

Downham Market Academy

Bexwell Road, Downham Market, PE38 9LL

Inspection dates 19–20 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- GCSE results in mathematics and science are below national averages and students do not make enough progress in these subjects.
- The progress of disabled students, those with special educational needs and those in receipt of the pupil premium is not improving as well in mathematics as it is in English.
- The sixth form requires improvement. The students' progress is not consistently good in several of the subjects with large numbers of entries.
- Some staff do not manage the behaviour of students, particularly boys, effectively in some lessons, so that learning is disrupted and progress is too slow.
- Teaching does not always make clear what students are expected to achieve, or explain how to carry out tasks in enough detail.
- Teacher's marking of students' written work does not help students understand what they need to do improve.
- Homework is not used consistently to help students apply their ideas and improve their understanding
- Not all staff have high expectations for students' work, or set demanding targets for students' future progress.
- Senior and middle leaders do not all apply high enough standards when evaluating the quality of teaching or of students' work.
- Arrangements for developing the teaching skills of less experienced staff are not fully effective.

The school has the following strengths

- Students behave well when moving between lessons, and appreciate the recent developments to the academy site that have led to improved safety and better opportunities for them to develop their social skills.
- Students' progress is improving over time and arrangements to support students with individual difficulties are increasingly effective.
- Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is well provided for.
- The tracking of students' progress has improved well, so that senior and middle leaders make good use of this information to plan future developments.
- Teaching is improving, because leaders have taken appropriate action to eliminate weak teaching.
- Governors are experienced and well trained, holding academy leaders to account well, and monitoring improvements carefully.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students' learning in 47 lessons, including nine joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors made short visits to other lessons and tutor group sessions. They looked at samples of students' work, interviewed groups of students and heard students read from across the age range.
- Meetings were held with the Principal and other members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders, house heads, teachers, members of the governing body, and a representative of the academy Trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, school-development plans, behaviour records, safeguarding records, governing body documents, and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in 60 questionnaires returned by school staff, and 91 responses submitted by parents to the on-line 'Parent View' survey.

Inspection team

Roger Waddingham, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lynn Kenworthy	Additional Inspector
Joanne Ward	Additional Inspector
Ian Tett	Additional Inspector
Clive Allen	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Downham Market Academy opened in July 2013 as part of the CWA Trust group of schools. It is larger than the average size of secondary schools found nationally. When its predecessor school, Downham Market High School, was last inspected in May 2012 it was judged to require special measures.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is below average, at about one in every 12 students in the school.
- About one in every four of the students is known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, which is average. This is additional funding allocated by the government for students who are looked after or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Most students are of White British heritage and very few come from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language.
- There have been significant changes in the staffing of a number of subject departments since the academy opened.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students by the end of Year 11.
- The school offers work-related training for a small number of Year 10 and Year 11 students through provision from the College of West Anglia or Easton College for one day per week.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that:
 - students always know what they are expected to achieve and understand how to carry out the tasks they are set
 - the marking of students' written work gives them clear guidance on what they need to do improve their work
 - homework is set and marked regularly enough to help students improve their understanding
 - staff demonstrate consistently high expectations for students' quality and presentation of work, setting demanding targets for students' future progress
 - all staff apply the academy behaviour policy effectively to minimise disruptive behaviour in lessons.
- Raise achievement by:
 - improving progress in mathematics, especially for disabled students, those with special educational needs and those in receipt of the pupil premium
 - ensuring that middle and lower attaining boys make better progress in their GCSE subjects, especially mathematics and science, with activities planned carefully to engage their interest
 - making more systematic provision of opportunities to develop numeracy and writing across the curriculum
 - developing progress tracking in subject departments to make sure students show consistently good progress in a wider range of A-level courses.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making sure all leaders apply consistently high standards when evaluating the quality of teaching and students' work
 - developing the teaching skills of weaker staff through matching training opportunities to a more detailed analysis of their training needs.

An external review of the school'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 **require improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because not all staff demonstrate high enough expectations for teaching and learning in the academy. There are still weaknesses in teaching and students' behaviour that mean some students are not achieving as well as they should. In particular better consistency is needed in behaviour management in the classroom, opportunities for students to develop their confidence in mathematics, and the setting and marking of homework.
- The Principal, senior and middle leaders, and the governing body have clearly identified what they need to do to continue to improve student achievement in the academy and establish a positive learning ethos among students. Teaching is improving and much of the previous inadequate teaching has been eliminated. The role of teacher leader is a helpful recent development, but has not been in place long enough to have the full impact intended on improving teaching to good overall.
- The procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the academy are now well established, with regular departmental reviews leading to detailed reports on teacher effectiveness and student progress. However, the rapid turnover of staff in some departments such as mathematics and science has meant that changes needed have not been implemented as quickly as expected. Also, the training needs of new and inexperienced staff have not always been addressed well enough because the evaluation of teaching evidence has not identified the key individual development points needed to move teaching to at least good.
- The academy has an effective system for tracking students' progress and subject leaders are making increasingly good use of test information to target support for students by identifying areas of the subject where they are falling behind. Pastoral heads make good use of a range of attendance and behaviour information to spot quickly if students are letting their attitudes to learning become less positive. Overall, middle leaders need to improve their effectiveness by reviewing the quality of students' written work more carefully and using it to identify weaknesses in teaching, in particular.
- Academy and subject action plans are well coordinated and their impact is reviewed regularly through discussions with line managers and review visits carried out by link governors.
- Senior managers monitor the accuracy of staff assessment carefully and external expertise is used well to ensure that departmental members apply the correct standards. The school has made good progress in implementing a new assessment system for Year 7 and the new method of reporting student progress to parents is clear and well designed.
- The range of examination subjects offered to students is appropriate to their needs, with a sound balance of academic and vocational courses. The school offers a wide range of after-school clubs and sporting activities in particular.
- Activities to promote pupils' personal development are well provided, with older students following a philosophy and ethics course, for example. The planned programme of themes for the week in assemblies and tutor period prepares students well for life in modern Britain, including, for example, topics relating to respect, the rule of law, and homophobic language. The development of social and moral awareness is well provided for throughout the school; spiritual and cultural experiences are supported well through a program of visits and visiting speakers.
- Careers guidance is good with all students having access to external experts for advice. Year 11 students and sixth formers speak positively of the options advice they receive, and the academy tracks their destinations in education and training carefully.
- The support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is well managed and most pupils are currently making good progress in English, with slower progress in mathematics. The impact of support from specialist staff is monitored carefully by the coordinator and adjusted appropriately

in the light of students' progress.

- Pupil premium funds are used increasingly effectively in English for one-to-one support, group work and weekend classes, leading to a diminishing performance gap in the subject. However, the rate of improvement in mathematics is slower for middle-attaining students in particular. A similar picture applies to the effectiveness of the use of the Year 7 'catch up' funding.
- The academy tracks the progress, attendance and behaviour of students educated off-site for part of the week appropriately through regular contact with the providers.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Staff are well trained in both welfare and safety procedures. Leaders have a clear commitment to equality of opportunity and ensuring there is no discrimination, providing well for students' personal development in these areas during tutor period.
- The CWA Trust gives good support to the academy through the provision of staff expertise in financial management, assessment and monitoring.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors manage their meetings very effectively and records are well maintained. They review their own expertise carefully and undertake training as needed. They use their skills and experience well to hold academy managers to account.
 - Governors show a good awareness of the importance of performance data for analysing teaching effectiveness and students' progress and are well informed about this. They ensure that appointments to the upper pay scale are linked to effective teaching and represent value for money. They manage teachers' performance by receiving regular reports on teaching quality.
 - They have a good grasp of key development priorities and use reports from senior managers and first-hand evidence from their own regular school visits to monitor progress towards planned objectives.
 - Governors inform themselves well about expenditure of the pupil premium and catch-up funding, checking the impact carefully and challenging staff on areas for improvement.
 - They know and authorise changes planned for the curriculum and assessment and ensure these strongly promote key values, such as tolerance and understanding of others' beliefs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- In a significant minority of lessons some students, particularly boys, do not show the self-discipline or pride in their work needed to maintain their concentration and apply themselves to their tasks.
- Students behave well when moving between lessons and are generally respectful of each other and of all adults on the academy site. They say they appreciate the recent developments to the site that have led to improved safety at the entrance and better opportunities for them to develop their social skills in the new social and dining areas. They feel that the new arrangements for mixed-age tutor groups allow older students to give more effective informal support to younger students.
- Older students enjoy the new opportunities they have been given to take responsibility in the academy. Student representatives take an active part in ensuring safety of movement in the corridors and are contributing to the academy programme for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching. More-able students support their peers well in mathematics, and large numbers of Year 11 students take part in 'Saturday School' revision sessions.
- Sixth form students behave well in lessons, collaborating well on group tasks and taking an active part in discussions in lessons. They report that they enjoy the responsibilities of sixth form life.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement.
- Younger students report a small number of cases where the follow-up to matters of concern was not consistent or immediately effective. The academy's own figures show clearly that the number of reported incidents has decreased markedly over the past three years.
- Students give a positive account of how well the academy has developed their awareness of personal safety, with appropriate coverage of topics on internet safety and anti-bullying, for example.
- Students generally report that they feel safe in the academy, and this is supported by the responses from the Parent View questionnaire, the views of staff, and the inspection team's findings.
- The academy has effective procedures to promote good attendance and punctuality. As a result, attendance is improving rapidly from below average and is now close to the national average. Also the proportion of students missing over 30 school days per year has decreased similarly. The academy has introduced a detailed system for the monitoring of punctuality and this has reduced lateness to lessons by nearly a quarter.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because a significant minority of staff do not have the required skills to ensure that students concentrate on their work and make good progress.
- Teaching is improving over time because the academy has made good progress in eliminating most inadequate teaching. Support has not always been closely targeted to individual staff needs, so that a small minority of teachers still are not clear how to apply the academy's expectations for good teaching.
- Teachers do not always explain clearly enough the principles that students will need to apply when they carry out the tasks they are given, so that some waste time in lessons waiting for further help and this slows their progress. In some cases they start tasks with some confidence, but settle for low quality outcomes because either the task is not demanding enough or they do not know what the expected level of achievement looks like.
- The detail given in the marking of students' written work varies too much, so that many students are not in the habit of expecting work to be marked and do not take the time to respond when the teacher does give them follow-up guidance on what they need to do improve their work. Similarly, many younger students say they do not expect to carry out regular homework and have it marked, so that standards of presentation of work were seen to decline during the year in a number of classes.
- Some staff do not apply the academy behaviour policy effectively, with the result that low level disruptive behaviour is not challenged in their lessons, students' concentration is too low and they do not all listen carefully to instructions and explanations.
- Sixth form teaching requires improvement because not all staff take in and review students' work in enough detail to ensure that they are making progress in line with their previous levels of attainment.
- Questioning is used well to develop students' deeper understanding in a number of lessons, particularly in English, arts and humanities lessons. In some lessons, however, weaker pupils are not given enough opportunity to consider their answers and do not become fully involved in class discussions.
- Teaching assistants are used well to encourage student motivation and participation in discussion tasks in a wide range of subjects. They also use their skills well in small group work in literacy and numeracy.
- Subject teachers do not give enough overall attention to developing students' skills in numeracy and writing in particular, so that they do not always produce written work of the quality they are capable of.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- The proportion of students achieving five or more A* - C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, was below average in 2014, as a result of significant underachievement by a number of middle and lower ability students.
- The academy is now making better provision to promote the progress of all students, and has reliable evidence that the progress of all abilities, including the more-able, is set to improve to close to the national averages. However, achievement requires improvement because middle and lower ability students are not always making good progress in lessons.
- Progress in English has been weaker for higher attaining students. The work of current students shows better progress for this group and English is an increasingly strong subject in the academy.
- In mathematics, rates of progress for all abilities have been below average. While the work of more-able students currently is better, the progress of middle and lower ability students requires further improvement because they are not being given enough opportunities to practice and consolidate their learning in class or through homework.
- Early entry for GCSE is used for a small number of students in mathematics, but they all continue their studies in the subject afterwards, so that this policy does not limit their overall achievement.
- Progress in science is not consistently good. While more-able students have achieved well in the separate sciences, middle ability students do not always show enough motivation to make appropriate progress in their courses and the quality of their written work requires improvement. In particular, opportunities to develop practical skills such as recording and graphing are too limited.
- The most-able students have made below average progress in the past, but work seen in lessons and the academy tracking information show that current most-able students' rates of progress are improved and near the expected level.
- Sixth form students' progress varies considerably between subjects and courses. While results in the one year AS courses are often good, the progress of those who continue into the second year A2 courses is often not sustained and requires improvement. The small number of students following vocational courses make good progress.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress in their literacy skills, because support for them is provided well, both in class through knowledgeable teaching assistants, and through additional support sessions at other times. In mathematics their progress is limited because both class teaching and the narrower range of support opportunities provided are not developing their confidence sufficiently in their work on number.
- The academy's use of pupil premium funding is not fully effective. At GCSE, the gap in performance for students eligible for the premium was over one grade lower than their peers in both English and mathematics in 2014. In particular, middle-ability students made slower progress compared to those nationally. The academy's figures show the gap for 2015 for these students is narrowing, with English results expected to be about one third of a grade lower than other students' results. In mathematics the gap is expected to be at least half a grade and the overall implementation of mathematics support needs further consideration.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used well to support small-group teaching and classes before school, so that achievement in communication skills is improving, particularly in reading, where well-targeted support for weaker readers ensures that they have the skills needed to respond to the written tasks they are set. Although the academy has started to work on developing students' writing and numeracy skills, there are not yet enough opportunities to ensure they make progress in a range of subjects and the provision requires improvement.

- Last year many of the students educated off-site made low progress and showed poor achievement. The academy now tracks the achievement of such students more carefully, with attendance, behaviour and progress updates showing performance in line with their targets.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- Provision in the sixth form requires improvement because students' achievement is not consistently good across the range of subjects and courses offered. In particular the good progress seen in the first year AS courses is not sustained into the second year A2 courses, where progress is below average.
- Teachers in stronger subjects show good subject knowledge when working with individual students, challenging them well through the questions they ask. In weaker subjects, students are not always set demanding enough work and have limited access to exemplar material to show them what standards were expected in examination answers. Also, some staff do not take in and review students' work in enough detail to ensure that they are making progress in line with their previous levels of attainment.
- Students collaborate well on group tasks and take an active part in discussions in lessons, showing positive attitudes to their learning and good behaviour overall.
- Leadership in the sixth form requires improvement because it is not yet promoting consistently high standards. The monitoring of students' progress needs further development so that students falling behind in their work are identified more quickly. The curriculum offers an appropriate choice of vocational and academic subjects. Recruitment and induction are supported well and retention rates are increasingly high.
- Students report that they enjoy the opportunities for personal development offered in the sixth form and feel well prepared for the next stages in their education.

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	139204
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	449877

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

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	1376
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Bradley
Principal	Jon Ford
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2012
Telephone number	01366 389100
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