

King James I Academy Bishop Auckland

South Church Road, Bishop Auckland, County Durham, DL14 7JZ

Inspection dates 14–15 April 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Standards fell in 2014. The proportion of students attaining five or more good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, was below average. Given students’ slightly below average starting points, this represented no better than expected achievement.
- By the end of Year 11, a minority of students do not make enough progress in mathematics.
- Not enough students make more than expected progress in English.
- The quality of teaching is variable in some subjects.
- A minority of teachers still do not have high enough expectations of students, and do not sufficiently challenge them, especially the most able.
- A minority of teachers do not check students’ understanding carefully enough in lessons, before moving on with the planned activities.
- A small minority of students do not show enough commitment and determination to give of their best. They do not always respond fully to teachers’ marking and feedback, to improve their work.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has managed well significant changes in staffing, including to senior and middle leadership, since the previous inspection.
- High quality professional development is rapidly improving teaching and raising achievement strongly in Years 7 to11.
- Governors are increasingly well informed about the school’s performance. They confidently challenge the headteacher and senior leaders about the school’s work and students’ achievement.
- The effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Teaching is good, and most students achieve well.
- The school’s work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say how well they are cared for, and how little bullying takes place.
- Behaviour around the school is calm and orderly. Students say how much they enjoy the increasingly stimulating lessons. The vast majority of students show positive attitudes towards their work, and a desire to succeed.
- The many visits and extra-curricular experiences, across Years 7 to11, and in the sixth form effectively promotes both students’ personal development and their understanding of British values.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 36 different lessons, of which two were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors visited one assembly during the school day.
- Students' work was sampled informally in lessons in a wide range of subjects. In addition, work from Years 9 and 11 was sampled separately.
- Inspectors also reviewed a range of documents, including the school's own data on current students' progress, planning and monitoring documentation, minutes of governing body meetings, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents pertaining to safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with students across Years 8 to 13, governors and school staff, including those with management responsibilities. A discussion also took place with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents and students responding to the school's own questionnaires, but there were too few responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to consider. Inspectors also took account of the views of 40 members of the school's staff through the inspection questionnaires they returned.

Inspection team

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Andrew Swallow, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Christine Kennedy | Additional Inspector |
| Julie McGrane | Additional Inspector |
| Paul Copping | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are of White British heritage. A very small minority speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported through the pupil premium funding is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding to support those students known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is well above the national average.
- In 2014, the school met the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- All students are educated on the school's site.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in staffing, including senior and middle leaders.
- The school receives support from the local authority and from local authority schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to good in order to increase students' progress, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of what all students can achieve, especially the most able students
 - ensuring lessons are sufficiently inspiring to ensure all students always give of their best and respond to teachers' comments about how to improve their work
 - ensuring that all teachers check systematically students' understanding in lessons before moving on to other planned activities.
- Increase the proportions of students making expected progress in mathematics, and more than expected progress in both English and mathematics, by the end of Year 11, by:
 - ensuring that the most able students are always sufficiently stretched to reach the higher levels
 - providing more challenging problem-solving work in mathematics, and developing further the confidence of students to tackle unfamiliar mathematical questions and to fully explain the reasoning that lies behind their answers
 - sharpening students' writing skills in English, especially their use of a wider range of specialist language and punctuation, and their sequencing of ideas into more complex sentences and extended paragraphs.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has high expectations of all students. He has responded robustly to the fall in Year 11 standards in 2014.
- The headteacher has managed well significant changes in staffing, since the previous inspection, including large-scale changes to senior and middle leadership. Staffing is now stable, and new leaders fully embedded in their roles.
- As a result, senior and middle leaders form cohesive teams that work well together. They share the headteacher's commitment and determination to improve teaching further, and increase students' achievement.
- Senior leaders have refined procedures for gathering information about students' progress. They ensure that these are used effectively by teachers to check regularly students' rates of progress, and to identify any potential underachievement early. As a result, students' rates of progress in Years 7-11 are increasing strongly and standards are rising.
- Bespoke training has heightened the confidence of middle leaders in assessing the quality of teaching and its impact on students' learning and progress. Middle leaders are increasingly at the centre of sharing best practice and identifying and improving aspects of teaching that still require attention.
- Carefully tailored professional development provided by colleagues within school, from local schools, and the local education authority, has improved the quality of teaching, although some still requires further improvement.
- Rigorous appraisal procedures ensure that the precise training needs of all teachers are met. The headteacher has effective systems in place to make decisions about teachers' movement up the salary scale, on the basis of reliable information about the impact of their teaching on students' learning, over time.
- The school has an accurate picture of its strengths and areas for development. Leaders and managers, at all levels, produce clearly focused plans to improve further the school's work. For example, they have identified the work still to be done to accelerate further progress in mathematics and English, and ensure more consistently good and better teaching.
- Leadership of the sixth form is particularly effective. As a result, teaching is consistently good, and students achieve well.
- Teachers know their students well. Leaders and managers, at all levels, are committed to driving standards up in order to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to achieve success. They know that more work is required to challenge some of the most able students to attain the highest standards of which they are capable.
- At the same time, leaders and managers have notably closed gaps in the performance between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students. This is evidence of increasingly effective use of pupil premium funding.
- The curriculum is increasingly well planned to meet students' needs. Changes to the range of academic and vocational subjects on offer, additional small group work and one-to-one support, ensure most students are confident in their communication and mathematical skills, by the time they leave school.
- Careers education and advice are influential in ensuring that a high proportion of students continue in education, employment or training at the end of Year 11, and when they leave the sixth form.
- Well-planned assemblies, personal, social, health and citizenship education lessons, and timely visits by the police, fire fighters and paramedics, prepare students well for life in modern Britain. They promote the importance of freedom for all individuals and the significance of mutual respect, particularly for those from different faiths and cultures.
- Students have access to a wide array of sporting, musical and performance events and extra-curricular activities. Overseas links with Brazil, the 'Jamaica difference' project, visits to Italy, Spain, Ireland and France, work with the community drama group 'BATH,' as well as access to the new 'King Gym', and stargazing, library and photography competitions, help to promote students' understanding of the importance of equality of opportunity. In providing this range of experiences, the school emphasises the importance of good relations, and ensures any discrimination that may arise is tackled decisively.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are very effective. School leaders are adept in identifying early any students at risk of harm, and engaging with the local authority's safeguarding board, and other agencies, to respond appropriately.

- Work to help families support their children’s learning and development at home is good. Parents are generally supportive of the school. The majority believe that their children are happy and would recommend the school to others.
- The school has received effective support from the local authority to improve mathematics teaching and provide training for governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors carry out their responsibilities with increasing confidence and effectiveness.
 - The training that governors receive helps them to understand the detailed information about students’ progress, the quality of teaching, and the impact of arrangements to keep students safe.
 - Information from school leaders, as well as governors’ reports following their regular visits to lessons, and discussions with subject staff, are all used, with increasing effectiveness, to hold leaders to account for the school’s performance.
 - Governors have detailed discussions about major spending decisions, in particular the allocation of pupil premium and Year 7 ‘catch-up’ funding. For example, they have authorised additional staffing and resources to support students’ literacy and numeracy skills development in small groups, and have appointed attendance officers to ensure regular attendance at school. Governors are increasingly aware of the impact that these measures have on students’ achievement.
 - Governors are rigorous in annually reviewing the performance of the headteacher. They ensure that they receive information about the performance targets set for teachers, and review potential links with salary progression. They ensure that teachers only receive financial reward if their students reach their progress and attainment targets.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Most students enjoy positive relationships with one another and with the many adults who encourage their work and personal development.
- At breaks and lunchtimes, in the dining room and when moving between lessons, students conduct themselves in a sensible manner. They are particularly mindful of the potential risks posed by the extensive on-site building work, and manage these risks well.
- Academy council members and peer mentors take seriously their responsibilities. They help to maintain a calm and supportive atmosphere.
- The school’s information indicates that bullying and racist incidents have fallen over time, and are now infrequent. Students say that any misdemeanours are addressed swiftly by staff. As a result the school’s environment is clean, litter and graffiti free, and accommodation and specialist equipment well respected.
- Since the previous inspection levels of persistent absence have fallen. The vast majority of students now attend regularly.
- In a minority of lessons, and particularly where teaching does not stimulate and challenge sufficiently all students, the school’s records show that a small minority do not persevere fully with their work or respond fully to teachers’ written feedback in their books, or stretch themselves as fully as they could.

Safety

- The school’s work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Students are aware about how to keep themselves and others safe. They are confident in the use of the internet and conscious of potential risks posed by emails from unknown sources, through conversations using social media, and by surfing of extreme websites.
- Students say that they are well looked after. They emphasise that the school’s climate is one of openness in which their views are encouraged and listened to carefully by all staff and their peers.
- Adults are well trained in child protection and safeguarding matters. On-site trained medical and physiotherapist practitioners, learning support assistants and counsellors, ensure that no child is overlooked. The needs of students with particularly challenging physical difficulties are well met, so that they feel safe.
- Students relate generally well to one other, taking steps to ensure that peers are included in friendship groups, and in planned activities.

- Governors visit the school frequently to carry out thorough checks of safety and act upon their findings. They ensure that all necessary precautions are fully taken during the on-site extensive building programme.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- As a result of large-scale staffing changes since the previous inspection, and the impact this has had on some students' learning, not enough students achieve as well as they might.
- A minority of teaching does not provide all groups of students with work that gets the best out of them.
- On occasions, teaching in some lessons does not motivate or challenge students, particularly the most able, to think sufficiently about what they are learning and whether they can do even better. Students are sometimes moved on too quickly without having had sufficient time to make sense of what they have learnt.
- While many teachers provide regular and detailed comments on students' work, not all have high enough expectations of students' responses to their comments. As a result, a minority of students do not always challenge themselves enough to improve their initial work.
- There are still inconsistencies in some in English and mathematics teaching.
- In English, not all teachers yet insist on the use and accurate spelling of specialist vocabulary, or model sufficiently complex sentences that are well punctuated and communicate ideas in a fluent manner.
- In mathematics, not all teachers yet provide enough opportunities for students to apply mathematical skills in different contexts, to show understanding, or ask sufficiently probing questions that challenge all students to explain fully the reasoning that lies behind their answers.
- Senior and middle leaders are decisively, and successfully, tackling these shortfalls in teaching. Targeted support from local authority personnel, and from teachers in local schools, is improving teaching strongly. As a result, students' rates of progress are rising rapidly.
- Many teachers, in many subjects, enthuse students to want to do well and plan enjoyable experiences. For example, Year 7 students studying geography were keen to establish what an eco-system was, and to locate and offer examples of terrestrial and aquatic biomes. Similarly, Year 9 physical education students concentrated well to improve basic throwing and catching skills in rounders, and showed an eagerness to deploy these newly enhanced skills in a game situation.
- The teaching of writing, reading and mathematical skills across many subjects is improving strongly.
- In many lessons, teachers share strategies, and provide opportunities, that encourage students to read fluently, locate key information accurately, and develop inference skills to 'read between the lines'.
- In many subjects, teachers provide good opportunities for students to talk through their ideas, and share different viewpoints, to inform their subsequent writing. Opportunities are occasionally missed by some teachers to promote a greater use of specialist language, and support students to expand their ideas, and provide greater detail.
- In many lessons, teachers encourage students to measure accurately, apply formulae, work out calculations, and interpret information confidently from a range of charts and graphs.
- Teaching is consistently good in the sixth form. This is because teaching in this area of the school's work has remained relatively stable over time, and teachers have strong subject and examination knowledge.
- Learning support assistants are effective, in and out of lessons. They understand the requirements of individual students well and, as a consequence, many low attaining disadvantaged students, and those with physical disabilities, or special educational needs, achieve well.
- Relationships between students and adults in all years and subjects are positive and promote students' social and personal development well.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In 2014, the proportion of students attaining five or more good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, fell to below the national average. This represented expected progress, given their below average starting points in Year 7.
- Achievement in mathematics, while recovering strongly, still requires improvement. The proportions of students making expected, and more than expected progress, are below national expectations by the end of Year 11. A minority of students lack confidence in tackling unfamiliar mathematical questions, and in

providing coherent explanations to justify their mathematical working out. The most able students, in particular, have too few opportunities to develop their problem-solving skills, and apply their mathematical knowledge in real-life scenarios.

- Achievement also requires some improvement in English. While the proportion of students making expected progress is now in line with national expectations, not enough are making more than expected progress by the end of Year 11. A minority of students do not write extensively, with a wide enough range of vocabulary and phrases. They have not yet mastered the effective use of paragraphs to sequence their ideas, with a variety of punctuation for effect. Similarly, not enough of the most able students challenge themselves enough to write in sufficient detail.
- Year 11 attainment in many other subjects, as seen in students' books, in lessons visited, and in the school's information, is at least average. Attainment in some subjects is above average, for example in science, information and communication technology, drama, expressive arts, and most vocational subjects. Given, just below average starting points in Year 7, this represents overall good progress and achievement.
- The headteacher, governors and school leaders, at all levels, have responded robustly to the recent fall in achievement in English and mathematics. Actions have resulted in changes in staffing, including senior and middle leaders, and a successful drive to improve the overall quality of teaching. As a consequence, rates of students' progress in both subjects are now rising strongly across Years 7-10. Inspection evidence shows that standards are average in many lessons, representing good progress and achievement given these students below average starting points.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve well throughout the school. Their needs are met and they are supported well in lessons, and in small groups, by adults who understand precisely their specific skills that require further development.
- The small minority of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, including the very few who speak English as an additional language, also make good progress. Their specific needs are well catered for by specialist practitioners who support effectively their developing use of the English language, and ensure that work is tailored well to meet their precise needs.
- School leaders have carried out a thorough review of the deployment and impact of pupil premium funded activities. As a result of additional staffing, new resources, and changes in groupings of students, the progress made by disadvantaged students has increased significantly during the present academic year and is now good. Gaps from their starting points in Year 7, in English and mathematics, with their non-disadvantaged peers nationally, are closing. In school, they have closed completely in some years. This is in marked contrast to the 2014 end of Year 11 outcomes.
- In 2014, the overall progress made by disadvantaged students in English was well below that made by non-disadvantaged students nationally. The school's information, and current work in Year 11 students' books, indicates that the progress made by disadvantaged students in English in summer 2015 are likely to increase to within 15% of that seen nationally by non-disadvantaged students, and within 10% of their non-disadvantaged peers in school.
- In 2014, the overall progress made by disadvantaged students in mathematics was well below that made by non-disadvantaged students nationally, and in school. The school's information, and current work in Year 11 students' books, indicates that the progress made by disadvantaged students in mathematics in summer 2015 is likely to rise, and close in-school and national gaps by up to 10%.
- Gaps in attainment of the disadvantaged students are also closing. In 2014, at the end of Year 11, disadvantaged students' attainment in English was almost a GCSE grade behind non-disadvantaged students nationally, and half a GCSE grade behind their peers in school. In mathematics, gaps were well above a full GCSE grade in both instances. Inspection information indicates that gaps in 2015 with non-disadvantaged students nationally are likely to reduce to less than half a GCSE grade in English, and less than a full GCSE grade in mathematics. In-school attainment gaps are likely to widen in both subjects in 2015, due to the steep rise in attainment of all students.
- The school makes judicious and successful decisions about the very small minority of students entered early for GCSE examinations. As a result, their attainment is not limited in any way.
- Good support is made available for students at risk of falling behind. For example, Year 7 'catch-up' funding is used to provide specialist resources and teaching. The school's information on the impact of these measures shows good gains to date, especially in reading, spelling and basic numeracy skills, for a large majority of students.

The sixth form provision**is good**

- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Given their broadly average starting points in Year 12, the vast majority of students make good progress in most of their academic subjects and attain above average in end of Year 13 A-level standards.
- Sixth-form students pursuing vocational and applied subjects achieve well, attaining generally above nationally expected outcomes by the time they leave the sixth form.
- The recent dip in rates of progress across Year 12 has been successfully addressed through a more bespoke match of courses to students' aptitudes. The school's latest information, as well as work seen in lessons, indicates that most students are making good progress, and attaining well.
- As a consequence, overall sixth-form outcomes meet the national 16 to 19 interim minimum standards.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers know their students well, and use information about their progress to plan motivating and challenging experiences that ensure they give of their best. For example, in a Year 13 English lesson, students were keen to think deeply about the themes and form of a Victorian sonnet by the poet Elizabeth Barret Browning. Similarly, Year 12 drama students immersed themselves fully in devising a performance based on life in an institution, motivated by a recent visit to Brazil to explore different religious sects.
- Students are positive about the quality of the careers information and guidance they receive. As a result, increasing numbers enter the sixth form, a high proportion of students continue with courses from Year 12 into Year 13, and the vast majority are successful in their applications for higher education courses, further training and employment opportunities.
- The curriculum offers an appropriate range of academic, applied and vocational courses and is regularly reviewed. International links with America, Jamaica, Ireland and Spain, enable many students to travel abroad as part of their studies.
- Programmes for students entering Year 12 without good GCSE qualifications in English and/or mathematics, are well devised. The school's information shows that high proportions of students leave the sixth form with at least a GCSE 'C' grade in these subjects.
- Students show positive attitudes to learning, take private study time seriously, behave well and are good role models for younger students. They take seriously their roles as senior school leaders and support the school's activities in a number of ways, for example, planning fundraising events, supporting subject teachers in lessons, mentoring younger students and managing sixth-form facilities and communal areas.
- Through regular tutorials, assemblies, bespoke visitors and visits, students' personal and employability skills are well developed by the time they leave school.
- The sixth form is well led and managed by an enthusiastic and highly committed senior leader. Tracking systems enable teachers to check regularly on students' progress, provide additional support for any who fall behind, and reduce any variability in teaching that occurs.

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 | 136770 |
| Local authority | Durham |
| Inspection number | 461697 |

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

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| Type of school | Academy |
| School category | Academy converter |
| 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 | 753 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 170 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | E Varley |
| Headteacher | N Grieveson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 16 May 2012 |
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