

Arnold Hill Academy

Gedling Road, Arnold, Nottingham NG5 6NZ

Inspection dates

13–14 October 2015

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	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching is not good enough to ensure that all groups of students make the progress they could. Not all teachers have high enough expectations of their students and work lacks challenge.
- Teaching and assessment in Key Stage 3 are less effective than in the other key stages. As a result, the good achievement seen in the sixth form and the improved outcomes in Key Stage 4 are not matched in all subjects for younger students.
- Students' behaviour in lessons is not always good enough. As a result, in a few lessons, learning time is lost.
- While the quality of education at the academy has improved, senior leaders and governors have an over-optimistic view of the quality of education students receive. This has hindered the pace of improvement, for example in ensuring that all students receive consistently good teaching and behave well.
- Until very recently, the management of teachers' performance has not been rigorous enough.
- The gaps in achievement between disadvantaged middle-ability students in Key Stage 3 and their peers are too wide.

The school has the following strengths

- In a short period of time, the headteacher has galvanised staff and brought about significant improvements to the academy. Students' achievement, judged to be inadequate at the time of the last inspection, has improved. Students recognise and value these improvements.
- The gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged students and their peers in GCSE English and mathematics have closed rapidly, particularly in the last academic year.
- There are pockets of very strong teaching in the academy. More use is now being made of the most effective teaching to improve teaching overall.
- The sixth form is good. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good overall and some is outstanding. Virtually all Year 13 students progress to employment, higher education or training.
- The academy provides first-rate pastoral care for students facing challenging personal circumstances. Leaders ensure students are safe.

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the academy no longer requires significant improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in Key Stage 3, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers make effective use of assessment information to plan activities which fully meet the needs of all groups and all learners
 - raising teachers' and students' expectations with regard to the quantity and quality of work students produce in the lesson time available
 - equipping teachers with the skills necessary to stretch and challenge students of all abilities, especially lower- and middle-attaining students.
- Improve the achievement of middle-ability disadvantaged students in Key Stage 3 by ensuring that the support they receive through the pupil premium funding meets their needs.
- Improve students' behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons by ensuring that leaders at all levels support teachers in consistently implementing the academy's behaviour policy to eliminate disruptive behaviour, particularly in lower and middle sets.
- Build upon the recent significant improvements made to the leadership and governance of the academy by
 - ensuring that all aspects of the academy's self-evaluation and action planning are robust and effective, so that the improvements needed can be achieved quicklyand ensure that all teachers mark books in line with the academy's assessment policy.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement as senior leaders have been too slow to bring about improvements in teaching and learning. As a consequence, until 2015, student achievement at GCSE was poor. Poor-quality teaching was not tackled quickly enough to ensure all groups of students made the progress they could. As a consequence, although the achievement of current students is improving, it remains variable.
- The impact of the strategies the academy has introduced to support disadvantaged students is varied. Middle-ability students who are eligible for additional funds are not making as much progress as their peers. The academy spends its additional funding on providing extra staffing. The academy also provides focused support for disadvantaged students in English and mathematics. The academy has recently reviewed the strategies it uses to engage with disadvantaged students and has put changes into place. However, these changes are too recent to have made a difference.
- Senior leaders do not have a precise enough view of the academy's effectiveness. This has prevented them from recognising key weaknesses in teaching and having too positive a view about students' behaviour. Consequently, leaders are yet to ensure that all teachers deal with poor behaviour effectively.
- Nevertheless, recent changes to the leadership of the academy have secured important improvements. The new headteacher has been key in accelerating the pace of improvement. She is highly ambitious for the academy and has quickly made clear her vision for the academy to staff and students alike. She has been quick to identify the weaknesses of the academy and has taken appropriate action. She has introduced systems which are beginning to improve behaviour and the quality of teaching.
- As a result of recent improvements, subject leaders are better equipped to carry out their duties. Effective training is now ensuring greater consistency in the accuracy of judgements about the quality of teaching and in assessments of students' achievement. Subject leaders are aware of the need to ensure that all teachers assess students' work equally effectively.
- Until very recently, the management of teachers' performance was not rigorous enough. Although the academy has changed this process, it is too early to measure the impact on the quality of teaching.
- Training is now informed by better analysis of the common weaknesses in teaching. Senior leaders have established what they expect in all teaching. This has provided a focus for improving practice within the classroom and is re-enforced through staff training. Support is provided for those staff who do not teach to an acceptable standard. While these changes are resulting in better teaching, they have not had sufficient time to ensure that teaching is consistently good.
- The academy's well-designed curriculum ensures that students are prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. Senior leaders have reviewed the curriculum and have given more time to the teaching of English, mathematics and science. Students in Year 9 receive effective guidance when they make their GCSE choices and benefit from a wider range of subjects to choose from than before. This curriculum is enhanced by the provision of extra-curricular activities, including through the 'Bright Days' which allow students to develop their understanding of the world around them. Assemblies, trips and sporting activities enable the students to widen their experiences beyond their academic studies. The academy's student council promotes students' understanding of democracy.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors recognise the difference the new headteacher has made.
 - Governors challenge senior leaders to establish the causes of weaknesses in teaching and students' achievement. They have worked closely with the Trent Academies Group and external advisors to provide appropriate support to ensure that staff are trained and skilled to ensure the best outcomes for students. Governors recognise, however, that such improvement must also come from within the academy, and are keen that systems for improvement are home-grown.
 - Governors' view of the effectiveness of the academy is not accurate enough. Governors have set up links with different subject areas. This provides them with an alternative means by which they can evaluate for themselves how well the academy, its staff and students are performing.
 - Governors have worked hard and diligently to ensure that the academy's finances are in order and to maintain the academy's buildings. They have been prepared to make some difficult decisions in order to ensure financial stability.
 - Governors are fully aware of their statutory responsibilities where safeguarding is concerned. They are

aware of the action they must take where there are safeguarding concerns. They are all trained in safer recruitment.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All teachers receive annual safeguarding training which reflects changes to statutory requirements. They have received training on dealing with radicalisation and extremism.
- Senior leaders and staff responsible for keeping students safe form a close-knit and safe team. They make the most of support from external agencies and work well with parents to support students who may be vulnerable. Monitoring of students' safety and well-being is rigorous.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Although improving, there remains too much variability in the quality of teaching across the academy. As a consequence, not all students make good progress in their lessons.
- Expectations of the quantity and quality of work students are capable of achieving within the time in lessons are sometimes too low. Activities are not suitably challenging and students are not required to work hard enough. Teachers do not use assessment information effectively to design activities that stretch and challenge students. As a consequence, students fail to make rapid progress.
- Occasionally, learning is slowed by the poor behaviour of a very small minority of students. Not all teachers take effective action to ensure that all students behave well, particularly in lower and middle sets.
- Homework is not used consistently enough across the academy to develop students' knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Where learning is good, teachers use high-quality questioning to probe students' understanding. Teachers complete detailed planning to ensure that activities involve all students and provide appropriate challenge. Teachers make students aware of what they are learning in language that they understand, so enabling them to make rapid progress. Teachers set high expectations of their students. In one lesson, lower set Year 10 mathematics students were attempting higher tier examination-style questions. Although they found this activity challenging, they received close support from their teacher and were able to complete it successfully.
- The academy's work on developing students' reading, writing, speaking and numeracy skills is emerging. There has been a focus on developing the students' literacy skills. The fact that these developments are in an early stage does not act as a barrier to students making progress.
- Not all teachers use the academy's marking policy equally effectively. There is a variance in the format with which feedback is provided. Students are not always able to interpret correctly the feedback they have received. The failure of teachers to adopt the uniform approach to assessing work, then, leads to confusion.
- Teachers do not insist that students respond to and act upon the feedback they are given.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare require improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote students' personal development and welfare is good.
- Students spoken to say that they feel safe at the academy. Students are confident that there are teachers they can speak to should they have any concerns. There are no areas of the academy to which students feel they cannot go.
- The academy promotes students' understanding of how to live healthy lives and the world of work. Year 11, for example, receive career interviews from representatives of local business.
- The academy has an inclusive approach to different cultures, faiths, genders and sexual orientation. The academy has a Christian Union as well as a Muslim prayer room. Students are at ease talking about sexual orientation, including transgender. Homophobic and racist bullying are rare. As a consequence, students are being prepared well to live in a multicultural society.
- The academy checks the attendance daily and closely monitors the welfare of the small number of students educated elsewhere. As a consequence, students' attendance at training at places away from the academy is high and they behave and achieve well in their courses.

- Students know how to stay safe online.
- Students are aware of the different kinds of bullying. Those spoken to reported that, when bullying does occur, the academy deals with it rapidly. The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed with this point of view.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement.
- Although the academy has adopted a more rigorous behaviour policy, it is not being applied consistently by all staff. Some teachers fail to use appropriate strategies to manage the behaviour in their classroom, or to promote positive attitudes to learning. The reward system, for example, is not used effectively by all staff. As a consequence, not all students have positive attitudes to their learning.
- While the large majority of students behave well and respect their peers and their teachers, there are a few students whose behaviour is disrespectful. On occasions, they can disrupt the learning of others.
- The atmosphere around the academy site during social times is calm. Students interact well with each other and behave appropriately.
- Nearly all staff who responded to the staff questionnaire agreed that behaviour is managed well.
- Students' attendance is above average. This shows that students are aware of the importance of attending school and recognise the value of the education they receive. Year 11 students who were spoken to said that they understood they were being prepared by the academy for the professional world. They said they would recommend the academy to others.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes for students require improvement as the progress made by students varies as a result of the inconsistent quality of teaching across the academy. This is particularly the case for lower- and middle-ability students currently in Key Stage 3.
- Senior leaders have reviewed the academy's systems for checking on how students are achieving to ensure that the information is more accurate. This is allowing the academy to identify where students are falling behind more quickly and put into place the necessary support. However, this is a recent development and is not embedded across all years. Consequently, senior leaders do not have an accurate picture of the achievement of current students.
- Achievement in GCSE has improved in the last academic year. The proportions of students achieving five GCSEs at A* to C grades including English and mathematics in 2015 increased for the third year running and was above the national figure for 2014. The proportions of students making or exceeding the progress expected in English in 2015 improved significantly, higher than the national figures for 2014. The proportion of students exceeding the progress expected in mathematics in 2015 also improved significantly and was higher than the national figures for 2014.
- The achievement gaps at GCSE between the disadvantaged students and their non-disadvantaged peers in the academy and nationally have closed significantly in the last academic year. The proportions of disadvantaged students achieving the progress expected in GCSE English and mathematics significantly improved as a result of targeted support work. The gaps between disadvantaged students and their peers at Key Stage 3, however, are still too wide for middle-ability disadvantaged students.
- Students in the care of the local authority, disabled students and those who have special educational needs are supported well by the academy. As a consequence of this support, outcomes for these students are improving and are similar to other students.
- Regular and effective monitoring of the achievement of the small number of students who receive part of their education elsewhere ensures they make good progress on their courses.
- Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. A very large majority of Year 11 students either stay on into the academy's sixth form or attend college. Very few students do not continue to further education, training or employment.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- Teaching in the sixth form is good overall and some is outstanding. Where learning is most effective, teachers make excellent use of assessment criteria to plan lessons which stretch and challenge students of all abilities. Teachers skilfully break down challenging key questions, providing effective and well-designed building blocks to help develop students' knowledge, skills and understanding. Occasionally, students are not challenged enough to achieve as well as they could.
- Teaching and the marking of students' work are stronger in the sixth form than elsewhere in the academy. Students' good attitudes to learning and behaviour contribute to the good progress they make over time. Very good relationships between students and staff ensure that time in lessons is used productively.
- Sharper monitoring by the highly effective sixth form leader has increased the proportion of grades A* to B at AS level and significantly increased pass rates.
- Students' achievement at A level is generally strong, although in 2015 fewer students achieved the highest grades compared to the year before. A thorough review by the sixth form leader and faculty staff has identified that some subject departments over-estimated how well students were doing in the run-up to their examinations. Much sharper assessment systems are now in place and are helping to ensure that current sixth form students are making good progress. As a consequence, outcomes in the sixth form are good.
- The small proportion of disadvantaged students make good progress and progress to university, higher education or training.
- Significant improvements have also been seen in the proportion of students securing a grade C or above in GCSEs in English and mathematics in the sixth form. In particular, students achieving a grade C in GCSE English improved very significantly from a previously poor base.
- The quality of advice and guidance is good, with the result that retention rates from Year 12 to Year 13 have improved. This is because of strengthened recruitment processes and the greater rigour now applied to ensure that students begin on the right courses.
- Students benefit from strong support in making applications to higher education. They also benefit from growing provision to strengthen their understanding of other routes following sixth form. Hence, some students choose to pursue apprenticeships at the end of their courses.
- The majority of students, but not all, undertake work experience as part of their programmes of study. Sixth form leaders know that this is not yet planned strategically enough. The assessment of the impact of work experience placements on careers choices and destinations is not monitored to ensure that work experience has sufficient impact.
- Attendance is closely monitored by the sixth form leader.
- Sixth formers feel safe and know how to manage risk.
- Students benefit from a range of opportunities to develop wider skills and their personal development. However, participation in such activities is not tracked rigorously enough so that the academy can ensure that all students benefit equally.

School details

Unique reference number	137536
Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	10004598

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
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	1,624
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	352
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Pickin
Headteacher	Sharon Smith
Telephone number	0115 955 4804
Website	www.arnoldhillacademy.co.uk
Email address	schooloffice@arnoldacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 December 2013

Information about this school

- Arnold Hill Academy is much larger than most other secondary schools and has a very large sixth form.
- A large majority of students are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students who are disadvantaged and, therefore, supported by the pupil premium is below average. Pupil premium is additional government funding provided for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported by the academy through education health care plans is below average.
- A small number of students in Key Stage 4 study work-related courses at training places away from the academy. These include Stone Soup Academy in Nottingham, Premiere Training in Hyson Green, R.E.A.L Education in Ilkeston and CAST in Newstead Village.
- There have been many staff changes this year, with 23 new teachers joining the academy in September 2015. The headteacher took up post in March 2015.
- The academy has received support from the Trent Academies Group and has recently undergone a consultation process to formally join this academy group.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 38 lessons, including three joint lesson observations conducted with members of the senior leadership team. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors conducted learning walks with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also observed three assemblies.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and subject leaders. Inspectors met with senior leaders responsible for student achievement, teaching and learning, curriculum, behaviour and attendance, the sixth form, pupil premium and safeguarding. The lead inspector met with the executive headteacher and with six governors. An inspector also met with new members of staff.
- Inspectors spoke formally with groups of students from all year groups and talked to students in lessons and during break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors observed students' behaviour around the academy before and after the school day and during social times.
- The views of 136 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered, as were three additional letters and a telephone conversation with a parent.
- The views of 56 members of staff who responded to the questionnaire were taken into account.
- Inspectors looked at a variety of documentation, including information relating to students' achievement. Inspectors considered the academy's own evaluation of how well it is doing and its improvement plan. Inspectors checked the academy's records regarding behaviour, attendance and exclusions and policies designed to keep children safe. Inspectors looked at records of governors' meetings and systems used to manage staff performance and a range of other academy policy documents.

Inspection team

Simon Hollingsworth, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jayne Ashman	Her Majesty's Inspector
Daniel Burton	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mark Mitchley	Ofsted Inspector
Rona MacKenzie	Ofsted Inspector

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