teaching
 - evaluating the quality of teaching incisively through rigorous analysis of all of the available evidence, including data about the pupils' achievement

- ensuring that teachers with responsibilities are enabled to make a full contribution to monitoring and evaluating the impact of the quality of teaching
- ensuring that all aspects of the school’s work are evaluated equally rigorously, including pupils’ behaviour and safety.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leaders and managers have not given sufficient priority to improving the quality of teaching rapidly. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching has not been rigorous enough and has led to leaders and managers making inaccurate judgements. In particular, those judgements have not, until recently, taken enough account of information about the achievement of the pupils.
- The academy's action plans do not make clear enough what exactly will be done to improve the quality of teaching and when precisely this will take place. As a result, there is not at this point sufficient evidence of significant, rapid or sustained improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Other aspects of the academy's work are also not evaluated rigorously. For example, the academy does not analyse and summarise its records on behaviour and safety thoroughly or incisively. The information is not used well enough to identify patterns, trends, successes and failures to subsequently bring about improvements.
- Middle leaders have not been enabled to play a full role in managing and monitoring the work of the academy. As a result, they often lack essential information to enable them to make incisive evaluations of the academy's work. Middle leaders are not always fully aware of how well the pupils are achieving in relation to their areas of responsibility, such as with regard to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Recent developments show early, but only tentative, signs of improvements. For example, middle leaders are beginning to identify measurable improvements to show the impact of particular initiatives, such as getting more pupils to read at home. The recently improved use of data about the pupils' achievement is leading to slightly better rates of progress by the pupils, though still not sufficiently to remove the underachievement.
- Different aspects of the academy's approach to safeguarding are handled effectively, but separately, and are not coordinated sufficiently. As a result, key staff with responsibilities for this area are not informed as fully as they need to be about how well the system is working. This results in a lack of coherent analysis and evaluation.
- The academy's procedures for monitoring and vetting new staff and volunteers meet statutory requirements. The staff responsible for maintaining the records understand their responsibilities, so that records are kept up to date and complete.
- Senior leaders have drawn the staff together as a hard-working team. The team demonstrates commitment to the academy's inclusive ethos. That is apparent particularly in the way that the pupils in the special resource are fully a part of the academy community. As a result, good relationships are evident throughout the academy between the pupils and with the staff.
- In discussions with the inspectors, parents spoke about how much they value the academy's inclusive approach because it ensures pupils feel safe and happy and get along well together. They know that staff want to do the best for the pupils. Some described how having the special resource at the academy brought benefits for the other pupils in terms of the opportunity to learn with the hearing-impaired pupils and to learn sign language. That view was confirmed in discussions with the pupils themselves, who demonstrated mature and respectful attitudes towards the hearing-impaired pupils and also saw learning with them as of benefit to themselves. The pupils show pride also in the school's signing choir.
- Other parents spoke about the lack of challenge in their children's learning and the difference this makes when the children go on to secondary school.
- The leadership of the special resource is very effective. The provision has been developed and adapted as

a result of systematic tracking of the pupils' progress. For example, changes have been made to accommodate the needs of those pupils who speak English as an additional language.

- The academy has taken a broadly based approach to using the pupil premium and has taken care to ensure that the needs of eligible pupils, including in the early years, those who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are addressed specifically. The academy can show that, overall, the eligible pupils make better progress than other groups at the school. It has not, however, evaluated the particular impact of the different things it has done and so cannot show which activities have most benefit for the pupils and which do not.
- The curriculum offers a wide range of different types of learning opportunities for the pupils. It plays an important role in developing the positive attitudes to school that were apparent in the pupils' discussions with inspectors and also in promoting the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The respect for and tolerance of others that pupils develop stand them in good stead for life in modern Britain. The academy nurtures self-respect and, as a result, the pupils express confidence about the prospect of moving on to secondary education. Their success in the next stage of their education is hampered, however, by the low attainment.
- The academy has used the primary school physical education and sport premium appropriately, including by extending the range of sporting and physical activities for the pupils. It has made sensible arrangements to provide long-term benefits by providing mentoring for the staff to increase their skills in teaching physical education. The school has assessed how much progress individual pupils are making in the subject. It has not, however, analysed or evaluated the impact of how it has used the funds rigorously enough to show whether the pupils' participation in physical education and sport activities is increasing or not.
- The academy sponsor is fully alert to the academy's weaknesses. It is taking action systematically and progressively to bring about essential improvements. In addition to financial support for improvements to the accommodation and other initiatives that have extended the academy's curriculum, it has arranged for external support to improve leadership and management. The external support received by the academy has helped to improve the accuracy of its self-evaluation, but this is still not incisive or candid enough.
- Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body checks on the work of the academy directly. Individual governors have good connections with members of staff responsible for their particular areas of interest. The level of contact is such that the members of staff have a clear sense that they are being held to account for their work.
 - The governors demonstrate that they are prepared to ask challenging questions. They are aware of the achievement of different groups of pupils and understand what the data show. They have not ensured, however, that the academy's evaluation of its work is as rigorous and exacting as it needs to be.
 - The governing body oversees the academy's approach to the performance management of the staff. As a result, decisions about pay progression are linked to appropriate evidence of effective performance and are not automatic.
 - The governing body has been instrumental in securing the inclusive ethos at the academy and in setting out the academy's values. It has reconsidered the academy's statement of values and ethos and adapted it to reflect the academy's duties to promote British values.
 - The academy's budget is in balance. With considerable financial assistance from the academy sponsors, the governors have embarked on a programme of very much-needed improvements to the buildings and accommodation at the academy.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of the pupils requires improvement. In lessons, the pupils are more compliant than they are keen to learn. Nevertheless, generally, the pupils have positive attitudes to school and learning. Mostly

they respond promptly to the teachers' instructions.

- Pupils become inattentive and lose motivation when the organisation of lessons means that they are waiting for something, or when the work is not sufficiently interesting or challenging. The teachers do not identify this behaviour quickly or often enough, and so do not correct it sufficiently well. Conversely, on those occasions when the work is matched to their abilities, the pupils focus well and make good progress.
- A small number of pupils have very challenging behaviour. The pupils, including those within the special resource, say that there is some bad behaviour. There has been a small number of exclusions each year since the academy opened, including one permanent exclusion.
- Parents confirmed that there is bullying occasionally and stated that such matters were not always resolved quickly by the school. The pupils confirmed that bullying happens, but that it is rare and said that instances of racism and of the use of homophobic language were few. This was apparent also from the school's behaviour records.
- The inspectors saw evidence of some very effective work by the staff to help pupils experiencing difficulties with behaviour. For example, one pupil described how the help received from 'The Reach' (a counselling service that provides support to the pupils) had helped to improve behaviour and led to better relations at home.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. The academy has systems for recording accidents and injuries. Incidents are logged and monitored. However, the leaders and managers do not routinely analyse the logs effectively and use the information to plan improvements.
- Records show that the academy works closely with external agencies, when necessary, to support pupils with the highest level of need. However, these records do not always contain a clear overview of the difference the academy's work is making. Information is not linked to analysis of how well the pupil is doing in school.
- The staff show much commitment to safeguarding the pupils. They are trained regularly, and understand and conscientiously operate the academy's straightforward policy for recording and reporting any concerns. The academy gives considerable attention to the pupils with the highest levels of need.
- Attendance is broadly average. The pupils understand the need for good attendance and are aware that the academy has a strict policy. Leaders and managers do not, however, analyse attendance data in much depth.
- The pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, say that they feel safe at the academy. They refer to the safety of the academy's site and the fact that the gates are locked as one of the things that help them to feel safe. They know whom to contact, if they have a problem.
- The curriculum provides good opportunities for the pupils to learn how to stay safe. For example, the pupils told inspectors about what they had learned about how to steer clear of gangs. They are aware also of how to stay safe online.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Too much of the teaching does not secure good progress for pupils. As a result, their knowledge, skills and understanding are not increased sufficiently and gaps remain in their learning by the time that they leave the academy. The teachers do not have a consistent approach to developing the pupils' speaking and literacy skills.
- The work set for the pupils does not provide them often enough with an appropriate level of challenge to enable them to make as much progress as they could, including in literacy and mathematics. This is

particularly the case for the most-able pupils and also for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

- Teachers do not use assessment well enough to identify clearly what the pupils know, understand and can do, and then to devise activities that will move the pupils on from where they are. Too often, the work that the pupils are given is focused on covering different topics or subjects, rather than extending or deepening the pupils' learning. At times this leads to the pupils repeating the same type of exercises unnecessarily.
- The pupils are not given enough clear and precise information and guidance in lessons to enable them to understand what specifically they have done well, and how they can improve what they have done. For example, the teachers do not comment routinely on the quality of the pupils' speaking and literacy skills or give an indication of how the pupils can improve them.
- Similarly, the quality of the teachers' marking of the pupils' work is too inconsistent. Although marking is often done in line with the school's agreed approach, too often it does not give the pupils enough precise information to help them to understand clearly what they have learned and how to make more progress.
- In addition, the pupils are not given enough opportunities to make the necessary improvements in their work. As result, the marking does not help to increase the rate of pupils' progress. Too often, the teachers do not insist that the pupils present their work well.
- The teachers do not make the most of the time available for learning. For example, at times the pupils spend too much time waiting for attention, instructions or resources. This contributes to a slow pace of learning.
- In the most effective practice seen by the inspectors, including within the special resource:
 - the teacher used well-conceived questions to extend and make the learning secure
 - the next steps that the pupils needed to take were identified efficiently and the pupils were moved on accordingly
 - the teacher used techniques to involve a wide range of pupils in whole-class dialogues that kept the pupils on their toes and learning quickly
 - there was a consistent approach to developing the pupils' literacy skills in different subjects
 - teaching assistants were used skilfully and effectively, and promoted the pupils' communication skills very well
 - the teacher established high expectations for how the pupils should present their work
 - marking provided the pupils with a very clear view of how well they had done and of what they needed to do next.

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- The pupils' progress from joining in the early years to the end of Key Stage 2 is inadequate and results in low standards of attainment by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium do slightly better than their peers at the academy. In 2014, the Year 6 pupils who were eligible for the pupil premium were about four months ahead of their peers in reading and writing, and about one month ahead in mathematics. They were considerably behind other pupils nationally by slightly more than one year in mathematics, about 15 months in reading, and just over one year in writing.
- Overall, the disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to others at the academy, except in mathematics. However, they do much less well than other pupils nationally.
- The pupils who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to the other pupils. There are no significant differences in the progress made by minority ethnic groups.

- The most-able pupils make less progress than others, given their starting points.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make less progress than they might reasonably be expected to.
- The pupils in the special resource achieve well, particularly in the development of their reading, writing, and mathematics. In these areas, generally, they make at least the progress expected and often more. This is the result of the effective leadership of the resource and carefully structured planning for pupils' development.

The early years provision

is inadequate

- The children do not make enough progress to make up for the shortfalls in their knowledge, skills and understanding on entry to the provision, particularly with regard to their oracy and communications skills. The proportion of the children reaching a good level of development in speaking, reading, writing, number and in making relationships are notably below those seen nationally. As a result, the shortfalls are still evident when they begin Key Stage 1.
- The children are not challenged sufficiently to bring about the rapid process needed to secure the necessary gains in their learning. Too often, the tasks they are given are not pitched at the right level, particularly for the most-able children. The staff do not routinely identify how to extend the children's learning. As a result, the children lose focus and their learning slows.
- Too often, the children are unclear about what they are learning and why, including when working in the outdoor area. This reduces the impact of the activities on the children's progress.
- The approach to assessing the children's progress is not sufficiently effective. The children's learning journals provide little evidence of parental involvement in the process, or of effective work involving all adults within the setting, to identify how well the children are doing and to plan further work accordingly.
- Plans and strategies for improving the provision lack precision and a sense of urgency. For example, leaders have not identified clearly enough the needs of more-able children. The quality of teaching is not monitored robustly.
- The children's behaviour shows that they feel safe in the provision. The children are encouraged to take part in learning and to develop skills to help them learn by exploring their environment and using different resources. Children of different ages learn to work cooperatively and become tolerant towards each other. In this way, the provision reflects the inclusive ethos of the whole school well and to that extent the children are ready to move on to the next stage of their education.
- The provision works well with other providers and agencies. As a result, disabled children and those who have special educational needs are identified quickly and appropriate arrangements are made for additional support, where necessary.

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

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| Unique reference number | 139326 |
| Local authority | Nottingham |
| Inspection number | 449887 |

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

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|--|---------------------------------|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 251 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Jean Redgate |
| Headteacher | Eudora Christian |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number | 0115 915 5739 |
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