

Staindrop School An Academy

Cleatlam Lane, Darlington, County Durham, DL2 3JU

Inspection dates 16–17 June 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The achievement of students in 2014, over a wide range of subjects, was much weaker than had been the case in previous years when it was very strong.
- Senior leaders, including governors, did not anticipate this, and so were not able to take steps to minimise the drop in standards.
- Students in Key Stage 3 are not given sufficient opportunities to become confident with basic skills in English, mathematics and science. They do not have a strong enough foundation to make more rapid progress at Key Stage 4.
- Too few teachers prepare lessons that enthuse students and help them think deeply about what they are learning. These teachers underestimate what their students can achieve with good teaching.
- Although teachers now measure progress more systematically, too few use information and the marking of students' work to analyse how effective their teaching is, what their students do not know or cannot do. This weakens lesson planning.
- The skills of some teachers, for example using questioning strategies, are not strong enough. Consequently they are not able to identify when progress slows in lessons and adapt their teaching quickly to re-engage students.
- Some leaders do not evaluate the impact of teachers' work with sufficient objectivity. This results in inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and leadership.
- Inspectors identified an aspect of safety management that was weak. However, rapid and decisive action was taken by the leaders of the academy to minimise the risk to students.
- A significant proportion of students give up too easily when work becomes hard or they are not interested in the topic. This slows their progress and limits their ability to learn independently.
- In recent years, attendance had been below average. It has improved this year and attendance is now average.

The school has the following strengths

- The recent appointment of two senior leaders is having a positive impact on improving teaching and the rigour with which leaders and teachers are held to account. Teaching and students' progress have improved over the last year and are set to improve further.
- Governors and other leaders have sought out good support from other schools and professionals. Their guidance is helping the academy improve more quickly.
- Students' behaviour around the academy is highly creditable. Students say there is little or no bullying and they feel safe.
- Generally, students are very well looked after and cared for. They are given high quality support when joining this academy, and high quality guidance when about to move on to the next stages in their education.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school’s own data on current students’ progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, documents pertaining to safeguarding and external reports on the school’s overall effectiveness.
- Students’ current and earlier work was evaluated. Inspectors also undertook joint observations and reviewed, with senior and middle leaders, students’ work.
- Inspectors spoke with a wide range of students. They also spoke to the National Leader of Education who is supporting the school. Inspectors spoke to school staff, including governors, those with management responsibilities and teachers new to teaching.
- Twenty five members of staff completed an inspection questionnaire and their views were taken into account.
- Fifty-four responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) were evaluated.

Inspection team

Neil MacKenzie, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Janice Gorlach	Additional Inspector
Sir John Townsley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized secondary school, where a greater proportion of boys than girls attends than seen nationally.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students, and therefore eligible for support through the pupil premium funding, is similar to the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding to support those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportions of students whose heritage is not White British and students whose first language is believed not to be English are very small.
- In 2014, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations of students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The academy is being supported by a National Leader of Education who is the principal at Hermitage Academy.
- A new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2013 and a new assistant headteacher, in charge of teaching and learning, was appointed in September 2014.
- In 2014 students were entered early for GCSE examinations in science, mathematics and in English.
- Currently a very small number of students attend alternative, part-time education at Bishop Auckland College and The Gap in Durham.
- Staindrop School, An Academy, converted to become an academy in August 2011. When its predecessor school, Staindrop School A Business and Enterprise College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress made by all students, particularly in English, mathematics and science, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - make full use of the information they have about their students' prior learning and understanding to plan learning activities that will help students progress more rapidly
 - provide learning activities that capture students' imagination
 - raise their expectations of what their students can achieve and make sure they are given work that is more appropriately challenging, so students are required to think more deeply, evaluate and explain in more detail
 - improve their skills in questioning students, enabling them to gain a better understanding of students' learning and encourage more enthusiasm for learning
 - set high quality homework more frequently, in line with the best practice seen in the academy.
- Improve students' attitudes to their learning, by:
 - ensuring students are better equipped to persevere with work when it becomes difficult, and more able to concentrate over sustained periods of time
 - continuing to improve attendance.
- Improve the impact of leadership at all levels, including governance, by:
 - improving the rigour with which all teachers, leaders and in particular, middle leaders, are held to account for the progress of students
 - evaluating the effectiveness of all aspects of the academy's work and use these evaluations to identify further improvements
 - ensuring that evaluations focus on the quality of the work of teachers and leaders, rather than simply on the completion of tasks
 - reviewing the English and mathematics curriculum so that students are more able to develop stronger basic skills over both keys stages, to enable them to perform well in examinations

- ensuring that the best teaching practices, including assessment and feedback to students, are applied consistently by all teachers
- ensuring that all aspects of safety are reviewed regularly and prompt action taken when deficiencies are found.

An external review of governance 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

- Academy leaders, managers and governors did not identify weaknesses in teaching which led to a decline in achievement across all year groups, resulting in weaker GCSE results in 2014 than had previously been the norm.
- Academy leaders had identified slowing progress in English, mainly caused by many changes to teaching staff. Achievement for Year 11 students in that year was not as strong as it had been previously, but action taken by academy leaders ensured that it was not weaker.
- Recently, two key appointments have been made to the academy's senior leadership team which have significantly strengthened the academy's work on improving teaching and learning. Together with the headteacher, the new senior leaders are raising expectations of how well teachers should perform and enabling teachers to improve.
- The academy now evaluates frequently the progress students make and with increasing accuracy. This is enabling all leaders and teachers to evaluate the work of the academy.
- The quality of training for teachers is also improving. Areas for development are being identified more precisely and suitable training provided, including using the academy's own strong practitioners.
- The academy has actively sought support from successful leaders in other academies, consultants and the local authority. This external support is of high quality and is making a significant contribution to the improvements in teaching, learning and leadership. The local authority has brokered much of this support, most significantly the services of a national leader in education, who has given excellent support to the senior leaders of the academy in identifying pockets of weakness and raising the expectations of what can be achieved. The local authority has also provided support to help teachers assess standards more accurately.
- Many aspects of the academy's work are being evaluated with more rigour, and these are showing improvement. However, there are aspects that have not had such scrutiny and are not improving as quickly. The leadership of and provision for disabled students and those who have special educational needs require improvement because students' needs are not identified with sufficient precision. However, advice given to teachers on how to support students with specific needs has improved since December 2014.
- Similarly, the use of the Year 7 catch-up fund is not being monitored well enough and the students in receipt of this additional funding could make even more progress. The effective use of tutor time is inconsistent. Where there are weaknesses, middle leaders do not evaluate the quality of their work accurately. Weaker leaders simply measure success by the completion of tasks, rather than evaluating the quality of what has been done.
- The leadership of subjects is also variable in quality. Many subject leaders accept their responsibility to improve the quality of teaching within their departments and for the outcomes of students; however, a few are reluctant to hold teachers in their departments to account for weak practice.
- Leaders of the academy have used the additional funds received to support disadvantaged students well, enabling them to access many additional activities from which they might previously have been excluded. This has improved their personal development and raised their achievement.
- While the subjects that students follow offer a curriculum that is broad and balanced, the curriculum within some departments does not provide a coherent and systematic building of skills and understanding. In both English and mathematics, too little time is spent ensuring that students have a very secure understanding of the basics. This prevents them from understanding better more complex concepts later in their courses and undermines their confidence.
- The academy provides a very broad range of enriching activities. These make a considerable contribution to the students' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They include an excellent range of sporting and other physical activities, charity and community events, cultural and artistic experiences. Students in this academy are well prepared for their future lives in modern Britain.
- Students are well cared for and consistently given good information, advice and guidance which helps them stay safe and prepares them well for their next steps in their education. However, improvement can be made here too. Although students' basic skills are adequate, better teaching would improve their literacy and numeracy skills. The attitude of some students to working hard and improving themselves is not good enough, resulting in poor preparation for their futures. Students deserve credit for their courtesy, support and respect for others.

- No groups of students underachieve compared to others in the academy or nationally. There is a strong culture of respect and tolerance throughout the academy which is modelled by students. The academy promotes equality of opportunity, fosters good relations and tackles discrimination.
- Despite the academy's generally good work to ensure that students are safe, leadership of safety is significantly weaker in the design and technology department.
- The progress, behaviour and safety of the very few students who are educated at alternative provision are monitored effectively.
- The academy has been effective in making improvements to student attendance over the past year because staff have improved the monitoring of absence and helped students understand more clearly why they need to improve their attendance. Attendance is now average.
- A significant proportion of parents who responded to the Ofsted inspection questionnaire said they felt that the academy was not well managed. Staff who responded to a similar inspection questionnaire did not have those concerns.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors recognise that the effectiveness of the academy has recently weakened. It has also taken decisive steps to improve it. They clearly understand that the quality of teaching needs to improve and can identify the departments that need to improve quickly. They have the capacity to evaluate academy data with some accuracy.
 - Together with the headteacher, they have now engaged good quality support for the academy.
 - The rigour with which governors hold staff, including the headteacher, to account is improving because they are beginning to make better use of performance management systems, including rewarding successful teaching, and restricting pay progression for those leaders and teachers who do not perform well enough.
 - The governors have a broad range of skills. They have ensured that the academy functions within its budget.
 - The governors are keen to improve the impact of their work, and welcomed a review by the local authority to identify aspects for improvement. They are now keen to seek guidance on how to achieve these recommendations.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Around the academy there is a stark contrast between the excellent behaviour seen at social times with student's attitudes to their learning.
- Students integrate very well across year groups, older students looking out for younger ones. Students say there is very little bullying and it is easy to believe that in this calm and supportive environment. Corridors are narrow, there are separate buildings, staircases, many doors and corners. Yet the movement of students is orderly and safe. Levels of supervision at break times are low and proportionate.
- Students are generally confident and at ease when talking to adults.
- There is, however, a significant proportion of students who choose not to persevere when work becomes challenging, when they are asked to concentrate for long periods of time or when they do not find topics interesting. They do not misbehave; they simply work slowly or seek support from the teacher before really trying. This restricts their progress and that of their peers because the teacher is distracted, giving unnecessary support.
- Some students do not treat all adults in charge of lessons equally well. These students take advantage of cover teachers, talking when they should be working. By contrast, in other lessons the same students will work hard and learn well.
- The leadership and management of behaviour, particularly supporting those students who need help to behave is improving, resulting in a reduction in the use of temporary exclusions.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement.
- The academy's procedures to protect those who are vulnerable are highly effective. New staff are

appropriately vetted to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. The academy uses a range of modern technologies effectively to ensure that the site is secure.

- Teachers know how to respond to concerns they have about students' well-being and students are entirely confident they would get high quality support from academy staff if they ever needed it.
- Parents strongly support the statements that their child is safe at the academy and they are well looked after.
- In all but one department safe practices are shown to students effectively by teachers and routines firmly established.
- A weakness in the chain of accountability within the academy had led to one design and technology workshop becoming unsafe for students to carry out practical work. Poor "housekeeping" led to a cluttered environment; with already narrow walkways become further obstructed. This weak culture also led to safety provision on some machines being difficult to access with ease. Risk assessments for this room have not been completed on schedule. Inspectors informed the headteacher who took immediate and effective action to ensure the safety of students. This included a termination of the use of machines until the academy is confident that safety requirements are fully met.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable within the academy, with some very strong practitioners and others that are weaker. This inconsistency results in variable achievement. Consequently the impact of teaching on learning and achievement including in literacy, reading and mathematics requires improvement.
- Recent improvement to the monitoring of students' progress has meant that teachers now review more frequently the progress their students are making. However, some teachers do not know with sufficient detail and confidence what their students know, understand and can do. This limits their ability to plan lessons that meet the needs of students in their classes. In some lessons work is not planned to build on previous learning. Some teachers have a better grasp than others of the sequence in which things must be taught. In addition, these teachers use questioning in the classroom to better understand how well their students are learning. They also learn a great deal from marking students' work. The best teachers use this information and secure knowledge of their course to plan lessons well. They confidently adapt activities if they detect progress is slowing.
- Teachers' abilities to enthuse students are also variable and when teachers fail to interest their students, some of them readily become disengaged from their work. The best teachers use questioning very well to both maintain enthusiasm and help students deepen their understanding.
- Where progress is not good, teachers' expectations of what their students can achieve are too low. They give students work that is uninspiring. The best teachers ensure that their students are required to perform at a high level, thinking deeply about topics, analysing, evaluating and explaining their ideas.
- The academy has done much to improve the benefit students get from the feedback they receive from their teachers. When done well, the advice teachers give helps students know how to improve their work. However, a significant proportion of teachers are still developing their skills in communicating to students precisely what they have to do to improve.
- Teachers and subject leaders in English and mathematics, particularly at Key Stage 3, have not given sufficient consideration to what should be taught, in what sequence and how best their students will learn. In mathematics, tasks can be very variable in challenge, with some being far too easy followed by ones that are too difficult. In English many books are poorly chosen. Students do not enjoy reading them and do not find them relevant to their lives and as a result their work on these texts lacks focus and understanding.
- Homework is set regularly, but this can be too infrequent or of insufficient quality to help students learn quickly.
- Basic errors in students' literacy and numeracy are not checked with sufficient rigour by teachers across all subjects.
- An unusually high proportion of parents say that their child is not taught well.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- The progress that Year 11 students made in 2012 and 2013 was outstanding. In 2014, however, progress was not as strong. There were several reasons for this, most notably, an unusually high number of staff changes, many mid year. Some teachers were teaching subjects in which they were not confident and were not well supported. Others did not adapt well to changes in the courses they were teaching. In general, the quality of teaching that had previously served well deteriorated across many subjects, including English, mathematics and science.
- By contrast, students performed very well in other subjects in 2014, particularly in design and technology, business studies, information and communication technology, media and vocational studies.
- Improvements to teaching are having a positive effect on progress students currently make, although progress is slower at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4.
- Currently in English and mathematics, the proportions of students that are making the progress that is expected of them have increased. Too few students, however, are exceeding their expectations for progress to be good.
- Achievement in modern foreign languages, particularly French, has been weak across Years 7 to 11. Recently, however, the quality of teaching has improved in French and the progress that younger students make is improving. Students in the current Year 11 however, have had a lot of catching up to do before their GCSE examinations. Academy data show that their results are likely to be disappointing.
- The most able students are not working at the standard of which they are capable, because too often teachers' expectations of them are not high enough. Students make better progress in Key Stage 4 than they do in Key Stage 3. Overall, students make better progress in mathematics than they do in English.
- In Key Stage 3, some low ability students do not make good enough progress in English and mathematics. This restricts their progress in other subjects.
- The progress that disabled students and those who have special educational needs make is similar to that of other students in the academy and, therefore, requires improvement. Their progress is not better because teachers have only recently begun to receive guidance on how to best meet the specific needs of these students.
- The gaps in attainment between disadvantaged students and others in the academy have narrowed over recent years and are currently only approximately half a grade behind, when once it was well over a grade. There is now no gap between the levels attained by the academy's disadvantaged students and other students nationally in English and mathematics.
- Currently there is no gap in the progress of the academy's disadvantaged students in English with other students in the academy or with other students nationally. There is still a progress gap in mathematics between the academy's disadvantaged students and their peers and with other students nationally. However, this gap is narrowing, when once it was wide.
- In past years the academy made extensive use of entering students early for examinations. This included almost all of the current Year 11 science students, when they were in Year 10. Consequently the academy's science results may not compare favourably with national results, as any 2015 science Year 11 resits will not be counted in the academy's examination analysis. The academy has not used science early entry for the current Year 10 students. This year, a small proportion of students took their mathematics examination early. This decision was a good one as it helped them secure a good pass and enabled them, with confidence, to resit and try to improve their result.
- A significant proportion of parents report that they do not think their child makes good progress.

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	137234
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	462675

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	551
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tracey Newby
Headteacher	Andrew Flint
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2011
Telephone number	01833 660285
Fax number	01833 660833
Email address	admin@staindropschool.com

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