

# North Durham Academy

East Campus, Tyne Road, South Stanley, County Durham, DH9 6PZ

**Inspection dates** 26–27 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Not enough students gained five GCSEs with English and mathematics in 2012. Students did not make sufficient progress from their often below-average starting points in Year 7, particularly boys and students entitled to free school meals.
- Although improving, teaching has not been good enough over the past two years to eradicate the history of underachievement, especially for older students.
- Teachers do not always provide activities that are set at the right level to move students on quickly from their individual starting points.
- Teachers do not always use the additional adults in all parts of the lesson to support and challenge students' learning.
- Not all teachers are adopting the academy's good marking policy.
- At times teachers spend too long talking, leaving less opportunity for students to work things out for themselves.
- While students speak positively about improvements in behaviour, it still requires improvement. This is because not all staff or students are playing their part in adhering to the academy's behaviour management policy.

### The school has the following strengths

- The majority of teaching is now good. This is making a positive difference to students' progress in lessons. It is also helping to narrow the gap between the achievements of boys, students entitled to free school meals and other students.
- Students who spoke to inspectors say they feel safe in the academy and confident there is always someone on hand when they need help or advice. They like the 'Stop Bullying' texting scheme, noting it has had a marked impact on reducing all forms of bullying.
- Students who have a statement of special educational needs achieve well because of the additional care and support provided.
- The restructured senior and middle leadership teams have embraced the Principal's and sponsors' ambitious vision and drive to raise aspirations and students' achievement. This can be seen in students' accelerating progress in class but it is too early to see the full impact of the collective actions they are taking.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with half a day’s notice. Inspectors observed 45 lessons across both sites. Eight lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors heard students read and visited a range of sessions where students learn including one-to-one literacy support and nurture-group sessions.
- Discussions were held with the Principal, senior and middle leaders and staff. Discussions were also held with a school improvement officer from Durham County Council and representatives of the governing body, some of whom were also representing the academy sponsors.
- Inspectors spoke to students in lessons and at various times during each day. They also spoke formally to four groups of students on the second day of the inspection.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documentation, including the academy’s evaluation of its work, improvement plans and leaders’ records of their observations of teaching and students’ progress in lessons. They also looked at policies and documents to keep students safe.
- The inspectors took account of 25 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 44 responses to the staff inspection survey.

## Inspection team

Margaret Farrow, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Christina McIntosh	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Nigel Drew	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Rothery	Additional Inspector
Catherine Laing	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- North Durham is an average-sized academy. It opened in September 2011 and is sponsored by New College Durham and Durham County Council. The academy is currently based on the sites of the two predecessor schools. Students are due to move into the new, purpose-built accommodation in September 2013.
- Virtually all students are of White British heritage. The number known to be eligible for the pupil premium is nearly double that found in other schools nationally (funding available for students known to be eligible for free school meals, students in local authority care and those whose parents are in the armed forces).
- An average proportion of students have been identified as requiring extra help at school action because of their special educational needs or disability.
- The proportion of students receiving extra help at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average. This is partly because there is a learning resource base for up to 25 students with speech, language or communication difficulties. All of these students are fully integrated into the academy and are supported alongside their peers in class.
- At the time of the inspection no Year 11 students were on site. They had completed their examinations and left the academy. From September 2013 the academy will offer sixth-form provision for its first group of Year 12 students, in partnership with New College Durham.
- A small group of students are educated off site. A number of these students have been at risk of permanent exclusion. Students attend provision in either the YMCA in Stanley or the Green School, Durham County Council's alternative education provision in Lanchester.
- Some Year 10 and 11 students take vocational subjects at New College Durham once a week.
- There has been a significant change of staff since the academy opened. By September 2013 virtually half of the staff, including a number of senior and middle leaders, will not have taught at the predecessor schools.
- In 2012 the academy did not meet the government's current floor standards (these are the minimum standards and rate of progress expected of secondary-aged students).

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Hasten the rate of improvement in students' progress and achievement in lessons by leaders:
  - accelerating strategies to improve teaching, including through sharing good practice and training and robust performance management processes where necessary
  - making sure teachers always use the information they have about students' previous learning to plan for, and provide, varied, stimulating activities that are set at the right level and move students on quickly from their starting points, particularly the more-able and lower-ability students
  - making sure all teachers use the marking and feedback policy well so students always understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work
  - ensuring teachers provide more opportunities for students to take responsibility for their learning through research, investigation or working in groups, pairs or independently
  - ensuring teachers deploy additional adults in class effectively to support and challenge students' learning
  - ensuring the behaviour management policy is consistently applied so that all staff and students play their part in improving behaviour in lessons.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Strategies to improve students' achievement and progress, developed by academy leaders on opening, are making a positive difference to students' progress in lessons but did not have time to tackle fully the history of underachievement for last year's or this year's Year 11.
- Current assessments indicate that the proportion of students gaining five good GCSEs will increase and the academy is predicted to meet the government's floor standards. There is still some way to go for students' achievement to match that found nationally.
- The way that the academy has used early entry to English and mathematics examinations has been improved. No students take English examinations early. In mathematics students who may need an extra chance to get a good grade are entered early and then resit in June if need be. The proportion with a GCSE in mathematics is already higher than last year's results.
- Evidence from students' assessment information, scrutiny of students books, discussions with them and lesson observations conducted during the inspection indicate students across the academy are making at least expected, and often good, progress in lessons.
- Better use of the additional pupil premium funding, through smaller class groups and specific interventions for boys and students known to be entitled to free school meals, is helping to narrow the gap between their progress and achievement in lessons and those of other students.
- Recent improvement to the way that literacy is taught is helping to improve students' skills in lessons other than English. Where this is working well, it is inspiring students' confidence in reading aloud and in their writing and communication skills. Leaders are developing further strategies to ensure all students have opportunities to read widely and often.
- Students attending the range of alternative provision are tracked and monitored for their progress, safety and care. Where a student is identified as being at risk of not meeting their targets, additional support is secured. Current tracking data show good improvement in students' basic skills, attendance and in their Level 1 or Level 2 vocational courses.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Leaders' uncompromising focus on improving teaching has been the driving force in the faster progress students are making in lessons. It is helping students to develop better learning habits, as seen in their generally positive attitudes and behaviour in lessons.
- Students who spoke to inspectors report that teaching has improved, over the last year particularly. They also report that some lessons are not interesting, especially when teachers talk for too long and do not give them time to work things out for themselves.
- Much teaching is now good and it is occasionally outstanding. Inadequate teaching has been virtually stamped out but there are still too many lessons where teachers do not match activities closely enough to students' current skills and understanding. This holds back the progress of higher- and lower-ability students particularly, because work is not always challenging enough for the former and too hard for the latter.
- In two outstanding lessons observed, inspiring and creative teaching captivated students' interest and zeal for learning. For example, in a Year 7 science class students enthusiastically dissected animal hearts, promoting much lively moral and ethical debate. In a sports lesson on cricket it was splendid to see students expertly coach their teacher in long-barrier fielding.
- In better lessons teachers make good use of resources like the interactive whiteboard, including providing opportunities for students to confidently work on the large screens, sharing their problem-solving skills with their classmates.
- Most teachers are getting to grips with the academy's improved marking policy. There are examples of high-quality, informative marking and feedback that students report help them understand how well they are doing and what they need to improve on or to move on to next. This good practice is not embedded across the academy yet, nor is the good practice in some

lessons where the teaching assistants are fully involved in all parts of the lesson, challenging as well as supporting students to make rapid progress.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **require improvement**

- Students report an increasingly positive atmosphere and a growing pride in their academy. This is in part due to the 'House' system which they say is driving a stronger sense of belonging. Students express their satisfaction with how it allows them to mix with their own and other age groups. They also report that it helps them to feel included.
- Students generally get along well together in class and during lunch and break times. They are usually well-mannered and polite to visitors and staff. They report that behaviour is improving, with few lessons disrupted by low-level misbehaviour.
- However, behaviour and attitudes are not consistently positive. There has been a significant reduction in the number of students temporarily excluded because of poor behaviour this year but the proportion remains above that found nationally.
- Some students, a few parents and a significant minority of staff responding to the inspection questionnaires consider that behaviour is not reliably good and behaviour management strategies not consistently applied.
- Nevertheless, students report that the reward and sanctions system is helping to improve students' behaviour. They like the vivo miles rewards and particularly appreciate the postcards home that let their parents know when things are going well.
- Students confirm that they feel safe and well supported in times of need. Students in the learning resource base are very well cared for. Strong action is taken to ensure students are safe on both sites and students feel well taught about potential risks to their personal safety.
- Systems to respond to and reduce incidents of bullying, including racist and homophobic incidents, are extremely robust and, along with the wide range of work taking place on such issues in assemblies and across the curriculum, mean that bullying is in decline. Students affirm how well any form of bullying is dealt with once someone knows about it.
- Attendance rates, although below average, are improving because of the actions taken by staff and the improvements across the academy.
- The alternative curriculum, delivered with other agencies, is helping to get reluctant students back into education and, consequently, making a difference to their confidence, self-esteem, basic skills and future work options. The vocational courses at New College Durham are contributing to increases in the number of students gaining Level 1 and 2 qualifications.

### **The leadership and management**

### **require improvement**

- The Principal and sponsors have taken firm action to raise aspirations and instil higher expectations of staff in order to improve the life chances of students. As a result, there have been significant changes in staffing over the last two years.
- The leadership team, with recent middle and senior leader appointments, is increasingly involved in driving improvement across the academy. Although too early to judge full impact, middle and senior leaders say they have been positively buoyed by their increasing responsibilities and the tangible lift in the quality of teaching and students' progress in lessons.
- Leaders know there is more to do before they are fully effective in securing good or better achievement for all students and eradicating the achievement gap completely between students in North Durham and students nationally.
- Accurate evaluation of the academy's work is based on thorough analysis of the quality of teaching and regular checks on the progress of all students and groups of students. Clear action plans have been put in place as a result, including a raising achievement plan demanded from sponsors following the disappointing results at the end of the academy's first year of operation.
- Plans have clear success measures and are monitored regularly by leaders, sponsors and the governing body. Leaders recognise that progress reports sometimes focus on whether actions

have been carried out rather than on the impact of actions. They are taking steps to tackle this.

- The curriculum is broad and adapted effectively to meet individual students' needs. This helped 80% of students to gain five good GCSEs last year. Weaknesses were in English and mathematics. The teaching of these subjects has changed significantly and, together with the recent literacy strategy where teachers develop students' literacy skills within other subjects, is starting to improve students' reading, writing and communication skills effectively.
- Leaders have an ambitious vision and good plans for the sixth form and for the first group of students who will have to remain in education or training until the age of 18. This is not least due to the strong partnership with the sponsor, New College Durham.
- Every opportunity is taken to enrich the curriculum to develop students culturally, socially, morally and spiritually. A wide range of additional activities aim to broaden students' horizons.
- Students speak confidently about how subjects such as personal and social education, the 'inspire' curriculum and assembly time enable them to reflect on key moral, social and spiritual dilemmas, and build a sense of identity in the academy.
- The academy is well supported and challenged by both sponsors, who feel the rate of improvement has accelerated. From regular scrutiny of the academy's work they are confident that outcomes for students will be better this year and even better for the current Year 10 who have had more time to benefit from the whole-scale improvements across the academy.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance, including that from the sponsors, is strong. Governors are well-informed, fully involved in reviewing the work of the academy and challenge where things need to be better, as exemplified in the information demanded following the 2012 examination results. Governors have ensured all statutory requirements are met, including those related to safeguarding students, and have adopted a rigorous approach to financial management. Resources are used well to make sure students have equal opportunities to take part in all the academy has to offer. For example, in order to instil a sense and pride and status for older students, newly designed uniforms are being provided free of charge. Careful checks on the use of the pupil premium have resulted in the funding of additional teachers and support staff for students entitled to free school meals and Year 7 students who were not achieving well when they started the academy. This is contributing to the better progress these students are making in class and in narrowing the gap between their achievement and that of their classmates. Sponsors and governors rigorously check how strategies to improve teaching are working and ensure that performance management arrangements for staff are linked to improvements in students' achievement and teaching quality. Robust actions are taken when teaching is not up to scratch. Governors and sponsors look beyond the academy gates to seek external support and challenge, to help drive improvements, but also to check that actions leaders are taking are working. For example, ongoing, good subject support from Durham County's Education Development Service has helped to support the improvements in English and mathematics and the leadership skills of the subject leaders. Innovative ways have been secured to develop positive relationships with parents and to secure their views about how things are going in the academy. The use of the academy's new 'Facebook' site provides instant feedback to initiatives and actions.

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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136745
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	399848

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy Sponsor Led
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	981
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Rasmussen
<b>Principal</b>	David Thornton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01207 292180
<b>Fax number</b>	Not applicable
<b>Email address</b>	info@ndacademy.co.uk



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