

Route 39 Academy

Higher Clovelly, Bideford, Devon EX39 5SU

Inspection dates

21–22 June 2017

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. Governors and school leaders have failed to ensure that safeguarding procedures and practice are robust enough to keep pupils safe. Statutory safeguarding guidance has not been followed and safer recruitment practice is weak.
- The school is not maintaining an admission register in line with legal requirements. The school does not inform the local authority in a timely manner when pupils are removed from the admission register and so puts pupils at risk.
- The decision of governors and leaders not to enter any pupils in Year 11 for public examinations is in breach of statutory requirements and the school's own funding agreement.
- Teaching has not prepared pupils in Year 11 well enough for the next stage of their education. Leaders and governors acknowledge that this cohort has not made enough academic progress or developed sufficient resilience or maturity.
- Pupils' progress across key stage 3 is inadequate. Pupils are not developing the knowledge, understanding and skills they need.
- Teachers' expectations of the quality of work pupils produce and their engagement with learning are too low. As a result, pupils' achievement across a range of subjects is poor.
- Governors and leaders have not ensured that the pupil premium is used in an effective or appropriate manner.
- Pupils' attendance is very poor. Rates of absence are significantly higher than the national average. Leaders' actions to address this are not having an impact. Attendance is worse this year than last.
- The rates of fixed-term and permanent exclusions are too high, and significantly higher than the national average. School leaders have not developed an effective approach to managing behaviour that will reduce these very high exclusion rates.

The school has the following strengths

- The school makes good use of its extended day to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Parents of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very appreciative of the way the school cares for their children.

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 leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - a robust culture of safeguarding is rapidly established and follows all legislative requirements and statutory guidance, especially those related to safer recruitment
 - an admission register is maintained in accordance with legal requirements
 - statutory requirements relating to the entry of pupils to public examinations at the end of key stage 4 are met
 - additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used efficiently and appropriately to improve their academic progress and personal development
 - the terms of the school's funding agreement are followed, especially with regard to the entry of pupils for public examinations at the end of key stage 4
 - the school's strategy to tackle very low attendance has much greater impact on reducing absence
 - the school's strategy for behaviour management improves and leads to a dramatic reduction in the number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions
 - the curriculum and its delivery meets pupils' needs and prepares them well for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teaching improves rapidly so that pupils make good progress from their starting points due to effective development of their knowledge, understanding and skills
 - teaching presents a much higher degree of challenge and thus promotes much faster progress by pupils
 - teachers have high expectations of the quality of work that pupils produce and their engagement with their learning.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - pupils value their education more, so their very high rates of absence and persistent absence reduce rapidly
 - pupils' behaviour improves swiftly, so that the number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions falls dramatically
 - pupils display consistently positive attitudes to learning across the curriculum.

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

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

Inadequate

- School leaders and governors have not ensured that pupils are receiving an acceptable standard of education. They fail to demonstrate the capacity to rectify this situation due to shortcomings in their knowledge and understanding of the most important key aspects of running a successful school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are ineffective. The school's safeguarding policies, procedures and practice are inadequate for the purposes of keeping children safe from harm. Governors and school leaders do not demonstrate a secure understanding of effective safeguarding practice.
- The school has not followed the statutory requirements concerning the safer recruitment of staff. The school has not taken steps to ascertain whether any teachers were subject to orders that prohibit them from teaching. This omission puts pupils at risk. In addition, the school has not made checks to ensure that any school leaders or governors are not prohibited from taking part in the management of a school. School leaders were unaware that such prohibition checks were required to be made. As a result of these omissions, the school's single central register does not comply with the statutory guidance.
- School leaders do not maintain an admission register that meets the requirements of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. In addition, the school does not inform the local authority in a timely fashion that pupils have been removed from the admission register. These shortcomings put pupils at risk.
- Governors' critical oversight of the school's work is weak. For example, they have not ensured that the school has an appropriate safeguarding policy. They have repeatedly ratified a policy that does not reflect the requirements of the latest statutory guidance contained in the most up-to-date version of 'Keeping children safe in education' and other very important documents.
- Governors have not ensured that the pupil premium is spent effectively and appropriately to improve the progress and personal development of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders' decision to use the pupil premium to pay for disadvantaged pupils' school lunches is in breach of the school's funding agreement, which states that these meals should be paid for out of the school's general annual grant. This decision has reduced the amount of funding available from the pupil premium by approximately one third. As a consequence, it has reduced the impact that the pupil premium is having on improving the life chances of disadvantaged pupils.
- The decision by school leaders and governors to keep pupils in key stage 4 beyond compulsory school age is in breach of the school's funding agreement and the Education Act 1996, which requires them to enter pupils for public examinations at the end of key stage 4.
- The decision to hold back an entire cohort is an unreasonable and unorthodox one. Leaders and governors state that the pupils in Year 11 are neither academically ready nor sufficiently mature or resilient to have taken the examinations. They state that, had they taken the examinations at the usual time, these pupils would have significantly

underperformed and attained at low levels. This is an admission that the school's curriculum and its delivery have not met the needs of pupils by ensuring that they make good progress and are ready for the next stage of their education, employment or training.

- From discussions with leaders and governors and the examination of internal documentation, the decision to defer entry of Year 11 pupils to examinations for a year seems to have been driven at least as much by organisational concerns as by a consideration of individuals pupils' educational needs. Specifically, the delay in the availability of the sixth-form provision until the school's new building is completed in time for the academic year 2018/19 appears to have played a significant part in the decision-making process. In addition, when challenged as to why some pupils (for example, the most able) could not take some of the examinations at the usual time, leaders cited the perceived difficulties of teaching in small groups rather than justifying it in terms of the educational best interests of the pupils concerned.
- The school's strategies for improving attendance and behaviour are not having an impact. The nature of the school's cohort is changing and leaders have not adapted to this effectively enough. As a result, attendance is declining and rates of exclusion have risen.
- Leadership of teaching is inadequate. Leaders have not ensured that a culture of high expectations is consistently manifested in teaching across the school.
- The special educational needs coordinator has a good understanding of the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their parents are very appreciative of the care that the school shows towards their children. The impact of the use of additional funding for special educational needs on pupils' outcomes is, however, limited, as these pupils make the same poor progress as other pupils in the school. The school does not monitor the impact of the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium closely enough.
- The school makes good use of the opportunities provided by its extended school day to put on a wide range of additional activities for pupils. These activities promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils well.
- The school actively promotes fundamental British values. Assemblies, visits and external speakers develop pupils' understanding of other cultures and religions. The school council helps pupils to understand the concept and process of democracy.
- It is recommended that the school should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate because it does not ensure that pupils develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to progress successfully to the next stage of their education. This is true across both key stage 3 and key stage 4.
- Teachers' expectations of the standard of work pupils produce and its presentation are too low. This results in a lack of challenge, especially for the most able pupils, and limits their progress. Teachers are too easily satisfied with poor-quality work and as a consequence the feedback they give to pupils does not help them to make progress quickly enough. Across a range of subjects and all year groups, incomplete, scrappy,

poorly presented or missing work is commonplace. As a result of the lack of challenge, these features persist over time in pupils' work or, indeed, get worse.

- Teachers do not consistently set work at the right levels for pupils. Daily literacy sessions for pupils, for example, can involve learning the pronunciation, meaning and spelling of words more commonly covered in key stage 1. Low expectations of what pupils can do is limiting progress. Some pupils report that they find these literacy sessions repetitive and boring.
- Teachers do not reinforce consistently high expectations of behaviour and engagement in classrooms. As a result, some pupils are not developing and embedding the habits of successful learners, such as resilience and pride in their work.
- Pupils have daily coaching sessions but the effective use of time in these sessions is too variable. It appears to be accepted that some pupils will not engage in these sessions, reflecting low staff expectations.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Shortcomings in the school's safeguarding systems, procedures and practice mean that pupils are at unnecessary risk.
- Too many pupils have not developed the attributes of a successful learner during their time in the school. Levels of engagement in learning and pride in their work are too variable. Work in pupils' books is often incomplete, scrappy or poorly presented. Teachers' low expectations hinder pupils' personal development.
- Punctuality to lessons is poor. The school is situated in three separate buildings some distance apart. Pupils have to walk between these buildings between lessons and consequently often arrive up to 15 minutes late for lessons through no fault of their own. Leaders have not developed effective ways to address this issue and accept it as an inevitable feature of school life. It results in confused starts to lessons, and does nothing to promote better engagement with their learning by pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Attendance is very poor. The already high rate of absence has increased further this year; one in 10 pupils are absent on any given day. In addition, 30% of pupils are persistently absent. School leaders do not have a clear, strategic approach to dealing successfully with this situation. They are too keen to attribute the school's serious problems with attendance to the changing nature of their intake of pupils rather than the shortcomings of the school's work.
- Rates of fixed-term and permanent exclusion are too high. The rate of permanent exclusion so far this year is approximately 15 times the national average. Rates of fixed-term exclusion are over four times the national average. A significant minority of pupils show a lack of respect for each other or staff. The school's behaviour

management strategy is ineffective.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Outcomes are inadequate because pupils across both key stages do not make the progress of which they are capable. Work in a range of subjects and all age groups reveals a pattern of underachievement across the school.
- In key stage 3, teaching is not helping pupils to acquire the essential knowledge, skills and understanding that are the bedrock of future success. Work in English shows that too many pupils are making slow progress in improving their literacy. The work pupils produce in humanities in Years 7 to 9 demonstrates insufficient depth of understanding or acquisition of key historical or geographical methods and skills. Progress in science across key stage 3 is a little stronger, but there is still too much inconsistency in rates of progress.
- In relation to the current Year 11, school leaders themselves judge that pupils have made such inadequate progress that they believe they would have significantly underachieved had they been entered for public examinations at the end of key stage 4. As a cohort, however, these pupils had average attainment at the end of key stage 2 that was higher than the national figure. This is an indication that teaching has failed to promote sufficient progress for these pupils. The work of pupils in Year 11 confirms this. It is also clear, however, that there are individual pupils who could have succeeded in public examinations had they been entered at the usual time.
- The picture of poor progress overall is mirrored in the performance of significant groups such as disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In particular, the most able pupils in Year 11 have had their progress impeded by the decision to delay their entry to public examinations and, consequently, their movement on to post-16 study programmes by a year.

School details

Unique reference number	139816
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10033115

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	131
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Richard Bence
Principal	Jordan Kelly
Telephone number	01237 431969
Website	www.route39.org.uk/
Email address	learning@route39.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 May 2015

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the Trust's memorandum and articles of association or its funding agreement on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the pupil premium, Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding, and governors' information and duties.
- Route 39 Academy is a free school that opened in September 2013. It has occupied temporary premises in three buildings in the village of Higher Clovelly since then. It plans to move into purpose-built premises in 2018.
- The school began in 2013 with pupils in Years 7 and 8. It now has pupils in Years 7 to 11. It proposes to admit students to the sixth form in September 2018, once its new premises are complete.
- One pupil attends alternative provision at a forest school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning across all year groups and a range of subjects. A large number of these observations were undertaken jointly with members of the school's senior leadership team. During observations in lessons, inspectors examined pupils' work and talked to them about their learning. In addition, extensive scrutiny of pupils' work also took place outside lessons.
- Inspectors had discussions with the principal, senior leaders and other members of staff. The lead inspector also had a discussions with a group of governors, including the chair.
- Inspectors had formal discussions with pupils of all ages.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentary evidence, including the school's policies. They examined documents relating to safeguarding and child protection, as well as the school's records of the checks it makes on teachers' backgrounds to ensure that they are suitable to work with children.
- In making their judgements, inspectors took into account 39 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parental questionnaire, and the responses to the staff and pupil survey.

Inspection team

Stephen Lee, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Nick Ward

Ofsted Inspector

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