

Armthorpe Academy

Mere Lane, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN3 2DA

Inspection dates 26–27 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Teaching is inadequate in Key Stages 3 and 4. As a result, students make inadequate progress throughout the academy, including in mathematics and, particularly in English.
- The proportion of students achieving at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics is significantly below average.
- Teachers' expectations of the quality, quantity and presentation of students' work, and of their behaviour, are not high enough.
- Too often students are unclear about what they are meant to be learning. Frequently, the tasks they are given are not matched accurately to the levels at which they are working.
- Teachers' marking does not always tell students what they have achieved and what to do next. Advice given by teachers is not often acted upon by the students.
- The behaviour policy is not applied consistently across the academy and students' behaviour and attitudes do not support good learning in enough lessons.
- Attendance is not improving quickly enough and this is hindering students' progress.
- Subject leaders do not have clearly enough defined roles, responsibilities or accountability for improving teaching and raising standards in their areas. They do not report back to the senior team regarding the impact they have made on students' progress.
- Senior leaders do not check thoroughly enough how well subject and year leaders progress towards their goals. Consequently, they do not know whether priorities to improve the academy are the right ones and are working.
- The governing body is unable to help steer the academy forward because it does not have systems and procedures to enable it to check closely on the academy's performance.

The school has the following strengths

- Students feel safe.
- The sixth form requires improvement; although a greater proportion of teaching here is good, progress is not consistently good.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 31 lessons, of which four were observed jointly with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher.
- The inspectors took into account the 56 responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the information from 34 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors held meetings with three groups of students, senior and subject leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents. This included the information about the progress of students of all abilities in each year group and how closely the academy's improvement plan matches their needs. They also looked at records of checks on the quality of teaching, students' behaviour and attendance, as well as policies to help safeguard them.

Inspection team

Lynne Blakelock, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Peter McKay	Additional Inspector
Tudor Griffiths	Additional Inspector
David Woodhouse	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with 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.

Information about this school

- Armthorpe became an academy in July 2012. It works in partnership with three other academies, which make up 'The Consortium of Community Trusts.'
- Although Armthorpe Academy has its own governing body, just over half of the governors are appointed by the umbrella trust members.
- This academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The number of students on roll is declining.
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium (additional government funding for looked after children, students known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families) is above the national average.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above average.
- The academy uses alternative places for students to learn away from school. 'Open Cast' provides for a small proportion of students with learning and behavioural issues. Five students attend Doncaster College. A significant proportion attend Danum Academy for post-16 courses.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching throughout the academy and in all subjects, so that it is at least consistently good, accelerates progress and raises standards, by making sure that:
 - students know exactly what they are expected to learn in each lesson
 - tasks are closely matched to the levels students need to work at and ensure students of all abilities are well challenged
 - students respond in future work to advice given in marking that tells them what they have achieved and what their next steps in learning should be
 - staff have the highest expectations of the quality, quantity and presentation of students' work.
- Raise standards, especially in English and mathematics across Key Stages 3 and 4, so that students make at least good progress, by ensuring that:
 - consistently good or better teaching is established and sustained across the academy, starting with an audit of the strengths and areas for development in teaching
 - best practice in the teaching of English and mathematics is modelled for other staff.
- Secure students' good behaviour and attitudes towards learning through:
 - making sure that staff demonstrate the highest expectations of students' conduct

- ensuring that staff apply the behaviour policy consistently.

 - Improve students' attendance more rapidly through:
 - an overhaul of the attendance procedures
 - a greater emphasis on ensuring students and their parents understand the relationship between progress and attendance.

 - Strengthen significantly the impact of leaders and managers at all levels on raising standards and accelerating students' progress by ensuring that:
 - all leaders have very clearly defined roles, responsibilities and accountability for raising standards, improving the quality of teaching and increasing the effectiveness of the curriculum in their areas, and report regularly to the senior leadership team the progress made
 - the headteacher and deputy headteacher check and assess very carefully the impact of the work of subject and year leaders on the academy's goals for improvement in order to keep the academy on track to improve the quality of education.

 - Improve the quality of governance by making sure that the governing body:
 - develops systems and procedures that enable governors to check for themselves how well the academy is doing, so that they can support and challenge it more robustly.
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Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Students do not make the progress expected of them from their starting points when they join Year 7. This is because teaching is not good enough to raise standards. Students' progress throughout the academy was inadequate in 2012 in English, mathematics, languages and science.
- At the end of Year 11 the proportion of students achieving at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is significantly lower than average. Students' performance in English is also significantly below average. However, the proportion of students achieving five or more A* to G grades at GCSE is above average. Students achieve well in, for example, drama and English Literature and BTEC hospitality and catering. However, not enough achieve higher grades in most subjects.
- The school's data at the end of Year 9 in 2012 show a sharp increase in the proportion of students reaching expected levels in English and mathematics. However, this is not reflected in the quality of learning observed in lessons which, overall, is not strong enough to raise standards at either Key Stage 3 or 4, especially for those students capable of reaching higher levels. Inspection evidence points to the use of support groups at times to help raise standards, rather than regularly good teaching over time.
- Most groups of students, including those from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language, make similar rates of progress, which match the quality of teaching and support. Girls, though, achieve better than boys. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs made inadequate progress last year, although the academy's data indicate that some are starting to make better progress this year. The performance of students receiving the 'school action plus' level of support, the majority of whom have behavioural or attendance issues, continues to be significantly below average. The few students educated off-site are making expected progress in both their learning and behaviour.
- The academy's data show that the gap between the average point score of students known to be eligible for free school meals and supported by pupil premium funding and that of students nationally known to be entitled to free school meals has not narrowed. However, the gap between the average point score in English and mathematics of students known to be eligible for free school meals and other students in the academy has narrowed.
- Some more-able students take the GCSE mathematics examination early. Students who do not achieve the higher grades expected of them resit the examination.
- Those students educated on other sites, including at work placements, are making at least expected progress in their chosen courses.
- Students in the sixth form are benefiting from courses that meet their needs more closely, from good support and guidance and from a greater proportion of good teaching than found elsewhere in the academy. Ninety five per cent of students stay on into Year 13 and, after this, almost all get a job or go into further or higher education. Students' attainment by the end of Year 13 was below average overall in 2012 which, from their below-average attainment on entry, shows that achievement requires improvement. There are, however, strengths in some subjects, including in BTEC courses.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- While there is some better teaching, far too much requires improvement or is inadequate, especially in English and in mathematics. Consequently, students' achievement over time is inadequate.
- Where teaching is weak, teachers' expectations of students' learning, attitudes and quality of presentation are too low. In several subjects students complete only small amounts of work that show little care has been taken. In a Year 9 English lesson observed, for example, only a few

students had done their homework.

- Too often teachers do not make clear to students the purpose of learning or give them a specific enough focus. Therefore, students are not well motivated to learn and tend to lose interest.
- The main issue slowing students' progress is that work is not well enough matched to their learning needs. In several lessons the work provided was the same for everyone. It often lacked challenge, especially for those capable of reaching higher levels, and slowed their progress.
- Although some marking, especially of formal assessments, tells students what they have achieved and advises them well on how to make further progress, most marking is of poor quality. The intervals between such marking are too long, leaving students unsure of how well they are doing or how to improve. When teachers give advice there is scant evidence that it is acted upon. However, a more positive feature is that students are, more and more, assessing the quality of learning of their classmates and this is promoting a more focused approach to their own learning.
- In the lessons where teaching is good, strong relationships between students and teachers, high expectations and a range of well-planned tasks result in good progress.
- Sixth-form students are given lots of opportunities to practise their independent learning skills, including through research and discussions, and group work extends their thinking.
- The recent focus on promoting literacy in all subjects was evident in a number of lessons, including mathematics. However, it is not carefully enough considered and has not had time to make any discernible impact on students' achievement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- Students' inattention and low-level disruption in lessons, along with below-average attendance rates, slow considerably their rate of learning and progress.
- Students' behaviour varies according to the expectations of staff and the quality of teaching. While many students behave maturely and are a credit to the academy, too many fail to pay attention in lessons and some distract others, impeding progress.
- Attendance remains below average overall. It is significantly below average for students with special educational needs supported at 'school action plus'. Persistent absence rates are far higher than found nationally in Year 11 and are also a cause for concern in Year 9. The academy is working to reduce these and there are some signs of improvement, but there is a long way to go.
- Fixed-term exclusions have fallen, helped by the use of the supervision room where students go when their behaviour is poor. Students value the new system of rewards.
- Most students say they feel safe in school and that there is very little bullying: parents agree. Students understand the different types of prejudice, including homophobia. Students show a good awareness of how to avoid the potential dangers of using the internet.
- Students enjoy their growing involvement in improving the academy and have more opportunities to participate and take responsibility. This includes the sixth-form students who, for example, help support younger students learning English as a foreign language. However, not enough is done to promote students' sense of responsibility and ownership.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, have been ineffective in improving the quality of education. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have accurately identified the issues preventing improvement. For example, they are fully aware that too much teaching is not good enough to raise standards. They judge the quality of teaching accurately but their measures to strengthen it have not had the necessary impact.
- Regular meetings between senior leaders and subject and year leaders focus on detailed data

about students' progress, attendance and behaviour. Yet leaders at all levels cannot explain why, overall, the 2012 GCSE results fell so far short of the predictions. Inspection findings show that the quality of checking of teaching, progress and behaviour by some leaders lacks the necessary thoroughness. As a result, some do not have a full, accurate overview of strengths and weaknesses in teaching or of the struggle that some teachers have to manage behaviour.

- A third of the staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire felt that behaviour was not consistently well managed and over a half indicated that the academy's policies were not regularly followed. The academy's data show that its appropriate systems to improve behaviour and attendance are starting to make a difference but that there is some way to go to ensure that students, on a daily basis, can learn without distractions.
- The quality of teaching does not, in general, support the movement of teachers up the pay scale.
- The effectiveness of the inclusive sixth form is improving. The sixth-form leader works closely with the staff from other providers to check the progress and well-being of students who learn off site.
- Partnerships between home and the academy are secure. Parents have expressed their support for the academy, particularly the quality of care it provides.
- The academy's procedures for safeguarding students, including those educated on other sites, meet the statutory requirements.
- The curriculum throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 provides a suitable range of courses with particular thought given to how learning is organised to meet the needs of Year 7 students.. However, planning across the academy does not enable students of different levels of ability to build regularly on what they already know. This demonstrates an inequality of opportunity for students and means the impact of the curriculum is inadequate. Students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning show that, overall, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is ineffectively developed.
- The local authority and The Consortium of Academy Trusts provide a range of support to improve teaching and strengthen leadership but this has not enabled the academy to improve sufficiently.
- Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Following the considerable shock caused by the wholly unexpected and significantly lower than average Key Stage 4 results in 2012, the governing body has begun to question the academy's performance more robustly. However, governors do not know enough about the quality of teaching, students' performance, the impact of pupil premium funding, or decisions about pay increases for staff, to enable them to challenge the actions of leaders and managers to help the academy to improve. Appropriate systems to help them do this are not in place.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138314
Local authority	Not applicable
Inspection number	407074

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	739
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	121
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sally Shearman
Principal	Mr Andy Cope
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01302 831582
Fax number	01302 300757
Email address	admin@armthorpe.doncaster.sch.uk

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