

Copley Academy

Huddersfield Road, Stalybridge, Cheshire SK15 3RR

Inspection dates

17–18 May 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

Good

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected as an academy

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Results in 2015 showed significant underachievement in English, mathematics and science. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs are also failing to make good progress.
- Although the achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is beginning to narrow, this is not happening quickly enough.
- Not enough teaching is good or outstanding. Teachers do not challenge pupils to strive for excellence, resulting in few pupils making good progress.
- Teachers' use of the school's policy on marking and feedback is inconsistent. In some subjects marking is too infrequent to help pupils understand how to improve, or for teachers to assess their knowledge and understanding.
- A lack of urgency on the part of the leadership to tackle underperformance in both teaching and assessment has led to several years of pupil underachievement.
- The school's development plan does not address key weaknesses in teaching. This is because leaders and managers have overestimated the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' achievement.
- The work in pupils' books is often poorly presented and demonstrates weak literacy skills.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils behave very well in lessons and during breaktimes. They are polite and respectful to each other and to the adults in the school.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves healthy and safe in 'life studies' lessons, and have a good understanding of their role as active citizens.
- Attainment and progress is good in history, geography and religious education.
- More-able pupils make particularly good progress in English.
- Effective careers guidance supports pupils well in moving to the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Governors provide robust challenge and have assisted the brokering of external support for senior and middle leaders.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure more rapid improvement in the progress that pupils make, particularly in English, mathematics and science, by ensuring that:
 - pupils of all abilities are stretched and challenged in lessons
 - teachers' questioning enables pupils to think deeply and give extended answers
 - lessons are stimulating and enjoyable with increased opportunities for pupils to be creative and develop their thirst for learning
 - literacy is embedded across the curriculum
 - teachers follow the school's feedback and marking policy
 - the practice of the school's best teachers is shared across departments.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - increased vigour and urgency in tackling the issue of the underperformance of pupils, and of disadvantaged pupils in particular
 - judgments about the quality of teaching and the impact on pupil progress are more rigorous and challenging
 - development planning focuses on engaging and challenging pupils in the classroom in both key stages.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have accurately evaluated the school as requiring improvement overall. The recognition that pupils' achievement is too low and that improvements are too slow has led governors to seek support for the headteacher from the academy trust and a national leader of education. Similarly they have sought support for heads of departments from specialist leaders of education. However, it is too early to fully assess the impact of this support on pupils' progress and attainment.
- Senior leaders have not effectively tackled the legacy of underachievement in the school. Lack of urgency in tackling declining trends has delayed the progress pupils are able to make, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability.
- The school has implemented a range of strategies funded by the pupil premium (funding provided to narrow the gap between the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and their peers). Although the attainment gap is beginning to narrow, it remains too wide. Further to this, the school's analysis of the impact of these funded strategies does not make clear which are having the desired impact on outcomes.
- Year 7 catch-up funding to improve literacy skills is having a positive effect on pupils' reading levels although the 'accelerated reader' programme has not been fully evaluated for overall impact. Initiatives to improve literacy across the curriculum are yet to be embedded. Pockets of good practice exist, but this is not consistent across the school.
- Teaching is insufficiently strong to ensure that pupils make rapid and sustained progress. Strategies to improve outcomes have been hampered by leaders' and managers' overestimation of the quality of teaching and their overly generous predictions of pupils' progress and attainment. School and departmental development plans fail to address weakness in classroom teaching, in particular the lack of challenge, stimulation and creativity in lessons and its impact on pupils' progress.
- Leaders and managers have a poor track record in making accurate assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. To address this, middle leaders are receiving support from a teaching school and specialist leaders of education who are developing their leadership skills and checking the validity of their assessments. School information indicates that the majority of pupils in Year 11 are on track to make progress that is in line with expectations.
- The emphasis on improving results for the current Year 11 is delaying improvements across the school. Too little consideration is given to planning the key stage 3 curriculum to enable pupils to succeed at key stage 4.
- Staff demonstrate positive attitudes. The majority of staff who responded to the online survey were proud to be a member of the school and valued the training opportunities provided for them. However, there are few opportunities for them to share best practice across departments.
- Systems for managing the performance of staff have been enhanced to include a wider range of evidence beyond observing teaching. Middle leaders now consider the quality of pupils' work in books and their progress levels when making judgements about teachers' performance.
- The curriculum overall is broad and balanced and designed to provide alternative options for those who require them. Extra-curricular options are available in a variety of sports and performing arts. However, pupils' engagement in wider school activities are not systematically monitored to ensure entitlement for all, nor analysed to determine their impact on overall outcomes. Subject clubs are offered to support learning, but only for Year 11.
- The inclusion in the curriculum of life studies for all year groups has a very positive impact on pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves physically and emotionally safe and healthy. With further contributions from the humanities subjects in particular (history, geography and religious education), pupils also learn about equalities, the rule of law, human rights and democracy. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain and contributes to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- As a result of high-quality careers education, advice, information and guidance, the overall percentage of pupils moving on to further education, training or employment is in line with national figures and above national figures for disadvantaged pupils.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors, supported by the academy trust, are increasingly effective in holding leaders to account. They are skilled at scrutinising information provided by the school, ask pertinent and challenging questions, and have taken actions to support improvements.

- Governors understand how money is spent and what actions have been taken by leaders. However, they are not always aware of the impact these actions have had on the learning and development of pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Appropriate checks are made on staff, volunteers and visitors to the school. Training to keep pupils safe is up to date and includes preventing radicalisation, and tackling female genital mutilation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to achieve are too low and pupils do not achieve as well as they should, given their starting points.
- Although teachers use questioning well to encourage all to participate, too often questions are low-level and do not stretch and challenge pupils or deepen their knowledge and understanding. This lack of demanding work includes, for example, insufficient focus on the correct use of subject-specific terminology, and lack of precision in teaching pupils how to present their findings in scientific subjects.
- At its best, books are marked in line with school policy but this is not consistent across the school. Where the policy is followed, pupils have a good understanding of how to improve. Poorly presented work is common and often goes unchecked.
- Teachers value the training on offer to support improvements in their teaching. However, this is linked to the priorities of the school's development plan and is not bespoke to meet the needs of individual teachers.
- Most teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, organise activities well and utilise a range of resources to support learning. However, planning for learning is overly focused on the activities being undertaken rather than the levels of progress pupils are making as a result of those activities.
- Relationships in the classroom are very good. Pupils engage well with the tasks given to them and the '3B4ME' system encourages them to support each other's learning by asking three of their peers for help before asking the teacher. Pupils have confidence in their teachers and are not afraid to ask questions when they do not understand.
- There are particular strengths in the teaching of modern foreign languages and humanities and this is reflected in the good levels of pupils' progress in these subjects over time.
- Teachers are skilled in promoting diversity, challenging stereotypes and ensuring that a respectful ethos defines all aspects of the school's work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The school takes the issue of safeguarding in the curriculum very seriously. In the life studies programme pupils learn how to protect themselves from abusive relationships, inappropriate sexual behaviours and exploitation. They are well informed about substance use and abuse and have a good awareness of the mental health issues that can affect young people, including eating disorders. Displays in the corridors inform them of a range of support agencies they can turn to for further help and advice should they need it.
- Pupils have learned how to keep themselves safe online and when using social media. They understand the importance of security settings and the consequences of sexting and disclosing their personal details.
- Pupils did not participate in the online questionnaire. However, those who met with inspectors felt safe and considered bullying to be quite rare and effectively dealt with by the school. They expressed the view that racist, sexist, homophobic or transphobic language or behaviours would not be tolerated by the staff or pupils, but that some pupils suffered from name calling about their appearance or outside interests.
- Pupils are supported well in their next steps by strong careers education, advice, information and guidance that includes visiting speakers, one-to-one interviews and work experience for all in Year 10.
- Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported by a wide range of initiatives including international links, charity fundraising, volunteering, the work of the 'eco group', the cadet programme, cultural visits and visitors.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' encounters with staff and visitors show them to be unfailingly polite and helpful.
- Attendance is improving and in line with national figures, and the proportion of pupils who are temporarily excluded has fallen. Pupils who met with inspectors said that improvements in behaviour were due to the implementation of a new, more effective behaviour policy that was applied consistently and fairly.
- The personal development and behaviour of pupils placed at alternative provision is regularly monitored by the school. Records from the school and the provider indicate good levels of behaviour and welfare.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Over time, pupils at the school have achieved below the expected standards by the end of key stage 4. Results in 2015 indicate an improving picture from a very low base in 2014 but remain low compared to national figures. The progress that pupils make in English, mathematics and science is significantly below expectations and in mathematics has shown little sign of improvement.
- Historical information shows that disadvantaged pupils make similar levels of progress to similar pupils nationally, but achieve less well than their peers in the school and less well than non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. Although the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is narrowing, this is not happening fast enough, particularly in mathematics.
- Boys achieve less well than girls and middle-ability pupils make the least progress of all ability groups.
- The most-able pupils entering the school with high attainment at the end of key stage 2, make progress in line with expectations overall and above expectations in English.
- The attainment of the small proportion of pupils taking vocational courses such as cookery and personal finance is good overall.
- The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs or disability is similar to that of their peers in the school but lower than similar pupils nationally.
- Information provided by the school about the achievement of current pupils indicates substantial improvements in their attainment and progress. The school is expecting pupils will attain broadly average standards in 2016 and in some instances exceed national averages. However, observations of teaching and learning and the work seen in pupils' books does not match the school's predictions of significant improvements.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 139294 |
| Local authority | Tameside |
| Inspection number | 10002810 |

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.

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| 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 | 675 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Christine Aymes |
| Headteacher | Matt Jennings |
| Telephone number | 0161 3386684 |
| Website | www.copleyacademy.org.uk |
| Email address | mail@copleyacademy.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected as an academy |

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection the school has become an academy and changed its name from Copley High School to Copley Academy. It is part of the Great Academies Education Trust.
- The school is smaller than average and has more girls than boys.
- The school has a higher than average proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for additional financial support through the pupil premium is higher than average.
- Fewer pupils than average have a minority ethnic heritage or a first language that is not English.
- A total of 10 pupils in Years 10 and 11 undertake vocational courses at Tameside College.
- The school site is shared with the Copley Sports Centre.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Support is provided to the school by a national leader of education who is also the headteacher of Middleton Technology School.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the work of the school across a wide range of subjects and year groups. Some observations of teaching and learning were undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors met with pupils both formally and informally to listen to their views.
- Discussions were held with members of the governing body, a representative of the academy trust, teaching staff, and with senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation, including: the school's self-evaluation and development plan; information relating to pupils' attainment and progress; attendance, behaviour and safeguarding records; teacher performance information; and school policies.
- Inspectors took account of the school's own pupil, parent and staff survey information, the 16 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey and the 32 online questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Janet Palmer, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Charles Lowry | Ofsted Inspector |
| Alyson Middlemass | Ofsted Inspector |
| Jan Rowney | Ofsted Inspector |
| Timothy Long | Ofsted Inspector |

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