

Thornaby Academy

Baysdale Road, Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees, County Durham TS17 9DB

Inspection dates

8–9 June 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Safeguarding is ineffective. Leaders do not ensure that pupils on alternative programmes are kept safe. Additionally, the school does not complete attendance registers properly for pupils on alternative programmes.
- Leadership, including governance, is inadequate because leaders have been too slow in their actions to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils. The school's performance has declined since the last inspection.
- Leaders have failed to ensure that the school effectively develops pupils' understanding of, and respect for, people of different sexual orientations.
- The performance of almost all pupils in 2014 and 2015 was inadequate.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable across the school. It remains inadequate in science.
- Many pupils struggle to apply themselves to their work properly and to concentrate well during lessons.
- The most able pupils continue to make poor progress as a result of teaching which lacks challenge.
- Pupils who have special educational needs, some of whom are on alternative placements, do not achieve well.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting principal has a sharp vision for improvement at the school which is shared by middle leaders who are increasingly effective.
- The quality of teaching in English, mathematics, humanities and the arts is now improving.
- Pupils' overall attendance is improving.
- On the whole, pupils are sensible in their behaviour around the school and in lessons.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve its work on safeguarding by ensuring that:
 - governors and senior leaders are appropriately trained so that they can check the monitoring of the school's safeguarding procedures effectively to be sure that all pupils are safe
 - all pupils on alternative placements are kept safe at all times and that procedures to register pupils' absence and attendance are maintained correctly.
- Ensure that all pupils, including the most able and those who have special educational needs, make at least good progress in all subjects and across all year groups by:
 - using accurate assessment information in a consistent manner to bring about well-targeted intervention and planning
 - developing pupils' ability to work hard on challenging concepts for significant periods of time
 - requiring pupils to think much more deeply about their learning by responding to carefully planned questioning.
- Improve the teaching of science so that the quality of provision is at least in line with the developing improvements in English and mathematics.
- Develop the quality of leadership and management by:
 - taking rapid action to address any remaining inadequate teaching or subject leadership
 - ensuring that the curriculum for all pupils is broad and balanced and that no pupil is denied equality of opportunity because specialist teachers and high-quality provision are unavailable
 - meeting the requirements to ensure that the school takes seriously its responsibility to promote understanding and respect for people of different sexual orientations.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

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

It is recommended that this school does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils in key stage 4 who have been placed on significantly reduced timetables are inadequate. Some pupils are provided with as little as 10 hours of curriculum time each week and leaders were not able to provide any evidence that they are kept safe during the extensive periods of time when they are not in the school.
- Inspectors found that registers were not completed accurately for pupils on modified timetables. Some were marked present when they were absent and registers were also completed a day in advance on a number of occasions. The failure to register correctly the attendance of these pupils represents a serious safeguarding risk.
- School leaders have not moved swiftly or effectively to bring about necessary improvements in the quality of teaching and the progress of all pupils. The quality of education that the school provides has declined since the last inspection.
- Leaders have developed an unrealistic view of the school's performance and improvement. Too much emphasis has been placed on factors outside the school's control and too little on the clear evidence in 2014, 2015 and in the school currently of significant underperformance. As a consequence, leaders have failed to set effective priorities for the improvement of school performance and have all too readily accepted outcomes for pupils which are extremely poor.
- Additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils is not yet used effectively by leaders. The analysis of the impact of that funding lacks rigour and, as a consequence, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are underperforming at a level which is consistent with the broad level of underperformance of all pupils at the school.
- The curriculum, though broad and balanced in its design, fails to ensure that all pupils, including those of higher ability, are fully challenged. The modified and much-reduced curriculum available to a small number of vulnerable pupils in key stage 4 is inadequate and fails to prepare them for the next stages of training and employment.
- The acting principal, in partnership with a new and developing senior and middle leadership team, is committed and increasingly effective. As a consequence, the quality of teaching in English, mathematics, humanities and the arts is improving and systems to monitor the progress of pupils are much more thorough.
- The school has worked hard to improve its work on the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Weaker readers are now supported well and there is intensive and effective support provided for pupils whose number skills are weak when they enter the school. Many pupils are involved in reading and this is promoted well through the school library. Inconsistency in supporting pupils' communication and number skills remains in some areas of the curriculum.
- Opportunities for pupils to prepare for life in modern Britain have been mapped across the curriculum. Pupils are enthusiastic about their exploration and engagement in a wide range of activities which develop their understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues; a recent visit to a Sikh temple was viewed very positively by the pupils involved. Pupils did, however, express a clear view that the school does not properly develop and explore the importance of accepting and embracing differences around sexual orientation.
- The on-site unit which caters for pupils with autism is increasingly effective and inclusive. Pupils from the unit are integrated well into mainstream lessons through careful planning.
- The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including study support for pupils outside lessons. All of the activities are valued by pupils as an important and improving part of the school's provision.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance is inadequate. The governing body has not been effective in monitoring safeguarding procedures, particularly for pupils on modified timetables.
 - Governors have failed to bring about effective challenge regarding the performance of the school since its last inspection. They have been too quick to accept school leaders' ineffective analysis and too quick to blame factors outside the school's control as legitimate reasons for underperformance.
 - Governors have not ensured that the pupil premium funding is used effectively and that it is solely used for the benefit of disadvantaged pupils.

- Governors have ensured that there is a link between pay and performance. They have not awarded salary increases where the performance of leaders and teachers has been weak.
- The sponsor of the academy and the three co-sponsors have been ineffective in bringing about any improvement in performance at the school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- The quality of teaching remains variable across the school and across subjects. There is also significant variation within some subject areas. As a consequence of this inconsistency, and of a legacy of weak teaching since the last inspection, many pupils are not equipped with the key skills required to succeed in their learning.
- Where teaching and its impact over time is much less effective, pupils make little progress and, in science, even regress in their learning. Science lessons are characterised by a lack of challenge, with pupils spending lengthy periods of time copying from books or colouring in posters. They show little enthusiasm for the subject and this was reflected in inspectors' meetings with pupils during which science was seen by almost all pupils as the weakest subject in the school.
- Even where teaching is strongest, greater challenge and pace is required. In too many lessons, higher-ability students are insufficiently challenged; on occasions, this results in loss of interest or motivation in learning.
- The quality of marking and feedback that pupils receive is varied and inconsistent. Where it is exceptionally strong, as is the case in English, pupils prosper as a consequence of the clarity of the guidance they receive. Where teaching is weaker, pupils are unclear about what they need to do to improve their work and, as a result, their progress is limited.
- The teaching of pupils on alternative programmes or modified timetables is inadequate. This is because they lack the equality of opportunity which would follow if they were taught by teachers with excellent subject knowledge across a range of subjects.
- Assessment systems are now more robust and are used to plan teaching and to intervene where underperformance occurs. These systems, however, are still at a point of early development and evidence seen by the inspection team showed that some assessment information is inaccurate. This is particularly the case in science at key stage 3.
- Pupils' reading, writing and numeracy skills are not yet developed consistently across the curriculum. Opportunities to develop pupils' accuracy in the application of number work, for example, are often missed.
- There is clear evidence of a recent improvement in teaching of English, mathematics, humanities and the arts. In a Year 10 English lesson, pupils were able to write and speak with confidence about the language used by writers and, in a Year 8 music lesson, pupils were inspired by the passion and subject expertise of the teacher.
- The school is beginning to develop effective sharing of best practice, but this remains in its early stages. Middle leaders are keen to work together on the development of teaching and show an emerging understanding of how to bring about the required improvements in teaching that will result in all pupils making better progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- The majority of pupils feel safe and well cared for. However, the poor safeguarding culture in the school means that not enough is being done to be sure that pupils on alternative programmes or modified timetables are safe.
- Too many pupils do not engage effectively with their learning. They struggle to concentrate in their lessons and do not apply themselves to their work in a manner which demonstrates that they are being prepared well for success in examinations.
- Pupils are confident that, when it does occur, bullying is dealt with effectively. They also recognise the good work undertaken by the school to ensure that they behave safely, including in their use of social media.

- Advice given to pupils regarding employment and further study beyond the school is in need of strengthening. For higher-ability pupils it fails to encourage aspirational goals.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Most pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school. Where teaching is uninspiring or poorly planned, pupils become frustrated and bored. This can result in low-level disturbances in lessons and around the school.
- Many pupils fail to concentrate well and do not apply themselves effectively to their work. All too often, they give up when work becomes challenging. This is because they have not routinely experienced lessons which have a fast pace and rigorous challenge.
- Attendance remains below the average expected nationally for secondary schools. Evidence seen by inspectors shows that attendance is improving within this academic year for all key groups.
- Rates of exclusion are higher than the national average for all key groups, although numbers have reduced during the course of this academic year. The number of pupils removed from lessons for poor behaviour was very high in 2014 but has reduced significantly.
- Although provision for pupils on alternative programmes of study and modified timetables is inadequate, their behaviour is good.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- In 2014 and 2015, pupils' achievement was inadequate. There were no groups who performed well and outcomes for pupils during that time reflected a deterioration in performance since the last inspection.
- The most able pupils underachieve. Evidence provided by the school shows that the most able pupils underperform at key stage 4 because of the very poor provision that they have received in their first three years at the school. For example, of the 24 pupils in the current Year 10 who entered the school with above-expected attainment in mathematics from key stage 2, all are currently working at a standard considerably below their potential as 11-year-olds.
- The school's own assessment information shows that, despite recent improvements in the quality of teaching in English, mathematics, humanities and the arts, pupils will continue to underperform in key subjects in 2016. In mathematics, only just over half of pupils are predicted to make expected progress.
- In 2014 and 2015, disadvantaged pupils underperformed, in line with other pupils at the school. Evidence seen by the inspection team shows that in some areas the gaps in performance between disadvantaged pupils and others within the school are narrowing. The position in comparison to the performance of other pupils nationally is much less convincing; although gaps in performance are narrowing, they are doing so at a rate which is too slow, particularly regarding pupils who make more than expected progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make inadequate progress overall. Some of these pupils in key stage 4 are working to modified timetables which fall well below their entitlement. The progress of pupils who have special educational needs is stronger in key stage 3 because of changes which have been recently introduced by the school and are improving provision.
- The outcomes for pupils on alternative programmes are inadequate. The school has altered its approach to this area and now plans to have no pupils in current key stage 3 directed to any alternative programmes. Older pupils, however, continue to underperform, as did pupils in alternative provision in 2014 and 2015.
- Pupils in the school's specialist provision for autism perform well overall, although it is too early in the provision's development to be confident of overall achievement.

School details

Unique reference number	136121
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10012016

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	392
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Simon Stobart
Acting Principal	Clare Mason
Telephone number	01642 763244
Website	www.thornabyacademy.org.uk
Email address	info@thornabyacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 March 2014

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average secondary school and its numbers have fallen since the last inspection.
- Most pupils are White British and there are lower than average proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is well above the national average.
- The academy is sponsored by Teesside University and co-sponsored by Stockton Sixth Form College, Stockton Riverside College and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.
- The school has a number of older pupils in alternative provision. These are centred at Middlesbrough College and Aspire@Bishopton. The school has also established its own alternative provision known as Compass.
- The school has an additionally resourced provision of 10 places for pupils from across the borough with autism.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across a wide range of lessons and subjects including a joint observation with the acting principal. Shorter visits to a range of lessons also took place in the form of learning walks.
- During visits to lessons, inspectors spoke with pupils and looked at their books to find out more about how well they were learning. Inspectors also gathered evidence about how well pupils were reading, writing and developing their mathematical skills.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. Formal meetings were held with six groups of pupils of different ages, abilities and backgrounds to find out more about their views of the school.
- Additional meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, governors and representatives of the sponsor and the co-sponsors.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school more broadly and looked at a range of documentation. This included policies and improvement plans relating to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, pupil achievement, curriculum, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View to produce any results.

Inspection team

Sir John Townsley, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mrs Fiona Dixon	Ofsted Inspector
Mr Stuart Cleary	Ofsted Inspector

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