

# Sutton Community Academy

High Pavement, Sutton-in-Ashfield, NG17 1EE

**Inspection dates** 17–18 September 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		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 Year 11 students made the progress expected of them in mathematics in 2014.
- Teaching is not consistently good enough to ensure students, particularly the academy's most-able students, make enough progress in all subjects.
- The sixth form requires improvement because achievement and teaching are not consistently good.
- Students' literacy skills require development.
- Senior leaders and the academy sponsor have been too optimistic when judging the quality of teaching in the school. Teacher performance is not linked closely enough to pay progression.
- The academy does not provide enough opportunities for students to learn about other cultures, or political and social issues in order to make them better prepared for life in modern Britain.

### The school has the following strengths

- The school is improving.
- Achievement is good in several subjects, most notably in English language, drama, business studies, and in vocational subjects.
- Teachers plan lessons that are well-structured.
- Students' behaviour is good. They are polite, friendly and work exceptionally well together. Relationships between students and teachers are very positive.
- Governors are fully aware of their responsibilities, and they provide effective challenge and support to senior leaders.
- The new Principal has accurately identified areas for development and he has begun to address these.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students learning in 35 lessons taught by 31 different teachers. Nine of these lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. An inspector evaluated students' experience of the academy's Year 10 work experience programme. The lead inspector visited every Year 11 mathematics group to see the learning that was taking place.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, senior and middle leaders, five members of the governing body, and two representatives of the academy sponsor, including the Chief Executive Officer.
- Inspectors spoke with students in meetings as well as informally in lessons.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the academy's evaluation of its own performance, data on students' attainment and progress, attendance and behaviour records, safeguarding procedures, evaluations on the quality of teaching, and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors reviewed a selection of work in students' books.
- There were only nine responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire. However, inspectors did take account of 288 parental responses to the academy's own survey and the 36 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Ian McNeilly, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

William Morris

Additional Inspector

Melanie Callaghan

Additional Inspector

Susan Tabberer

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The academy opened on 1 January 2013. It is sponsored by Academy Transformation Trust.
- The academy has a new Principal who took up his position on a full-time basis at the beginning of September 2014.
- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school for students aged 11-18.
- The proportion of students for whom the academy receives pupil premium funding is double that of the national average. This additional government funding is for students in care of the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is well above average.
- The student population is almost exclusively White British.
- Last academic year, a total of 24 students attended short-term courses offered by the School Partnership Alternative Centre for Education in Kirkby-in-Ashfield. The academy collaborates at sixth form level with Quarrydale Academy in Sutton-in-Ashfield and West Nottinghamshire College in Mansfield.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

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

- Improve teaching so that it better meets the needs of individual students, particularly the most-able.
- Improve achievement by building on the recent increased rates of progress, particularly in mathematics.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - making the academy's systems to judge the quality of teaching more rigorous and then linking the outcomes more closely to pay progression
  - ensuring that standards of literacy, including oral communication, improve across the academy
  - providing more opportunities in the curriculum for students to learn about other cultures, and political and social issues in order to make them better prepared for life in modern Britain.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because senior leaders and the academy sponsor have not yet secured good achievement for their students. However, this school has improved since becoming an academy.
- The new Principal has accurately identified significant areas for development and revised the academy's self-evaluation document to reflect these. He met with all members of staff at the beginning of the term to outline his clear vision for the school and to emphasise that all teachers should act as role models to the students. While acknowledging that he is developing professionally in his new role, the Principal is committed to meeting the challenges that lie ahead in order to improve the academy.
- Judgements on the quality of teaching are not rigorous enough. Senior leaders reported to the local governing body in the summer term of 2014 that 93% of teaching was good or better. Students' rates of achievement do not reflect such a view and neither did the quality of teaching observed during the inspection, though many strengths were apparent. Teacher performance is not linked closely enough to pay progression. The academy sponsor has not addressed this issue effectively. The Principal and representatives of the Trust acknowledge this and have plans to improve their management of this area.
- Leaders have not ensured that students have good literacy skills. This is particularly the case for the academy's youngest students. This includes oral communication. Some students do not have the ability or confidence to give their opinions.
- The curriculum is generally broad and balanced, though students do not have the opportunity to study single sciences at Key Stage 4 if they wish to. Vocational courses are a strength of the academy. Leaders have increased the numbers of students studying French and Spanish which has put them in a strong position to fulfil the requirement of the English Baccalaureate.
- The academy serves a community which lacks cultural diversity. The curriculum does not currently make enough provision for students to learn about other cultures, or political and social issues. There is good practice, such as a focus on Holocaust Memorial Day and through the school council and youth parliament. The academy has been successful in discussing certain events, such as local protest marches or, at the time of the inspection, the referendum in Scotland. However, the academy is reactive in this sense and these opportunities do not feature prominently enough in curriculum plans. The need for this was reflected in a lesson in Year 12 where the students struggled to name the main political parties in the local area.
- The positive behaviour of the students reflects their good moral and social development. The child care qualification in the sixth form effectively promoted social development by giving four Year 13 students the opportunity of working with children with disabilities to improve their swimming skills.
- Senior leaders and teachers have made extra-curricular activities a popular option. The take-up of lunchtime and after-school clubs is very high with nine of out ten students in Key Stages 3 and 4 attending at least one club. This has a positive effect on their social skills.
- Subject and pastoral leaders are allowed to develop professionally (for example, via the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership) and the Principal plans to extend these opportunities. The Principal is in the process of meeting all middle leaders to ensure they understand their responsibilities and to address their individual development needs. These leaders have a good understanding of their roles and they are contributing to improving achievement in the academy.
- The leader with responsibility for mathematics began at the academy in September 2013 and took over a department which had been judged inadequate by the academy sponsor. Her leadership has ensured that this department is now much improved, though there is still extensive work to do to ensure good achievement for students.

- Careers advice and guidance takes place from Year 8 onwards. There is a particular focus on work experience in Year 10; students have to act independently to identify potential placements and contact the employers themselves. Students were highly engaged and their employability skills were improved by the programme. All students in Year 11, as well as some targeted students in Years 9 and 10, receive independent careers guidance. This informs them about their next steps, but low retention rates in the sixth form indicate that not enough students make the right choices.
- Assessment information is used by leaders to inform changes to the curriculum. The academy is continuing to use former National Curriculum levels while the sponsor decides on a consistent approach for its schools.
- Leaders have secured improvements in the achievement of disadvantaged students (approximately half of the academy's students) but, as with those students who are not disadvantaged, the improvement is not consistent across subjects and this aspect requires improvement. However, leaders could demonstrate how pupil premium funding had been spent and how it had improved pupils' achievement.
- Students were positive about their experiences of alternative provision and they valued the support offered, as well as the opportunity to learn vocational skills such as cabinet making and decorating. Courses were between six and twelve weeks in duration, and students usually attended for one morning or afternoon a week.
- Senior and middle leaders have successfully developed an atmosphere of care and safety in the academy.
- The academy's sponsor offers a range of support and professional development opportunities for teachers and senior leaders. Their review of the academy's mathematics provision was accurate and they have also offered guidance on improving outcomes for disabled students and those who have special educational needs. The Chief Executive Officer of the academy sponsor knows the school well and he is committed to improving the life chances of the students.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance of the academy is good. The Chair of the Local Governing Body is an experienced educationalist who leads on governance issues for the academy sponsor. He is knowledgeable and effectively leads a team of governors who challenge school leaders to improve the life chances of the students in their care. Governors are aware of their responsibilities, and that these extend to the safeguarding of students. This has had a positive impact on the academy's effectiveness in dealing with incidents of homophobic language; governors insisted that these incidents be reported separately so they could be better monitored. Governors are aware of the academy's areas for development, including improving the quality of teaching in certain subject areas, though they have not been helped in this regard by over-optimistic judgements on teaching from senior leaders. The Chair of the Local Governing Body takes part in the performance management of the Principal. Several governors are trained in safer recruitment practices and they take part in panel interviews for new staff.

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

- The behaviour of students is good. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and these have developed well over time. There are no significant concerns about behaviour raised by students, teachers or parents.
- Students work together exceptionally well. Even the academy's youngest students show positive, mature attitudes. Students in Year 8 show impressive social skills in many lessons, and particularly so in drama and food technology.
- Although students consistently display positive attitudes in lessons, some do not attempt to answer teachers' questions because they lack self-confidence or the necessary oral skills.

- Students generally behave well during break times and when moving around the school site between lessons.
- Students take pride in their appearance. They wish that the school could look as smart as they do. Some teachers, supported ably by non-teaching staff, have gone to great lengths to make their classroom environments welcoming and informative. This is not consistent throughout the building. This was acknowledged by the Chief Executive Officer of the sponsor (which has already made significant investment in the building) who has plans to address the students' most immediate concerns.
- Attendance in 2013–14, although still below the national average, was an improvement on the previous year. Attendance of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is similar to that of other students. Students appreciate the reward system in place for good attendance.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students have a good awareness of different forms of bullying and e-safety. Students know what to do if either they or another student is at risk of harm. Staff and volunteers are carefully selected.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement as it has not been consistently good enough over time to ensure that students make good progress across subject areas, and particularly in mathematics.
- Too much teaching is aimed at those of average ability. Where this is the case, it has a negative effect on the rates of progress of the academy's most able students. When they are not sufficiently challenged, they do not fulfil their potential.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved over the last academic year, so that the learning which takes place in that subject is no longer inadequate. Good learning was seen in several mathematics lessons, though some practice still requires improvement.
- The marking of students' work is regular and detailed, and helps students make progress in their subjects.
- Teachers' marking does not always support students' literacy development. Some good examples were seen, particularly in history in Year 7 where spelling mistakes were noted and corrections insisted upon; in this classroom, displays also supported literacy development. This was seen in other subjects but it is not consistent enough to address students' weaknesses in literacy.
- The very positive relationships established between teachers and students make a clear contribution to the learning that takes place. Little time is wasted dealing with low-level disruption, and students work very well together in group tasks.
- Teachers plan lessons that are well-structured. Almost every lesson observed had a very clear structure and students invariably understood the purpose of activities.
- Good learning took place in many lessons observed, particularly in English, drama and food technology.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because it is not consistently good across all subjects.
- Literacy skills are underdeveloped in the academy. Improving these skills – including verbal communication – is a priority, and senior leaders are aware of this.

- Too many of the academy's more able students do not make the progress expected of them.
- The achievement of Year 11 students in mathematics in 2014 was poor. However, from a very low base, these students made an average increase of 1.15 GCSE grades in just over two terms following the appointment in September 2013 of a new head of department. This was not enough to compensate for previous lack of progress and, as a result, only half of the students made the progress expected of them. Mathematics progress in Years 7 to 10 was better.
- Of the 17 GCSE subjects available in 2014, students' rates of progress were in line with national averages for two of them, exceeded national averages in eight of them, but were below national averages in seven. This reflects the inconsistency between subjects, but also confirms that the academy is doing well in several areas.
- Drama, business studies and core science saw the greatest successes in 2014 GCSEs as, in these subjects, the academy's students performed better than the national averages in terms of both making and exceeding the progress expected of them. However, core science is advantaged in the academy as the more able students who might normally study single sciences have this as their only option. Art and food technology students also performed well. The proportion of students who made the progress expected of them in English language was greater than that achieved by students nationally though not enough students exceeded the progress expected of them, especially given the high-quality learning experiences in the subject that were observed during the inspection.
- Vocational qualifications are a strength; students made good progress in all of these subjects at Key Stage 4 in 2014.
- The achievement of disadvantaged students requires improvement because it is too variable across subjects. Three quarters of these pupils made the progress expected of them in English language, a figure that is not only well above the national average for disadvantaged students but exceeds the performance of students nationally who are not eligible for pupil premium funding. However, only a third of the academy's disadvantaged students made similar progress in mathematics. The academy's disadvantaged students were half a grade behind their peers in English and a grade and a half behind their peers in mathematics.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs requires improvement for the same reason as other students – it is too variable across the school and has been affected by low achievement in mathematics. However, these students made very good progress in certain GCSE subjects in 2014, including information and communication technology, physical education, music, drama, French and across vocational qualifications.
- The academy has begun to have an impact on encouraging students to read more widely. Students begin most lessons with ten minutes private reading; this has begun to raise the status of reading.
- Year 7 catch-up funding has been used to pay for literacy progress units, and to fund intervention groups. This, along with the use of a multi-media scheme designed to improve reading skills, is helping students make improvements but not as rapidly as required.

### The sixth form provision

### requires improvement

- Attainment in academic qualifications improved significantly in 2014 by one full grade at A level. However, this was from a low base and achievement is not yet good. Students do not consistently make good progress and many fall short of their target grades.
- Disadvantaged students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs do not make as much progress as their peers.

- Achievement is particularly low for those students who are re-taking their English and/or mathematics GCSEs.
- Achievement in vocational qualifications is good, and improved by more than a grade in 2014. All vocational students achieved at least one substantial qualification.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form requires improvement because it has not enabled students to make good, consistent progress across all subject areas. The quality of teaching is good in some subjects. Good progress was made by students in travel and tourism, including the development of literacy skills, and the students were supported in this subject by marking which was described by the observing inspector as 'forensic'.
- Behaviour and safety are good, with positive peer relationships contributing to the caring and friendly ethos of the school. It is not outstanding because students are not always as intellectually curious as they need to be to make good progress in post-16 study, despite the high expectations their teachers often have of them.
- Leadership in the sixth form requires improvement. Too many students begin courses which do not suit them and this leads to many dropping subjects after the first year. Effective strategies have not been put in place to improve success rates in GCSE English and mathematics. Senior leaders have been effective in ensuring that those leaving the sixth form have a destination to go to. Academy data show that almost three quarters of Year 13 leavers in 2014 went on to higher education, and no students were classed as NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training).



## 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>	139063
<b>Local authority</b>	Nottinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	447871

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	656
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	108
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Bishop
<b>Principal</b>	Tim Croft
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected as an academy
<b>Telephone number</b>	0845 8405500
<b>Fax number</b>	01623 405544
<b>Email address</b>	tim.croft@suttonacademy.attrust.org.uk

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