

Top Valley Academy

Top Valley Drive, Top Valley, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG5 9AZ

Inspection dates

15–16 November 2016

| Overall effectiveness | Inadequate |
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| 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

- Senior leaders have not acted with sufficient urgency to address issues since the last inspection. Outcomes have not improved rapidly enough in a range of subjects.
- Leaders have not paid enough attention to accelerating the progress of underachieving pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, boys and the most able.
- Expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough.
- Leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching have not been linked closely enough to outcomes. Their evaluations are too generous.
- The school's curriculum is too narrow. It limits pupils' learning experiences and opportunities, and does not prepare them well for life in modern Britain.
- Teaching is not consistently good enough. Teachers do not routinely engage pupils' interest or use assessment information to plan challenging activities to meet pupils' needs, especially the most able.
- Teachers do not routinely check on pupils' learning, or question them effectively about it, before they move on.
- Teachers do not use the school's behaviour policy consistently. There is too much low-level disruption in lessons. This is especially the case where the work expected of pupils is not demanding enough.
- Attendance has been below the national average for some time and shows little improvement. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is low and is not improving.

The school has the following strengths

- The Redhill Academy Trust has only very recently begun to support the school. The work of the trust is already starting to have an impact.
- Pupils make better progress in art, drama, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education (PE).
- Safeguarding is effective.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of 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?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders accurately evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and link it more closely to its impact on pupil outcomes
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve across all subjects, especially boys, disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and most-able pupils
 - pupil premium funding is used more effectively to diminish the differences in the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils and those of other pupils nationally
 - the support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively to ensure that they make good progress from their starting points
 - leaders at all levels are more sharply focused on diminishing the differences between groups of pupils and intervene quickly when pupils are falling behind
 - the curriculum offered by the school offers a wider range of subjects, courses and opportunities.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment information effectively to inform their planning so that it is tailored to meet individual pupils' needs and enables them to make at least expected progress, especially boys, disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and most-able pupils
 - teachers plan work which challenges all pupils especially boys, disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and most-able pupils
 - lessons offer learning activities which inspire and interest all pupils so that they remain focused on their learning
 - teachers make regular checks on pupils' learning to ensure that they fully understand before moving on.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently use the school's behaviour policy to reduce incidents of low-level disruption

- implementing effective strategies to reduce the number of pupils who are regularly absent from school, especially disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school had an external review of its use of pupil premium funding in the last academic year. The Redhill Academy Trust will undertake a pupil premium review this academic year to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

The school had an external review of governance in the last academic year. The Redhill Academy Trust will undertake a governance review this academic year to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders have not addressed the issues that were identified at the previous inspection. There has been a lack of urgency about the work that they have done to improve the school. Pupils overall and particular groups of pupils underachieve. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable and expectations of what pupils can do are too low.
- Leaders have an over-generous view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They do not always link the quality of teaching with pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders have not ensured that there has been a coordinated approach to improving outcomes for groups of pupils who are underachieving. This means that there has been little or no improvement in the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, most-able pupils and boys.
- Senior leaders' oversight of the support provided for disadvantaged pupils through the use of pupil premium funding has been ineffective. The support is not coordinated across the school and the impact of strategies to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils is not evaluated properly. The differences between the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those of others nationally remain too large.
- Leadership of the school's work with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has not been consistently strong. These pupils have not made good progress from their starting points for some time because they are not receiving appropriate support. Outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities continue to decline.
- Subject leaders do not regularly check on teaching, learning and assessment in their subjects and do not have an accurate view of their quality. They do not look at performance information in enough detail so that they can intervene quickly when pupils or groups of pupils are falling behind.
- Subject leaders are not holding teachers to account for any poor-quality teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders have not monitored teachers' performance robustly enough in the past, but procedures have been tightened up recently to make sure that teachers are not rewarded for poor performance.
- The school's curriculum is too narrow and some subjects, such as design technology and music, are not offered. Key subject areas, for example religious education, are delivered mainly through 'drop-down' days which happen about five times a year. Pupils who wish to follow a vocational course at key stage 4 have to do so at a local college. The narrow curriculum limits pupils' personal development, future learning opportunities and the way in which they are being prepared for life in modern Britain. The school has plans to reorganise the curriculum from September 2017.
- Extra government funding to support the least able pupils in Year 7 has had some impact on improving literacy levels. Leaders have been too slow to decide how the money will be spent this academic year and have not fully evaluated the impact of last year's extra funding on pupils' outcomes, particularly in mathematics.

- The school offers a range of extra-curricular activities, including a homework club, breakfast club and some sports clubs. These contribute to pupils' personal development.
- Pupils are given some opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through assemblies and the 'drop-down' days. A cultural exchange to Spain is offered, but only to a limited number of pupils.
- The school became a member of the Redhill Academy Trust very recently and the trust is providing significant support to the school. The Redhill Academy Trust has a strong track record of working with schools to secure rapid improvement.
- Despite the very short time that the trust has been involved with the school, there is tangible evidence of improvements being made. For example, there are trust-wide improvement priorities, checks on standards and assessments by trust staff and shared trust policies. Subject leaders spoke about the high-quality professional development that they were now being offered through the trust which they were finding very useful in improving their teaching.
- It is recommended that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

Governance of the school

- The governors of the school are passionate about their role and about making sure that pupils do well. They can clearly articulate the school's issues and have placed high expectations upon senior leaders to report regularly to them on pupils' progress. They understand performance information and ask incisive questions about the information they are given.
- Governors are committed to their own development and training. All of them have undertaken training in the 'Prevent' duty about radicalisation and extremism and they take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously.
- Governors are now holding senior leaders to account more robustly and have recently made sure that no teacher is rewarded for poor performance.
- The governing body runs appropriate committees including a committee to oversee finances and resources.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and managers take steps to make sure that pupils are safe at school. All staff are vetted and trained as required and there are regular safeguarding training updates.
- The school site is safe and staff are taking care to ensure that pupils' safety is not compromised during an extensive period of building work.
- The school has a variety of strategies in place to keep parents and carers informed about the school and how they, and the school, can work together to make sure that all pupils are supported and safe.

- Pupils report that they feel safe at the school and that there is always an adult they can talk to if they are worried about something.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teaching is too inconsistent across the school and within subjects. Only a very few teachers routinely use assessment information to plan lessons to meet the different needs of their pupils. They do not know what pupils can and cannot do, and tasks are often too easy.
- Teaching does not routinely take account of the different starting points of pupils and their different needs. In particular, disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and most able pupils, are not making good progress because teachers are not using strategies to ensure that they do well. The lack of challenging learning experiences for most-able pupils is evident across the school.
- There is some evidence that boys are being targeted to improve their progress, but not all teachers are using this strategy.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectations of pupils' work in lessons or in books. Work in books is of an inconsistent quality and expectations for boys are lower than those for girls. Boys show less pride in their work.
- Lessons are often dull, with pupils not being expected to take an active part in their learning. As a result, they lose interest and become distracted. This often leads to low-level disruptive behaviour. Teachers do not consistently use the behaviour policy to address issues of chatting and other off-task behaviour.
- Teachers mark pupils' work according to the school's policy. However, pupils are not always expected to follow the feedback that teachers give them. This means that they are not always clear about what they have to do to improve.
- In lessons, teachers do not routinely make regular checks on pupils' understanding to be clear that they have understood and so can move the learning on.
- Pupils cannot always communicate verbally, read, write or apply mathematics as well as they should. They find it hard to articulate confidently what they are learning.
- Pupils are making good progress in art, drama, PE and ICT. This is because teachers plan well, deliver lessons enthusiastically, give pupils good feedback and use the information that they have on pupils to plan lessons which meet their needs.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Most pupils do not display negative attitudes to learning, but where lessons are not planned to take account of pupils' different starting points, pupils' interest wavers and they lose focus.

- Parents who responded to the online questionnaire, and staff who expressed an opinion, have confidence that pupils are looked after well at the school. However, there were a few concerns raised about bullying. Pupils are clear that bullying is rare and is always dealt with by staff.
- Pupils understand about the different types of bullying and know how to keep themselves safe online. They are also taught about keeping themselves physically and emotionally healthy and know that there are staff who will help them if they have a worry or concern.
- The school environment is respected. There is no graffiti and very little litter. The school has taken care to ensure pupils' safety while there is building work on site.
- Pupils generally look smart in their school uniforms.
- A small number of pupils access all or part of their education elsewhere. A larger number of key stage 4 pupils attend a local college to follow courses that are not available at the school. The attendance and safety of pupils attending off-site provision are checked daily by school staff.
- The school takes a large number of pupils into all year groups during an academic year. Many of these are directly from abroad. The school is rightly proud of how quickly new pupils settle into the school community.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Too many lessons are interrupted by low-level disruption, such as pupils chatting or shouting out. Such off-task activity does not happen in lessons where teachers plan work that is interesting and meets individual pupils' needs.
- Most pupils move about the school in an orderly manner, but there is some overly boisterous behaviour between lessons in corridors. Where this happens, pupils are slow to get to their lessons and need to be settled down when they arrive.
- There are a number of pupils who are late to the school each day. The school has clear procedures and sanctions that are applied to pupils who are not punctual to school.
- Attendance is below the national average and is not improving rapidly enough. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and boys has been particularly low for some time. The number of pupils who are regularly absent from school, although reducing, is still too high.
- Exclusions are higher than the national average, but are reducing each year. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are disproportionately excluded.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils enter the school with attainment that is significantly below national averages. Although outcomes have improved since the last inspection, they have not improved rapidly enough and the expected improvements at the end of the last academic year

did not materialise.

- Too few pupils make the progress expected of them across a range of subjects, most notably in English and mathematics.
- The differences between the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils, particularly in English and mathematics, and those of others nationally are too large and have remained so for some time. The quality of teaching does not meet the needs of these pupils.
- The attainment and progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities from their relative starting points have not been good enough and are declining over time. These pupils do not receive sufficient support in lessons to make sure that their needs are met and to accelerate their progress.
- Too few of the most able pupils, including disadvantaged most-able pupils, make the progress expected of them. There are not enough passes in GCSEs at grades A*–C across a range of subjects. This is because teachers' expectations are too low and they do not challenge pupils, particularly the most able, to exceed expectations. New targets set for most-able pupils since September are more appropriately challenging.
- Leaders have not collected information about pupils' progress often enough and the data has not been reliable. The school is working closely with other schools in the Redhill Academy Trust to ensure that assessments and progress-tracking information are robust, accurate and checked between schools. This is to ensure that such information is reliable and can be used to inform strategies to help pupils catch up.
- Pupils who are educated elsewhere take a variety of qualifications which will help them to progress to appropriate post-16 pathways. They are making reasonable progress.
- Pupils read with confidence and for pleasure and show appropriate strategies to help them with unfamiliar words.
- The numbers of pupils not in education, employment or training after they leave school are reducing each year. The careers education, information, advice and guidance for pupils are appropriate and helpful.
- Pupils make better progress in art, drama, PE and ICT. This is because of the good teaching, learning and assessment in these subjects and the teachers' high expectations of pupils.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 138573 |
| Local authority | Nottingham |
| Inspection number | 10011757 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 716 |
| Appropriate authority | Academy trust |
| Chair | Graham Mansfield |
| Headteacher | Sean Kelly |
| Telephone number | 0115 9539060 |
| Website | www.topvalleyacademy.org |
| Email address | skelly@topvalleyacademy.org |
| Date of previous inspection | 30 April to 1 May 2014 |

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the strategy for the school's use of pupil premium, pupil destinations and charging and remissions policies.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about governors' business interests and the structure and responsibilities of the governing body and committees.
- Top Valley Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Top Valley Academy was re-brokered from Central Academy Trust to the Redhill Academy Trust in May 2016. The Redhill Academy Trust has been providing substantial support to the school since September 2016.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than the national average. There are currently no pupils at the school who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school works with three alternative providers that enable pupils to receive their education off the school site. These are Equip, Central College and Phoenix Aspirational Learning Support Limited.
- There are a number of key stage 4 pupils who access work-related learning courses at Central College.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 lessons or part-lessons, including joint lesson observations conducted with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and scrutinised samples of work from a range of subjects jointly with senior leaders and middle leaders.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at break- and lunchtime and around the school site.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders at the school, as well as leaders of subjects and other key staff. Inspectors also met with or spoke to the executive headteacher working on behalf of the trust, the chief executive officer of the trust and a representative of the local authority who had previously supported the school.
- Meetings were held with pupils from all year groups and a group of governors.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including information on pupils' outcomes, the school's self-evaluation and reviews of the school's work carried out by the trust.
- Inspectors took account of the five responses to the online pupil questionnaire, the 41 responses to the online staff questionnaire and the 43 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Denise Newsome, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Gee Kader | Ofsted Inspector |
| John Edwards | Ofsted Inspector |
| Christine Horrocks | Ofsted Inspector |

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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