

# Fearns Community Sports College

Fearns Moss, Bacup, Lancashire OL13 0TG

## Inspection dates

15–16 January 2019

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Despite leaders' and governors' best efforts, they have been unable to secure sufficient improvement to the quality of education since the previous inspection. The slow pace of change in the past does not give assurance that necessary improvements will be any swifter in the future.
- School improvement has been hindered by a lack of clarity about the school's future and considerable levels of staff turnover and absence.
- Middle leaders have not developed the skills that they need to improve teaching and learning in their subject areas.
- Pupils' outcomes are inadequate. At the end of Year 11 in 2017 and 2018, pupils underachieved significantly in English, mathematics and a range of other subjects.
- Too much teaching across key stages 3 and 4 is weak. Consequently, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, do not achieve as well as they should.
- Pupils' writing skills are not developed effectively across a range of subjects.
- Many teachers' expectations of pupils are too low. Leaders have not ensured that teachers use reliable assessment information to plan challenging work. Some teachers do not use questioning effectively to deepen pupils' learning.
- Over time, the curriculum has not enabled pupils to achieve as well as they should. It is still too early to see the impact of recent improvements.
- Attendance is improving but remains below the national average. Persistent absence is high among disadvantaged pupils and girls.
- The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and for those who join Year 7 with low levels of literacy and numeracy is not used effectively to promote better academic outcomes for these groups.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make variable progress because the support that they receive does not routinely meet their needs.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have been effective in promoting a positive environment for learning. Pupils' personal development and behaviour are improving.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils feel safe.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed well.

## 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 so that pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, make good or better progress across a range of subjects, by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve
  - ensuring that teachers use accurate assessment information to plan learning that challenges pupils and builds on their prior learning
  - providing opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in a range of subjects
  - ensuring that teachers ask questions that deepen pupils' understanding
  - providing effective classroom support for pupils with SEND.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
  - ensuring that assessment systems provide reliable and useful information for teachers about pupils' achievement
  - developing the skills and knowledge of middle leaders so that they are able to improve the quality of teaching in their subject areas
  - ensuring that leaders use the pupil premium funding and Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding more effectively to improve academic outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those who enter Year 7 with low levels of literacy and numeracy
  - continue to build on the recent work to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of pupils and enables them to make good or better progress across a range of subjects.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, by:
  - improving rates of attendance for all pupils
  - reducing persistent absence, especially for disadvantaged pupils and girls.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding 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

- Leaders and governors know that the school is not good enough. Their actions to bring about improvement have been hampered by a lack of clarity about the school's future, financial concerns and considerable turbulence in leadership and staff. As a result, progress towards ensuring that pupils receive an acceptable standard of education has been too slow. The quality of teaching remains inadequate and pupils' achievement is weak.
- Slow progress in resolving the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection indicate that there is limited leadership capacity to turn the situation around. There is little certainty that leaders will be able to bring about the urgent changes required to secure an adequate standard of education.
- The senior leadership team was strengthened by the appointment of an additional deputy headteacher in September 2018. The headteacher and her leadership team have recently introduced new systems for reviewing teaching and learning across the school. Leaders are establishing a more accurate picture of the quality of teaching. They know the strengths and recognise where teaching needs to improve. They have started to put in place focused training to help teachers to improve their skills. However, these strategies 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 information that the school holds on pupils' achievement is unreliable. This means that leaders are not able to check on the progress that pupils make with sufficient rigour. As a result, signs of underachievement are not spotted quickly. Furthermore, the lack of reliable assessment information means that teachers' planning fails to build on what pupils already know and can do.
- The local authority has provided training for governors and has also supported a review of the school's curriculum. The local authority adviser arranged external support for teachers of English and mathematics. However, this support has had no impact on pupils' outcomes.
- The school is receiving very recent and substantial external support from Star Academies Trust in a range of key areas. For example, consultants from the trust are working with leaders to improve the accuracy of assessment information. The trust has deployed English and mathematics teachers on a part-time basis to provide additional support to permanent teachers. However, these initiatives are yet to translate into sustained improvements in the school.
- Until very recently, the curriculum on offer has not helped pupils to gain the most from their time in secondary school. In part, this has been due to financial constraints and staffing issues. School leaders, working in partnership with Star Academies Trust have developed a curriculum that better meets the needs of pupils. Many changes have been introduced since January 2019, including pupils being given more time to study English, mathematics and science across the school. Pupils in Year 9 have started their key stage 4 courses in January 2019, with all these pupils studying a humanities subject and a modern foreign language. All pupils in Year 9 and Year 10 follow

vocational courses in information and communication technology and sports science. However, it is too early to see the impact of these changes on pupils' achievement.

- Some middle leaders are new to the school. They are enthusiastic and are proud to work at the school. However, they are still developing their leadership skills. As a result, they have been unable to influence the quality of teaching in a range of subjects. This hinders the capacity of leaders to bring about swift improvements.
- Leaders have not made sure that additional funding is used effectively to help disadvantaged pupils achieve well. The progress of these pupils is weak in a wide range of subjects.
- Leaders have not used the Year 7 catch-up funding effectively. Leaders' actions do not help pupils gain the skills and knowledge that they need to succeed in English and mathematics. Leaders do not evaluate the impact of the strategies that they use to boost the academic attainment of these pupils.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Leaders ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to take part in activities that develop their understanding of British values such as democracy. For example, pupils hold elections for form captains and school councillors.
- Many pupils spoke positively about the wide range of extra-curricular activities such as art, music and sport. Pupils are also involved in charity work and have the opportunity to participate in educational trips to different countries.
- The funding for pupils with SEND is not used well. A lack of effective classroom support has resulted in many of these pupils making weak progress. The special educational needs coordinator has provided training for staff. However, this has not been translated well enough in the classroom to ensure that the needs of these pupils are met effectively.
- Leaders have been successful in creating a more positive culture for learning. They have ensured that the provision for pupils' personal development has improved. Furthermore, leaders have been effective in raising the standards of pupils' behaviour since the last inspection.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils benefit from effective and well-planned careers information, advice and guidance.
- Most parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, were positive about the support that leaders provide to their children.
- The school may appoint newly qualified teachers so long as leaders ensure that they are able to provide sufficient support and mentoring for these teachers.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors want the best for the pupils. They have spent considerable time dealing with a significant budget deficit. They are frustrated that their challenge and support is not resulting in more rapid school improvement. Governors have tried to be proactive, but they have been hampered by the uncertainty over the school's future. Governors are working with the local authority and the regional schools commissioner to secure the school's entry into a multi-academy trust.

- Governors ensure that they fulfil most of their statutory duties. They have been less diligent in checking that the school's website contains all of the required information.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school.
- Leaders make the necessary checks to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children. All staff have received up-to-date safeguarding training. Staff are aware of the signs of abuse and know what to do if they have concerns. Leaders liaise effectively and in a timely manner with parents, carers and outside agencies to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils.
- Pupils say they feel safe and know who to speak to if they have concerns. They are confident that staff will deal with issues quickly. Pupils have been taught effectively about how to keep themselves safe when they are online.
- Almost all of the parents who responded to Parent View agree that their children are safe and well looked after at the school.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

## **Inadequate**

- Too much teaching is ineffective. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. They do not use information about what pupils are able to do to plan learning that challenges them. This, in part, is due to the fact that the in-school information teachers receive on pupils' prior learning is unreliable. As a result, pupils do not receive teaching that meets their needs or challenges them to deepen their learning. This has a negative impact on the progress that they make.
- Some teachers do not use questioning well enough to probe pupils' thinking and develop their understanding.
- The most able pupils are not pushed to achieve more. These pupils finish learning tasks quickly. As a result, they become bored and do not achieve as well as they should.
- Pupils have insufficient opportunities to write at length and develop their vocabulary across different subjects.
- Pupils' progress in a number of subjects, particularly mathematics, has been hindered by staffing changes, staff absence and teaching by non-specialists.
- The teaching of pupils with SEND is weak. This is because teachers do not use information about these pupils' needs effectively when planning lessons. Consequently, progress for these pupils is poor.
- Relationships between most staff and pupils are positive.
- Where learning is more effective, teachers use good subject knowledge to plan engaging lessons and use questioning techniques to challenge pupils to think hard. As a result, pupils respond well and make better progress.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning vary between lessons and are not as good as they could be. This is because some tasks do not engage pupils well enough. As a result, they lose interest and do not sustain their efforts.
- Many pupils spoke positively of the support that they receive from staff. For example, the 'Diamond Centre' is used well. The centre staff help pupils calm down and reflect when they are experiencing difficulties. The personal, social, health and economic programme helps pupils to improve their emotional well-being and mental health.
- Pupils have many opportunities to develop their leadership skills, such as becoming sports leaders.
- Pupils report that instances of bullying were high in the past but are now rare. They say that if bullying does occur, teachers deal with it quickly. School records show that bullying incidents are monitored carefully. The number of reported incidents is reducing convincingly.
- Leaders ensure that the small number of pupils who are educated away from the school are studying courses linked to their aspirations. Leaders have secure procedures in place to monitor the well-being, safety and attendance of these pupils.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Despite some small signs of improvement during the 2018 autumn term, overall attendance remains low for almost all groups. Overall absence and the proportion of pupils that are persistently absent is above the national average.
- The level of persistent absence among disadvantaged pupils and girls is too high. Leaders have put in place a range of strategies to improve attendance. Their own records show that attendance for these groups is improving.
- In the past, the number of exclusions has been above the national average. Leaders now monitor behaviour more closely to identify patterns and trends. They have improved support systems for pupils who persistently misbehave. Consequently, the number of pupils being sent to the internal isolation room and the rates of fixed-term exclusions are decreasing.
- Staff and pupils say that behaviour in the school has improved. Most pupils behave well during breaktimes. Inspectors noticed occasional boisterous behaviour in corridors. However, this is quickly challenged by staff.
- Pupils are loyal to their school, polite and welcoming to visitors.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Inadequate

- Pupils' outcomes over time are inadequate because their progress is very weak. In 2017 and 2018, pupils' progress was in the lowest 10% of all schools nationally.
- Published data shows that pupils' progress in English, mathematics, science, humanities and modern foreign languages has been in the lowest 20% of schools nationally for the last three years. The progress of all ability groups has been well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils leaving the school with a standard pass in English and mathematics was significantly below the national average in 2018.
- Disadvantaged pupils underachieve considerably when compared with other pupils nationally. Progress for disadvantaged pupils in 2017 and 2018 was well below average across a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science.
- Year 7 pupils who joined the school with low starting points in English and/or mathematics are not making the progress that they should to catch up with their peers.
- Inspection evidence indicates that current pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, continue to underachieve in a number of subjects and year groups. There is little sign of any improvement.
- Pupils with SEND make variable rates of progress because teachers are not meeting their needs well enough.
- As a result of the effective careers guidance and advice pupils receive, an increasing proportion of pupils move on to education, employment or training after Year 11.

## School details

Unique reference number	119745
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10055810

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	285
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Styles
Headteacher	Helen Stead
Telephone number	01706 873896
Website	<a href="http://www.fearns.lancs.sch.uk">www.fearns.lancs.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:enquiries@fearns.lancs.sch.uk">enquiries@fearns.lancs.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	24–25 May 2016

## Information about this school

- Fearn Community Sports College is a smaller-than-average 11 to 16 school.
- The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is well above the national average. Some pupils are supported through the Year 7 catch-up premium.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much lower than the national average as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above average.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision for their education at local hospital schools.
- The school is in the process of becoming incorporated into a multi-academy trust.



## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment across a wide range of subjects in different age groups. Several observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with pupils, both formally and informally, to listen to their views.
- Inspectors observed pupils at breaks, lunchtimes, in registration periods and in lessons.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and looked at a sample of pupils' books to evaluate their learning over time in different subjects.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders, a group of staff, three governors, including the chair, and a representative of the local authority. Meetings were also held with a consultant and the chief executive officer of Star Academies Trust. Inspectors also spoke by telephone with a representative of a local hospital school.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including: records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, safeguarding information, minutes of governing body meetings, information on the progress made by pupils, training arrangements for teachers, checks on the quality of teaching, the school's self-evaluation and the school improvement plan.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed by parents in the 53 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as 52 comments received via the free-text facility.
- Inspectors also took into account 17 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- No responses were received to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils.

## Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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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](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

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