

Copley Academy

Huddersfield Road, Stalybridge, Cheshire SK15 3RR

Inspection dates

9–10 October 2018

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

- Leaders have failed to address the areas for improvement highlighted in the previous inspection report. Governors and trustees have provided insufficient challenge to halt the school's decline.
- Over the past three years, rates of overall absence and persistent absence have been above the national average.
- The school does not prepare pupils sufficiently for their next steps. Examination results in 2018 were very weak. Many current pupils, including in Year 11, are still making poor progress.
- Many pupils do not engage well enough with their learning. Some pupils lose concentration or chat in class. This usually happens when teachers do not plan learning activities that engage or inspire learners.
- Middle leadership is weak. Many middle leaders have been in post for a number of years. They have not made a positive difference to the quality of teaching or pupils' outcomes in their departments.
- The school's and the trust's improvement plans are not sharp enough. Recent improvements have not been sufficiently rapid or widespread.
- The curriculum does not meet the needs of pupils.
- Over time, leaders' use of the pupil premium has not improved outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- The quality of teaching is inadequate. Teachers have low expectations of their pupils. They do not use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding or to provide clear explanations to help pupils learn. Teachers do not build on pupils' prior learning well enough, including that from key stage 2.
- Over time, leaders and teachers have not secured accurate assessment information about how much progress pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, are making.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and its areas for improvement. The principal is taking action to deal with the most pressing issues.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils are well cared for and safe.

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?

- Urgently improve the quality of teaching across the school so that pupils' outcomes, including those for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, rapidly improve, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils' academic and social development
 - the quality of teachers' questioning and explanation improves so that pupils' misconceptions and difficulties in gaining new learning can be effectively tackled
 - recent improvements to teachers' training are embedded and built upon to ensure that they have greater impact on improving the quality of teaching
 - teachers use accurate assessment to match learning closely to pupils' needs
 - teachers have a better understanding of pupils' starting points, including the information provided at the end of primary school, and use this effectively to shape their teaching
 - teachers plan learning activities that interest and inspire pupils to learn.
- Ensure that the curriculum provides suitable levels of challenge for pupils of all levels of ability across the school.
- Rapidly improve the attendance of all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Ensure that leaders at all levels have much greater impact on pupils' achievement by:
 - further developing the role and skills of middle leaders
 - ensuring that assessment information provides accurate and useful information for leaders and teachers about how well pupils are achieving
 - making sure that trustees and governors oversee the work of the school more effectively and hold leaders more stringently to account for the impact of their work, including the effective use of additional funding
 - continuing to work with a wider range of good and outstanding schools to learn from the good practice in those schools
 - sharpening the school's and the trust's improvement planning, so that plans include measurable targets and milestones against which progress can be evaluated.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to see how this aspect of leadership and management can be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken to see how this aspect of leadership and management can be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- After the previous inspection, there was considerable turnover in leadership. Senior leaders, governors and members of the trust failed to prevent a rapid decline in the quality of education offered at this school. During this period, pupils' outcomes declined sharply, and other aspects of the school's performance became a cause for concern, including pupils' attendance.
- Leaders and teachers have failed to ensure the availability of accurate assessment information about pupils' progress and attainment. Therefore, leaders and teachers are not able to identify, or plan to meet, the specific needs of individuals and groups of pupils who are underperforming. Unreliable assessment information also means that leaders, governors and trustees are unable to measure the impact of their work.
- In January 2018, the current principal took up post. She has quickly taken effective steps to stabilise staffing and to begin to address underperformance at all levels across the school. Despite these positive changes, the principal and the new senior leadership team were unable to reverse pupils' declining achievement. Year 11 pupils' weak progress meant that attainment fell further in 2018. Efforts to improve the quality of teaching are not helping those pupils who currently attend the school to make up lost ground.
- The principal has a clear vision for the school. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders have used this to identify the school's most pressing issues. However, leaders' plans to tackle the considerable shortcomings at the school lack measurable targets and clear milestones to ensure that leaders' actions have their intended impact.
- Leaders are committed to sharing responsibility across the senior leadership team and among middle leaders. Leaders have started to ensure that all members of the school community, from the principal to the youngest pupil, understand what is expected of them. Everyone is being made accountable for their work in the school.
- Many middle leaders have been in post for a number of years, with some recent new appointments. Middle leaders are now keen to develop their skills so that they can fulfil their responsibilities and ensure that their departments successfully support subject learning and achievement. However, these leaders are still developing their approach. Many of their strategies for improving teaching in their areas of responsibility are in their infancy. As a result, they have had too little influence in improving pupils' progress across a range of subjects.
- Leaders have a realistic view of the quality of teaching within the school. Since January 2018, leaders have started to put in place training to help teachers to improve their skills. They give teachers opportunities to reflect on their teaching and discuss aspects to improve. Teachers have access to personalised training and support now. However, these plans are in the early stages of development, and there is little evidence of their impact on improving the quality of teaching across the school.
- The school's curriculum covers a broad range of subjects. However, the way in which the curriculum is taught across all year groups has not supported good outcomes for

pupils. At key stage 3, for example, curriculum plans do not take sufficient account of the work covered by pupils in their primary schools. This means that work set in Year 7 does not build on pupils' learning in key stage 2.

- The progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities has been particularly weak over a number of years. Leaders have not made sure that additional funding is used effectively to help these pupils overcome their barriers to learning.
- Leaders support pupils as they prepare for their role in society. Aspects such as tolerance and respect for each other are seen in the way that pupils get along together whatever their background or heritage. The school's curriculum and leaders' expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes help pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- There is little evidence that support to the school from the trust's executive leaders is making a positive difference. For example, they have helped to implement new ways of working such as the school's new behaviour policy. However, the impact of their work on the school's wider performance is limited. The principal is encouraging leaders to collaborate with a wide range of providers, within and beyond the trust, to learn from and share good practice.
- It is strongly recommended that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Governance of the school

- Neither the governing body nor the trustees have acted quickly enough in the interests of pupils. In particular, they have not probed deeply enough to investigate the school's effectiveness. For example, they did not make sure that leaders used the school's pupil premium funding to target the needs of disadvantaged pupils.
- Members of the local governing body share current leaders' determination to improve the school for all pupils. Governors are committed to ensuring that the school improves rapidly from its current position. The appointment of new governors, including a new chair and vice-chair, has increased the range of relevant skills and expertise in this group.
- Trustees are fully aware of the school's challenges and understand their responsibilities in resolving these challenges. However, this has not been the case in the past. The trust is now taking action to improve the school. For example, over the past few months, they have made a number of changes to senior and middle leadership and have challenged the underperformance of some teachers. Trust leaders have secured additional support from within the trust for middle and senior leaders who are new in post to help them do their jobs well.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created systems that keep pupils safe. Leaders are caring and have created a culture of safeguarding where any concerns about a pupil are acted on promptly.

- Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe. They appreciate the support provided by staff. Pupils are clear about how they would act if they or someone else was in trouble.
- All the necessary checks of staff, volunteers and governors to ensure that they are suitable to work with pupils are carried out and recorded accurately.
- Leaders work closely with outside agencies in the best interests of pupils.
- Leaders keep clear, systematic and timely records of any safeguarding concerns. They carefully check that pupils who attend off-site alternative provision attend regularly and behave well.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching declined after the last inspection, because senior leaders, governors and trustees failed to tackle weaknesses in teaching.
- Poor quality teaching across a range of subjects has led to pupils' weak progress over time. The progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has been exceptionally weak over many years.
- Many teachers do not use their subject knowledge to plan lessons that capture the interest of pupils. As a result, pupils do not have a love of learning, because they are uninspired by what is taught.
- Too many pupils underachieve in relation to their starting points, because teachers do not have accurate assessment information about pupils' previous gains in learning, including information about pupils' achievement by the end of their primary school education. Even given the unreliable assessment information, teachers do not plan effectively to meet pupils' needs. As a result, pupils lose enthusiasm for learning and their progress falters in a range of subjects.
- Many teachers' expectations are too low. Pupils' work over time shows that, regardless of pupils' abilities, little thought is given to stretching and challenging pupils. Some teachers do not do enough to check pupils' understanding before they begin new learning or during lessons. Teachers' unclear explanations lead to pupils becoming confused as they begin their tasks.
- The quality of teachers' questioning is often weak and fails to deepen pupils' thinking. Teachers do not check pupils' understanding routinely. This leads to pupils' misconceptions going undetected and mistakes being made.
- The school's recently introduced marking and feedback policy is not yet embedded into teachers' day-to-day practice.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.

- Opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles help successful candidates to develop their self-confidence and give them a greater voice in the school.
- The curriculum helps pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe, especially when using the internet.
- Pupils understand about the different types of bullying. Pupils who inspectors spoke to said that, on the occasions that bullying does occur, it is dealt with effectively by staff.
- Leaders have made sure that careers guidance is provided to all pupils. This has ensured that the number of pupils who go on to further study, training or employment is high. However, this advice and guidance is not always sufficiently aspirational or ambitious. As a result, some of the most able pupils do not advance to more demanding courses when they leave the school, despite having the ability to do so.
- Pupils have a range of opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Pupils are involved in a range of charity fund-raising events. This is helping them develop a greater appreciation of the world around them.
- The range of extra-curricular activities offered to pupils is limited. Pupils told inspectors that they wished that there were more opportunities to take part in a wider range of activities, including trips and visits.
- Leaders make regular checks on the behaviour and attitudes of pupils who attend off-site alternative provision on one or more days. These pupils are well cared for when they are in these placements.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Pupils' rates of absence are well above the national average. The absence of certain groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and the current Year 11 is particularly high. New leaders have put in place a number of systems and procedures aimed at improving pupils' attendance. There have been some small signs of improvement in the first few weeks of the autumn term.
- Leaders implemented a new behaviour policy this year. Teachers, pupils, and parents and carers confirm that behaviour is improving. Pupils told inspectors that they appreciate the rewards that are being put in place to recognise positive behaviour and good attendance.
- Around the school, pupils generally conduct themselves very well. They are polite and respectful to visitors, to each other and to school staff. Over time, the number of fixed-term exclusions has compared favourably with national averages. However, the number of permanent exclusions has been higher than the national figures.
- Where teaching interests and challenges pupils, they behave well in class. However, inattentive behaviour, such as talking when the teacher is speaking to the class, slows learning in too many classes.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Over the past three years, pupils have made weak progress and performed poorly in GCSE examinations.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a continuous decline in the rates of progress pupils make over their time in the school. In 2016 and 2017, Year 11 pupils' overall rates of progress and their progress in mathematics were in the lowest 20% of schools in the country. The progress of disadvantaged pupils was in the lowest 10%. The progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities was very weak.
- Year 11 pupils' attainment was very low across a range of subjects, including in mathematics and science. In 2018, Year 11 pupils' progress declined further in a variety of subjects, including in English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages.
- Typically, pupils achieve around one grade lower in each of their GCSE examinations than all pupils nationally with similar starting points. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities do even less well.
- The relatively weaker progress of disadvantaged pupils means that the difference between their achievement and that of other pupils nationally is increasing. This is due to leaders' ineffective use of the pupil premium funding.
- The progress of pupils currently in the school, including disadvantaged pupils, across different subjects is variable. It remains inadequate. Pupils' opportunity to make strong progress is too dependent on which classes they attend. Poor teaching over time means that far too many pupils have large gaps in their learning. The quality of current teaching is insufficiently strong to enable these pupils to make up for lost time.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make variable rates of progress, in line with other pupils in the school. However, when they receive high-quality support, they make good progress.

School details

Unique reference number	139294
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10045875

This inspection of the school 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 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	688
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mrs Denise Walsh
Principal	Mrs Sarah Gregory
Telephone number	01613386684
Website	www.copleyacademy.org.uk
Email address	mail@copleyacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	17-18 May 2016

Information about this school

- Copley Academy is a member of the Great Academies Education Trust. This is a small multi-academy trust, with four schools in Tameside and Rochdale. The trust board has delegated responsibility for the performance of the school to the chief executive officer. However, some responsibilities concerning the performance of the school are delegated to the local governing body.
- Copley Academy is a smaller-than-average 11-16 school.
- The school has experienced significant staffing changes since the previous inspection, including two changes of principal. The current principal took up post in January 2018. Since then, there have been changes to the senior leadership team and to the chair, vice-chair and other members of the local governing board. Since the last inspection, there have been changes on the board of trustees and to trust employees.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible to receive support from the pupil premium funding is well above the national average.

- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of students who receive special educational needs support or who have an education, health and care plan is in line with the national average.
- A small cohort of pupils in Year 11 attend alternative provision at 'Works4U' and at Tameside College.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching, learning, assessment and pupils' conduct in lessons. Several of these observations were undertaken jointly with school leaders.
- The behaviour of students was observed throughout the school day.
- Inspectors held discussions with the principal, senior leaders, middle leaders, a group of teachers and other members of staff, and two groups of pupils. They also had informal conversations with a large number of pupils.
- An inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair of the local governing body.
- An inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust.
- Inspectors considered the 22 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents, and the 19 responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. Inspectors also took into account one complaint received during the inspection.
- Inspectors examined school policies and other documentation provided by the school. Records, including those relating to safeguarding, attendance and behaviour, were also reviewed.
- Inspectors examined pupils' work.

Inspection team

Helen Gaunt, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Tuesday Humby	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Lomas	Ofsted Inspector
David Roberts	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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