

Abraham Guest Academy

Greenhey, Orrell, Wigan WN5 0DQ

Inspection dates

8–9 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Progress in mathematics is not good enough. Too many pupils have not received high-quality teaching over time and this has led to underachievement.
- Gaps between the achievement of pupils who are disadvantaged, have special educational needs or disability, and their peers, are not narrowing quickly enough.
- Leaders do not know the impact of their use of some pupil premium funding as they have not evaluated this robustly enough.
- Middle- and higher-ability pupils are not always challenged enough in lessons; this limits their progress.
- Teachers' feedback is not consistently effective in improving pupils' progress and opportunities to reinforce good literacy are sometimes lost.
- Low-level disruption in lessons sometimes hampers learning.
- Pupils' interests are not well catered for in social times; this leads to some poor behaviour.
- The school's self-evaluation and performance management arrangements for teachers are not robust enough to ensure the school makes the most of improvements in progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The leadership of mathematics has been greatly strengthened.
- Members of the governing body provide strong and decisive leadership and effective challenge to school leaders.
- The leadership and management of teaching, learning and behaviour is highly effective.
- Pupils feel safe at school and high-quality care is provided particularly for those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.
- The curriculum has been adapted well for pupils who need extra help with behaviour, social and emotional skills. The new 'Engagement Centre' is supporting pupils' motivation and learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly raise standards in mathematics and close the gaps in achievement between pupils eligible for the pupil premium, or who have disability or special educational needs, and their peers.
- Eradicate any instances of low-level disruption in lessons and ensure that pupils have more purposeful social times.
- Continue to strengthen the day-to-day quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by:
 - ensuring that pupils always receive high-quality support and resources to help them read, write and spell accurately
 - ensuring that all pupils, particularly the more able, are challenged to learn more in lessons
 - ensuring that teachers' assessment and feedback is consistently effective in supporting pupils' progress.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - using performance management targets more rigorously to accelerate pupil progress, particularly at Key Stage 3
 - monitoring the progress of groups of pupils in lessons and the impact of interventions funded by the pupil premium more strategically.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not accelerated improvements at the necessary pace. This led to a decline in standards last year. They have responded robustly to last year's inadequate results and can now demonstrate much better-quality teaching, leading to improved progress.
- Performance management is in place but targets set for teachers are not challenging enough and do not have sufficient focus on Key Stage 3.
- There are gaps in the quality assurance of lesson observations. Not all observations are suitably evaluative and some do not give the teacher any points for improvement.
- Of the £400,000 the school receives for pupil premium, senior leaders were not able to articulate the impact of some interventions because they are not evaluated carefully enough.
- A minority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, feel that the school is not well led and managed.
- In contrast, the very large majority of the staff who responded to the survey feel that the school has improved since the last inspection and most of them feel the school is well led and managed.
- The leadership and management of teaching and behaviour is strong. The vast majority of pupils spoken to by inspectors say that behaviour is improving and that the Engagement Centre, the school's alternative provision, has had a positive impact on standards in the main school.
- Middle leaders are enthusiastic and passionate about their subjects. They monitor standards much more closely and use interventions very well to help pupils catch up.
- There are examples of money provided for the pupil premium being well spent. These include the purchase, for teaching in humanities, of revision packs for pupils which ensure they all have the basic equipment needed to prepare successfully for their examinations. Similarly, the Engagement Centre is providing a stable and effective learning environment and reducing the number of exclusions for pupils eligible for pupil premium.
- The curriculum has been well adapted at the Engagement Centre to improve the behaviour of those at risk of exclusion. However, there is not yet enough academic rigour to allow them to make good progress.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Minutes of governors' meetings show that governors systematically challenge senior leaders on all aspects of school performance. However, these records also show that the answers they receive from the most senior leaders can be misleading and may give the impression that some groups of pupils are making better progress than is the case.
 - Governors have a very good understanding of what the school needs to do to become a good school and are using their collective expertise well. They are unequivocal that standards achieved last year are unacceptable and they are holding leaders to account more rigorously.
 - The sponsor regularly monitors the progress the school makes and holds senior leaders and governors to account. The sponsor is acutely aware that pupils should be making much better progress and is reviewing the support it currently offers to see how best to meet the school's needs.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- Pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable because they are not challenged enough in lessons. On occasion, pupils sit back, arms folded, because they have finished; they could learn more.
- Teachers' feedback is sometimes too vague and does not tell pupils what they need to do to make better progress.
- Poor literacy is a key barrier to learning for many pupils yet the vast public library on the school site is kept locked, even on days when it is not open to the public. This is a waste of resources.
- The quality of teaching in modern foreign languages is also weak.
- Assessment at Key Stage 3 is variable. There are some good examples of high-quality assessment in

mathematics but in other subjects, including religious education, the assessment of work and the quality of behaviour is overgenerous, giving senior leaders a skewed picture of typical standards.

- Assessment at Key Stage 4 is much more accurate. Senior leaders are rightly more confident that their predictions will be achieved. A wealth of expertise has been bought in to good effect, to check assessments and teachers' judgements regarding the quality of teaching.
- There is a core of strong and dynamic teaching in school, leading to high engagement and good progress.
- Pupils say that they really enjoy practical subjects such as technology and catering, and they have good reason. Year 11 pupils were observed making rapid progress in catering. They spoke confidently about their previous work, how it had been assessed and what skills they still had to work on. This is because the teacher reinforced key technical terms such as 'julienne', 'aesthetically pleasing', 'colour and texture' so pupils are very aware of what they are aiming for and how their work would be marked.
- Where there is strong challenge to more-able pupils, they make rapid progress. This was exemplified in computing, where more-able pupils at Key Stage 4 are given the role of 'lead learners' and given A-level standard questions to get them thinking. Pupils responded well to the challenge and made good progress. The teacher used a range of strategies to successfully engage those who were reluctant at first to answer.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say that a lot of work has been done in relation to anti-bullying, the use of derogatory language and keeping yourself safe. Staff deliver work specifically relating to domestic violence and the prevention of radicalisation and extremism.
- Pupils know that they can report bullying in person or anonymously through the school website. They feel confident that if they reported it, teachers would help them.
- The Engagement Centre is well led and organised. Staff show great care for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable or who are at risk of exclusion. Some pupils have successfully reintegrated into school after a period of time at the centre and are now making good progress in their studies.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Low-level disruption in some lessons is preventing pupils from making better progress. Newly qualified teachers do not get enough support and pupils say that behaviour is often not good with temporary teachers.
- There are not enough purposeful activities on offer at social times, which leads to some pupils misbehaving. Pupils are allowed to use their mobile phones freely at social times; leaders have not realised that this is a potential safeguarding risk.
- Logs relating to the isolation centre show that there are still a number of instances of serious misbehaviour to indicate that behaviour over time is not consistently good.
- However, behaviour overall is improving. The new behaviour policy, the isolation unit and the Engagement Centre have collectively served to reduce fixed-term exclusions for all groups of pupils.
- Attendance is much improved overall and for all groups, except pupils eligible for pupil premium whose attendance still lags behind that of their peers. This has a negative impact upon their achievement.
- Many pupils were observed behaving very well and working hard; they are proud of their school and their achievements.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Senior leaders and governors are acutely aware that the 2015 GCSE results were inadequate. However, standards in mathematics are now rising securely and quickly due to strong leadership and improved teaching. Forecasts for this year show that progress in core subjects will be just below the national average, signifying adequate progress from pupils' below-average starting points.
- Pupils' progress in English for this year is predicted to be broadly in line with the national averages. Pupils

were observed making at least adequate progress in lessons and often progress was good.

- The achievement of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is too sporadic. In some lessons they progress really well because their needs are well met, but in others they do not because teachers have not planned appropriately.
- The gaps between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and their peers varies. The gaps are widest in mathematics. Gaps are beginning to close but they are not closing quickly enough. This is because the impact of pupil premium funding is not evaluated thoroughly enough.
- Those pupils who are educated off-site are not making good progress in their academic studies but some are making good progress in other aspects of their curriculum to help them build personal resilience and social skills.
- Progress in personal, social and health education is limited for some pupils because they do not attend the lessons; instead they go to additional classes for other subjects.
- Pupils were observed making good progress in technology and when they were asked about what they were most proud of at their school some of them spoke about making bird boxes and storage units in resistant materials.
- All pupils go on to further education, employment or training. However, due to poor achievement historically, many leave without essential qualifications such as English and mathematics.

School details

Unique reference number	137210
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10002188

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	806
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Conor Davis
Principal	Paul Bousfield
Telephone number	01942 511987
Website	www.abrahamquestacademy.com
Email address	enquiries@abrahamquestacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	11–12 December 2013

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average sized school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium is high. The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government to support pupils eligible for free school meals and looked after children.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is low.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is well above the national average.
- The school does not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- A very few pupils from Key Stage 3 and 4 attend the Engagement Centre, an off-site provision run and managed by the school and West Lancashire College as part of their Key Stage 4 study.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils in lessons and during social times. They scrutinised documentation pertaining to current achievement, self-evaluation, performance management and school improvement. They looked at minutes of governing body meetings, financial information, current attendance and behaviour information and documentation relating to safeguarding. They visited the off-site provision, the Engagement Centre, and spoke both formally and informally to over 100 pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with trustees, parents, members of the governing body, senior leaders and middle leaders. They took account of 71 responses to the staff questionnaire and 43 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Sally Kenyon, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Jacqueline Cahalin	Ofsted Inspector

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