

# Abbs Cross Academy and Arts College

Abbs Cross Lane, Hornchurch, RM12 4YB

**Inspection dates** 3–4 June 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
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 special measures.

- The school's work to keep students safe is inadequate. This is because statutory procedures and processes are not up-to-date and fully in place. Consequently, leadership and management are also inadequate.
- Safeguarding practices at the academy were the subject of recent assessments by external consultants. Some changes were made as a result. However, inspectors found remaining gaps and omissions that go beyond administrative errors.
- Governors have not given sufficient attention to checking that school leaders' actions are robust or completed. The school has declined since the last inspection.
- Since the previous inspection, students' progress overall has been stable. However, actions taken to accelerate students' progress have not led to them making better progress. Achievement requires improvement. Boys, the most able, disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs do not make consistently good progress.
- Teaching requires improvement. The academy's use of assessment information is underdeveloped. Work set in lessons does not always provide sufficient challenge for students. Additionally, teachers do not mark students' work thoroughly enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour is good and the vast majority of students are very involved in their learning. Students feel safe, and are able to turn to staff when they have problems.
- Very good support is provided for students requiring early help or who are at risk.
- Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength.
- Partnership work with parents is good. Most are supportive of the academy's work.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons, of which seven were joint observations with a senior or middle leader; short visits were also made to 12 lessons. The inspectors also looked at work in students' books.
- Meetings were held with the joint acting headteachers, senior and middle leaders who hold specific responsibilities and with the Chair of the Governing Body. Separate meetings were also held with the safer police school officer and three representatives from Havering local authority. These included the local authority designated officer (LADO), the school improvement adviser, and the quality assurance senior inspector. Meetings were also held with three groups of students.
- Inspectors took account of the 106 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View. The inspection team also took account of the responses to a parent questionnaire undertaken by the school this school year. A meeting was held with two parents. The inspection team took into account 62 questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspection team observed the academy's work and looked at a range of documentation. This included all policies, in particular those for safeguarding and child protection. They scrutinised evidence of systems for protecting and safeguarding students. Inspectors also considered the academy's self-evaluation and improvement plan; governors' minutes; records of students' attainment and progress, their behaviour and attendance; planning and monitoring, and training provided on teaching and safeguarding.
- This inspection was initially conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The monitoring inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements and aspects of the quality of leadership and management in the academy. The monitoring visit was subsequently converted into a full section 5 inspection.

## Inspection team

Carmen Rodney, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sai Patel

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lynton Karmock-Golds

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mel Rose

Her Majesty's 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 smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The academy serves students from a diverse range of cultural heritages. Most students are from a White British background.
- The proportion of students who are of a minority ethnic heritage is broadly average, as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of students with special education needs has fallen significantly.
- The proportion of students supported by funding through the pupil premium is below the national average. This is funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after.
- The academy currently makes use of alternative provision for a very small minority of students.
- Since the previous inspection, the academy has experienced changes in leadership. The long-serving headteacher retired and was replaced in January 2012. The current headteacher has been absent since September 2014 and will formally leave the school in August 2015. The two senior deputy headteachers were initially appointed as joint acting headteachers for one term. This arrangement was later extended to last until August 2015. At the time of the inspection, governors were in the process of recruiting a permanent headteacher.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

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

- Ensure that, as soon as possible and by no later than the start of the Autumn term 2015, all safeguarding policies and procedures meet statutory requirements. These include:
  - checking and completing all records accurately
  - updating all policies and procedures to reflect recent statutory guidance, including *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2015* and *Working Together to Safeguard Children*
  - checking that training and procedures are effective, with good support systems in place that will enable staff to speak out if there are concerns.
- Develop the skills of governors to hold leaders and staff to account for students' achievement and the overall effectiveness of the academy.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders at all levels by:
  - using assessment information rigorously to identify patterns and trends so that actions for improvement are carefully planned and evaluated to identify: the needs of boys, the most able, disadvantaged students, disabled students and those with special educational needs.
  - building the capacity of middle and senior leaders to sustain improvements.
- Improve teaching to consistently good or better, so that it impacts on students' progress, by ensuring that:
  - teachers provide work, including homework, that enables all students, including boys, the most able, disadvantaged students, disabled students and those with special educational needs to make good progress at all times
  - teachers give students clear guidance and evaluative comments on how to improve their work.
- Raise ambition and achievement across all subjects, particularly for the most-able students so that they consistently achieve the highest grades.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are inadequate

- The academy's effectiveness has declined since its previous inspection. The academy's self-evaluation is inaccurate and does not recognise this decline or where there are weaknesses.
- Because of identified concerns, a scrutiny of the academy's recruitment practices was commissioned in the Autumn Term 2014. On completion, some changes to the school's recruitment processes were introduced, including training for staff and governors. Nevertheless, governors and other senior leaders have still not acted decisively and swiftly enough to ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met. There is not a methodical approach to updating and organising records of staff checks. Policies on protecting students have not been fully revised or ratified and are, therefore, still not fit for purpose. This is despite clear advice given by Havering local authority.
- Inspectors were satisfied that, when serious concerns about safeguarding incidents are raised, these are now referred to the local authority designated officer for safeguarding in a timely manner. However, although every member of staff is now trained in child protection, they are not all familiar with recent updates and guidance.
- The joint acting headteachers stepped up at very short notice. Their increased workload, including continued teaching commitments, has restricted their capacity to make all the improvements necessary. Despite these difficulties, they have held the academy together and maintained staff morale. Inspection evidence confirms that staff had lost their trust and confidence in the previous management. This has now changed. Nevertheless, a recent staff survey indicates that a small minority of staff remain dissatisfied with the leadership and management of the school.
- Some systems for providing early help and protection for students at risk of harm are effective. The academy plays a leading role in the local authority by sharing some of its good practices on this early help with other schools. However, the academy's work to protect students is inconsistent. For example, its work on preventing extremism and radicalisation is underdeveloped.
- Senior and middle leaders regularly check the quality of teaching. Teachers have opportunities to share good practice and senior leaders use the Teachers' Standards to guide staff on how they can improve. However, observations do not take into account the progress students make over time.
- Approaches to assessing and tracking students' progress are weak. Leaders at all levels gather and accurately analyse overall assessment information on students' attainment. However, this analysis does not cover all groups of students and the focus has been on comparing attainment with national averages. There has been insufficient emphasis on students' progress over time. As a result, the variability in performance of groups such as the most able, boys, disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs is not tackled consistently well.
- The school ensures that discriminatory behaviour is not tolerated and much has been done to reinforce the Equality Act 2010. However, there is still more work to do to ensure that all students can achieve equally well.
- Middle leaders work cooperatively with the joint acting headteachers and understand the vision of 'progress for all'. They contribute to the academy's development through teaching, and performance management, but their analysis of students' performance is not sharply focused on rates of progress. They are at the early stages of developing departmental self-evaluation.
- The academy's work to support disabled students or those with special educational needs lacks rigour. Individual students are tracked, and appropriate literacy and mathematics strategies are used to target improvements in their progress. However, the academy does not collate and analyse assessment information to identify the impact of these interventions.
- The curriculum provides breadth and balance in both key stages. Students are offered a range of courses and the vast majority of them are offered their desired options. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong, with the emphasis on performing arts contributing to all aspects of students' development. For example, arts week, annual productions and theatre visits increase students' awareness of different art forms and promotes anti-discriminatory practices well.
- Although the academy only recently started to implement a formal strategy for the promotion of British values, students learn the importance of tolerance and much work has been done to challenge stereotypical behaviour such as topics on British identity and homophobia. Work with the Metropolitan Police is contributing to students knowing more about this institution.
- The setting of percentage targets for teachers to achieve as part of performance management is evolving. However, the criteria for awarding pay increases are rigorous and ensure that not all staff who apply succeed.

- Pupil premium funding is prioritised towards developing students' literacy and numeracy skills, with a strong emphasis on dedicated reading time in all subjects and across all year groups. However, a policy for managing the funding is not in place and strategies have not been evaluated to identify the impact of the work undertaken.
  - Partnership with parents is strong, and most are supportive and happy with the academy's work. Careers guidance is effective. Long-standing partnership work with local colleges provides students with opportunities to attend taster workshops on post-16 education. Additionally, the most able students take part in the aim higher project and participate in visits to the University of Cambridge. However, these programmes to help them reflect on their future learning have not led to higher GCSE grades.
  - Havering local authority has started to work with the academy to challenge its work on students' performance, but this work is quite recent.
  - It is recommended that the academy should not appoint newly qualified teachers without the prior approval of Her Majesty's Inspector.
- **The governance of the school:**
- The governing body is very clear about some of the strategic priorities for the academy; but it has not ensured that safeguarding requirements are given the highest priority. Consequently, the academy's work to keep students safe is not as secure as governors believe.
  - Governors have begun to challenge leaders about students' performance. They recognise that all groups do not make fast enough progress. Additionally, governors also acknowledge that more needs to be done if the academy is to improve further. They are beginning to raise questions about the quality teaching. They know that the reportedly good teaching does not correlate with students' progress which is in line with the national average.
  - While all governors are linked to a department, the vast majority of these links are not well-developed. Consequently, governors are not knowledgeable enough to challenge subject leaders rigorously about students' achievement.
  - They know about the appraisal system and that only the best practice is rewarded. Similarly, they also know how the pupil premium funding is used, but are unable to account for its effectiveness because this work has not been evaluated. No governor has oversight of this work. Budget management is, however, monitored very well.
  - The governing body has plans in place for its work to be reviewed by an external consultant. This is due to start in September 2015.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

are inadequate

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Students concentrate well in lessons and are positive about their learning. They work well when taught as a class, in groups or in pairs. Their positive attitudes impact on their learning as they work diligently.
- Students arrive to lessons well equipped and prepared to work. They are responsive to the academy's high expectations of behaviour and know that disruption to learning is not tolerated. The vast majority are therefore eager and ready to learn. Students take pride in their work and graffiti on books is rare.
- Students are responsive to instructions, and get on well with their teachers and each other. They are insistent that unacceptable behaviour is rare and this is reflected in the parental surveys. While a few staff say that behaviour is not handled well, the majority of responses from parents indicate that they are happy with behaviour at the academy.
- Throughout the college system, students readily accept opportunities provided for them to hold positions of responsibility as peer mentors, and to play leading roles as representatives for the academy.
- Students' above-average attendance supports parental views that their children are happy at the academy. Very good work with the local education welfare officer ensures that persistent absence is followed up.

### Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is inadequate because not all statutory requirements for safeguarding are met.
- In spite of these shortcomings, students say they feel safe at the academy. Together with their parents, they agree that the high visibility of staff contributes to them feeling secure. Students can turn to staff for

help and support if they face potential risk of harm.

- Students are taught about how to look after themselves through contributions from the Metropolitan Police officer on e-safety. The curriculum provides good coverage of work on the negative impact of gang culture and taking drugs.
- Students know about bullying and report that this is rare. They are emphatic that bullying incidents, if they occur, are dealt with very quickly. They know about different forms of bullying and are particularly knowledgeable about the impact of social media on personal safety. However, their knowledge about radicalisation and extremism is not strong.

### **The quality of teaching**

### **requires improvement**

- The academy has not maintained the high quality of teaching reported at the previous inspection. While some teaching is good, records do not reflect resultant good progress for all students.
- On entry to the academy, students are tested to identify their levels of literacy and numeracy. Teachers have specific information about students and use this to begin setting individual targets for them in each subject. The use of assessment information is at the early stage of development.
- Work is not always matched to the varying abilities of individuals or groups of students. The most able are not stretched sufficiently and consistently to make even faster progress. Similarly, homework set does not always challenge students to gain deeper insight into their learning. Homework is sometimes mundane.
- The quality of marking is not consistently good across subjects. The best features of marking were seen in English, where it is thorough. This is not replicated across all subjects. Students spoken to struggled to explain how marking helps them to improve their work. They often take part in peer marking, but this does not help them to identify technical mistakes in their work.
- Sometimes students undertake repetitive work which does not extend or deepen their understanding of the subject to enable them to move on to, and master, new concepts.
- Most teaching assistants provide good support and enable students with special educational needs to keep up with their peers in lessons. These students manage the work because the assistants help them to interpret instructions and apply the taught skills. This was seen in information technology when Year 8 students used publishing techniques to produce a newsletter. While this level of support is usually the case, on occasion, teaching assistants do too much for the students and do not allow them to work for themselves. Sometimes, support is not given when students appear to understand the work. At these times, teaching assistants do not probe students to make sure they can manage the work.
- In the best examples, teachers demonstrate the quality of work expected. On these occasions, they skilfully question students to check their understanding of the work. This helps students to assess their work against the set criteria. Much of this is achieved because planning is thorough and information technology was used very well to illustrate specific teaching points. Appropriately paced lessons, combined with high expectations of work and behaviour, contributed to students learning well. A climate for learning was also evident in most classrooms.
- Positive relationships between students and with staff are a contributory factor to them engaging in their work. Students are polite and keep to the rules of addressing all staff respectfully.
- The teaching of reading is a key factor to improving students' literacy skills. The practice of dedicated reading time is used across departments. Emphasis on using specialist vocabulary, developing oracy and attention to spelling, punctuation and grammar were also evident in the best teaching. However, these features are not consistent.

### **The achievement of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

- The academy still has more work to do to ensure the motto, 'progress for all', enables all groups of students to make better progress.
- Standards of attainment in 2014 were significantly better than the national average on a number of measures. This included, for example, students' performance of five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics.
- Students are no longer entered early for GCSE mathematics. In 2014, most of the 10 entrants gained a grade C. In spite of the academy entering virtually all students for the mathematics examination at the end of Year 11, only 10% achieved GCSE grades A\*/A . Since the previous inspection, this pattern has been persistent.
- Although standards were above average in 2014, students' performance masked their underperformance

in subjects such as science, textiles, information technology and English. Too few students achieved the highest grades in the majority of subjects taken. Religious education was the exception, where one third of the entire cohort obtained the higher GCSE grades, A\* and A.

- The rates of progress for different groups of students were better than in the last three years, but they were still not significantly better than the national average. Progress in English and mathematics was in line with the national average. However, progress in other subjects is variable. Whereas progress was good in languages, it was significantly below national expectations in science. Given the starting points of students, their achievement is not as high as it should be. In 2014, achievement was in the bottom 20% of similar schools.
- The academy believes that students' reported prior attainment at Key Stage 2 is over generous and re-tests students on entry as leaders consider this to be more reliable. Nevertheless, progress is still not as rapid as the academy would wish to see.
- The academy is attentive to developing students' understanding and accurate use of literacy skills, particularly in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Nevertheless, scrutiny of work indicates that these skills are not challenged regularly enough.
- The academy has previously focused more on attainment rather than on students' rates of progress. Leaders now recognise that this needs to change. Consequently, there is now more emphasis on training and professional development to develop teaching and learning. Predictions for 2015 show that a higher proportion of students are expected to achieve five A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics. The school's projections show significant rises in progress in English and mathematics. However, previous predictions were inaccurate. The targets set for current students are ambitious but they are not clearly linked to students' starting points or matched to those of similar students nationally.
- In 2014, disadvantaged students outperformed their peers in the academy and their progress was good. They made faster progress than their peers in English and mathematics. Whilst in English they achieved the same grades as their peers in the school, in mathematics they were approximately half a grade below. In comparison with similar students nationally, they made much better progress. However, 2015 GCSE predictions indicate that this trend will not be sustained.
- The most-able students did not make rapid enough progress in 2014, as expected, based on their starting points. Too many did not achieve the top most grades in their GCSE examinations. Overall, their rates of progress were below the average expected for their group nationally, and their average grade was GCSE grade B.
- Disabled students or those with special educational needs performed in line with expectations. Nevertheless, evidence indicates that assessment information is not used well to track their progress and ensure that support is sharply targeted.
- Minority ethnic students achieved above the average expected for their groups nationally, and overall, most achieved higher grades than their peers in the academy in science, languages, humanities and mathematics. Students from any other White background performed less well.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136663
<b>Local authority</b>	Havering
<b>Inspection number</b>	464723

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy Converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	836
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Gregory Bowl
<b>Joint acting headteachers</b>	John Holland and Nigel Franceschi
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15–16 November 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01708 440304
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