

Lightcliffe Academy

Stoney Lane, Lightcliffe, Halifax HX3 8TL

Inspection dates

1–2 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils do not make good enough progress in a number of subjects, especially science, history and geography. Although more pupils now make the progress expected of them, too few make good progress.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. Some teachers do not hold high enough expectations. They set work that is too easy, which fails to challenge the most-able pupils.
- The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs or disability has not been good enough. The progress made by disadvantaged pupils has been well below that of other pupils in the academy.
- The curriculum to support pupils' personal, social, health and economic awareness is developing, but does not yet prepare pupils effectively for life in modern Britain.
- Attendance is below the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils lags behind that of their peers. In addition, attendance in the sixth form is low and some learners are not sufficiently punctual to lessons.

The school has the following strengths

- Since their arrival, the executive principal and the Principal have overseen a period of rapid change and development of the academy. They are highly ambitious for the academy's future.
- Leadership at all levels is contributing effectively to improving teaching, behaviour and the progress pupils make.
- Effective partnerships within the multi academy trust are playing a significant part in the academy's improvement.
- The vast majority of pupils behave well and are polite and courteous to one another.
- Good training and professional development of teachers is helping them to develop their practice. Marking and feedback are contributing effectively to pupils' better progress.

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, in order to increase pupils' progress and attainment, by:
 - urgently addressing the weaker teaching that remains in science, history and geography
 - raising teachers' expectations, so that they consistently plan and deliver lessons that challenge pupils, especially the most able
 - continually reviewing and refining the quality of provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability and pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - improving attendance, particularly the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and of sixth-form learners
 - expanding provision for pupils' personal, social, health and economic education so that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain
 - raising pupils' aspirations so that they demonstrate consistently positive attitudes to learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Strong and incisive leadership has transformed the academy. In the past, leaders failed to tackle weak teaching and pupils consistently underachieved; attendance was low and was not improving. Under the current leadership team, the academy is now on a very positive trajectory. Pupils are making better progress across most subjects and attendance levels are rising. The vast majority of pupils behave well.
- The new leadership team, only in post since September 2015, quickly evaluated the academy's strengths and weaknesses. Through good planning and decisive action, leaders have targeted the right things. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving in most classrooms. Leaders know there is still much to do and are drawing upon the support of colleagues within the Abbey Multi Academy Trust effectively. They are ambitious for the academy's future.
- The clear vision of governors and senior leaders has raised expectations and developed a positive 'can do' culture across the staff. Leaders are now able to support and challenge teachers effectively and most are responding by improving their practice.
- The executive principal quickly established robust systems to manage the performance of teachers. Poor practice was tackled head-on, and many teachers left the academy. Leaders have now established good training and support programmes for teachers that are helping them to develop. Training programmes are based on a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, and are therefore tailored and bespoke. Leaders continue to manage the performance of teachers tightly and hold them to account for the progress of their classes.
- Leaders have established effective systems to track the progress of all pupils. They now know which pupils are making the progress they should and which are not. Systems to help pupils who have fallen behind are increasingly well targeted and effective. Leaders now link this information to teaching staff, which is helping them to further understand how effective each teacher is at promoting learning.
- Leadership responsibilities are widely distributed. Subject leaders and pastoral leaders feel increasingly empowered to take decisions for themselves and contribute effectively to the academy's improvement.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides appropriate pathways for pupils' different abilities and interests. In the past, however, pupils did not receive good information, advice or guidance, and too many ended up following unsuitable courses from which they were belatedly withdrawn. Leaders have now implemented a new programme of careers guidance and strengthened the guidance they provide to pupils at key transition points.
- The pupil premium grant and Year 7 catch-up funding are now spent appropriately. The impact of the work to support disadvantaged pupils and those who enter the academy with lower levels of attainment is now being monitored closely. The most recent assessment information indicates gaps in attainment between different groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, have begun to narrow. However, this is not yet consistent and leaders continue to review the quality of provision.
- The academy's work to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain is at an early stage. An enrichment programme has been implemented in Year 9 and will be expanded, next year, more widely across the curriculum. Work is underway to map out other opportunities to support this work within subjects, assemblies and tutor time.
- Leaders have worked hard to engage parents and to ensure that effective communications are in place. The Principal writes an informative fortnightly newsletter and the website provides parents with access to all the statutory documents they require. Responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, indicate an increasing level of satisfaction with the academy across this year. The number of complaints from parents, which was high in the past, has declined sharply since September.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Members of the advisory board have a detailed understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, they are able to ask probing questions of leaders; for example, meetings with the vice-principal probe deeply into assessment information to determine trends and patterns of achievement
 - Governors draw effectively upon the support available within the multi academy trust. This has helped to ensure that the academy finances have been managed well
 - They ensure that the performance of teachers is managed robustly and that weaker performance is not rewarded with pay progression

- They ensure that pupils are safe and that arrangements for their welfare and personal development are strengthened. Recently, for example, members of the advisory board have considered carefully arrangements for grouping pupils in tutorial time and approved the move to mixed-age tutor groups.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Thorough checks are made on all adults who work in the academy and all staff are fully trained in child protection. Staff know how to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism, and take prompt action to safeguard pupils when they have concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent and does not ensure that different groups of pupils make good progress across the curriculum. It is improving quickly, however, because leaders took decisive action to tackle inadequate teaching and are providing tailored and bespoke training for those teachers who need it.
- There is an increasing amount of effective teaching in English and mathematics. In both subjects, teachers have raised their expectations and plan work that is adapted to challenge pupils of different abilities. They increasingly provide pupils with helpful feedback on what they have done well and what needs to be improved. This is having a positive impact on the progress of many pupils.
- Teaching is less effective in science, history and geography. Turbulence in staffing and weaker subject leadership in the past has meant that teaching within these subjects is inconsistent and some is typified by low expectations. Senior leaders are well aware of this and have a series of strategies and a comprehensive training and support programme in place. For example, the Professional Learning Guide Provides all teachers with thorough advice and guidance which includes helpful hints and tips, and leaders offer staff the opportunity to benefit from high-quality practice by observing other colleagues.
- Where teaching is more effective, teachers hold high expectations and ensure that there is sufficient challenge and support as necessary. They ask effective questions that probe pupils' thinking and strengthen their understanding of the concepts being discussed. This helps teachers to adapt their teaching to help those who are ready to move on to do so. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning, want to know more and make at least expected progress.
- However, this is not yet the case across the academy and within all subjects. Too much variation exists. Where teaching is weaker, teachers set work that is too easy. This is more pronounced in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4. In addition, a tendency to adopt a 'one size fits all' approach, where pupils of different abilities are all set the same work, sometimes results in pupils becoming less interested and less focused. Consequently, the most-able pupils make less progress than they could.
- A clear and simple approach to setting targets is in place, which is well understood by pupils. As a result, pupils know how well they are doing. Reports on pupils' progress and behaviour that are provided for parents are now of better quality because the information they contain is reliable. The setting of homework is variable, however, and some pupils are not in the habit of recording homework properly in their planners.
- The academy has not yet implemented a consistent approach to assessment, following the removal of National Curriculum levels. However, leaders are working with colleagues across the multi academy trust to arrive at a common approach.
- Inspectors observed considerable variability in the work of teaching assistants. Some provide effective support because they are confident and proactive and find ways to challenge and support pupils effectively. Others are less confident to intervene because they do not receive information or guidance from teachers prior to the lesson.
- The impact of marking and feedback is an aspect of teaching that has improved consistently across the academy. Work is marked in line with the academy's policy. Teachers' comments often lead to improvements to work and a deepening of understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- The academy's promotion of pupils' personal development is a work in progress. The 'enrichment curriculum' introduced into Year 9 provides a well-planned and thorough programme designed to develop pupils' understanding of how to stay safe and raise their awareness of important topics in the news. However, provision is weaker in other year groups. Pupils do benefit from a number of days across the year when the normal timetable is suspended and particular themes are explored in detail. Leaders intend to expand the enrichment curriculum into Year 10 next year and create more opportunities for personal development in Years 7 and 8.
- In Key Stage 3, pupils mostly display positive attitudes and enthusiasm for the topics they are covering. They are keen to learn and in some lessons are brimming over with enthusiasm. In a Year 7 art lesson, for example, pupils excitedly printed snowy landscape images using printing blocks and coloured inks and were delighted with the outcomes they achieved.
- Some pupils in Key Stage 4, who have experienced considerable disruption over recent years, are less positive and display negative attitudes and lower aspirations. Where teaching is less challenging and thought provoking, some drift off-task and do not work hard enough. This is reflected in their books and in the slower progress they make.
- Pupils are generally polite, courteous and respectful of one another. They behave well at social times and respond positively to instructions from members of staff. Some younger pupils told inspectors they find movement around the narrow corridors and stairwells can be intimidating, although members of staff do everything they can to supervise movement around the site.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement because some pupils do not show consistently positive attitudes to learning and a few pupils occasionally disrupt the flow of learning in lessons. This occurs when teaching is uninspiring and fails to challenge pupils' thinking.
- Attendance levels are rising because of the proactive and determined approach taken by senior leaders. A wide range of strategies are in place targeted on those pupils who miss school regularly. Although improving, the overall rate of attendance remains below the national average and disadvantaged pupils continue to be more likely to be absent regularly.
- The academy makes daily checks on the safety and attendance of the few pupils who attend alternative provision.
- Pupils wear the academy uniform with pride and look smart. They respect the academy site and do not drop litter. Most look after their books and arrive for lessons with the right equipment. Most pupils are punctual to lessons, but occasionally pupils gather in corridors and need to be reminded to move along promptly.
- Parents who have completed Parent View since September are happy with the way the academy manages behaviour. All pupils whom inspectors spoke to said behaviour has improved markedly under the new leadership team.

Outcomes for pupils require improvement

- On average, pupils enter the academy with levels of attainment in line with those seen nationally. In the past they have not made the progress expected of them in English, mathematics, science and a number of other subjects. Consequently, levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 were well below the national average in 2015.
- The work in the books of pupils currently in the academy shows they have begun to make better progress. The improvements are evident across most subjects and in all year groups. The proportion of pupils in the current Year 11 who are on track to make expected progress in English and mathematics is now close to the national average. However, the proportion on track to make good progress remains lower than the national average, reflecting the weaker teaching they had in the past. Subject leaders know which pupils are behind and are providing well-targeted additional teaching to help them catch up.

- The progress pupils currently make in science, history and geography is not as strong as in other subjects. Support for these departments is in place and leaders know this is an urgent priority for improvement.
- Leaders have established good systems to track the progress and attainment of different groups of pupils and now analyse this information forensically. Consequently, they have good support in place for those pupils who have fallen behind.
- Disadvantaged pupils in the academy still make slower progress than their peers. However, they are making better progress than in the past because teachers are providing them with better support. The gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others in the academy is on track to narrow in 2016, although it still remains wider than leaders and governors would like.
- The most-able pupils did not make good enough progress in the past. Those who are currently in the academy have begun to make better progress, but this is inconsistent across key stages. In those departments, such as mathematics, where teachers adapt the work they provide to suit different levels of ability, the most-able pupils are challenged effectively.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make varied progress. Those currently in Year 11 have made poor progress over time. In other year groups, they make the same progress as pupils with similar starting points.
- Pupils who enter the academy with lower levels of attainment receive additional support for literacy and numeracy. The academy uses a number of initiatives, such as the GROW project, to promote reading and writing. Many of these initiatives are relatively new and leaders are keen to ensure that they are well embedded so that they benefit pupils as soon as they arrive at the academy next year.
- The academy promotes reading effectively. The English department provides focused reading time every week and this is supplemented by reading in form time. Every pupil is expected to have a book with them. In lessons, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to read a wide variety of texts.
- The quality of presentation in books has improved since the last inspection. Most pupils take care and pride in their work. However, some teachers do not tackle errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, and some pupils get away with untidy and unfinished work.
- At the end of Year 11, almost all pupils, including those who attended alternative provision, found places in further education, employment or training. However, because outcomes were relatively low, a number did not secure places that were appropriate or suitable for their abilities. Leaders are determined to improve outcomes for pupils currently in the academy and have significantly strengthened the programme of careers advice and guidance to prevent this being the case in the future.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- Outcomes in the sixth form in 2015 were weak overall compared with those seen nationally, and outcomes on several A-level courses were significantly below the national average. This was because learners did not make the progress they should, particularly in English language, mathematics and history.
- Progress rates are improving, however, and learners currently in the academy are on track to attain more highly in 2016.
- The leadership team in the sixth form has undertaken a thorough analysis and introduced a significant number of new initiatives to improve teaching and learning and raise achievement. There are new enrichment activities and good opportunities for learners to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding. Learner leadership programmes have been introduced and sixth formers now mentor and coach younger pupils. Learners are being consulted much more and, in response, leaders have improved the sixth-form centre and study areas. Learners in Year 13 told inspectors the problems of last year are being fixed. As a result of these improvements, the requirements of 16 to 19 study programmes are fully met.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form requires improvement because there is too much variability. Inspectors saw some highly effective teaching that pressed learners to think deeply. However, inspectors also saw teaching that failed to take advantage of the small group sizes and was not tailored to meet each learner's needs. Well-focused training and professional development for teachers is leading to improvements and learners consistently reported that the quality of teaching is improving.
- Work experience has now been scheduled for learners in Year 12 and will become an integral part of the

16 to 19 study programme for all learners from next September.

- In the past, few learners who entered the sixth form without a GCSE grade C or better in English and mathematics managed to improve their grades. A better programme of specialist teaching is now in place and more learners made progress this year when entered to resit examinations last November. The picture remains mixed, however, with more success in English than mathematics, and leaders know there is more to do.
- Arrangements for learners' personal development are good. New programmes provide ample opportunities for learners to develop personal and social skills so that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Careers advice and guidance have been strengthened and learners receive good support with university applications. However, leaders are yet to have a positive impact on the low level of attendance in the sixth form. On average, learners in the sixth form miss half a day of learning each week.

School details

Unique reference number	137036
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10009733

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.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1430
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	182
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Frances Baker
Principal	Carol Kitson (executive principal)
Telephone number	01422 201028
Website	www.lightcliffeacademy.co.uk
Email address	admin@lightcliffeacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 May 2014

Information about this school

- Lightcliffe Academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most pupils are White British. Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- A few pupils in Years 10 and 11 access alternative provision at Calderdale College.
- The academy meets the government's current floor targets, which are the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress at Key Stage 4.
- Since the school was last inspected, it has become part of the Abbey Multi Academy Trust and changed its name from Hipperholme and Lightcliffe High School. The executive principal took up post one year ago and the majority of other leaders in the academy, including the Principal, took up post in September 2015.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection started as the fifth monitoring inspection since the school had been placed in special measures in May 2014. At the end of the first day of the monitoring inspection, the lead inspector converted the inspection to a section 5 inspection and the inspection team gathered sufficient evidence to be able to make judgments on all areas of the common inspection framework.
- Inspectors observed 32 part-lessons, of which a number were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. During lesson observations, inspectors sampled pupils' books and talked to pupils in order to evaluate the quality of current work. Inspectors also attended tutorial time and undertook a number of shorter visits to lessons to gauge the climate for learning and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors scrutinised in detail a sample of pupils' English, mathematics and science books across Years 7 to 11.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during break and lunchtimes and during the transitions between lessons.
- Meetings were held with the executive principal and the Principal, other senior leaders, a group of middle leaders, a group of teachers, pupils and learners in the sixth form, the Chair of the Advisory Board and two other governors.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including academy policies, assessment information, records of checks on the quality of teaching, the academy's own self-evaluation and its plans for improvement. The minutes of advisory board meetings and a range of safeguarding information were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors took account of the 62 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and of the academy's own surveys of parents' opinions.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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