

The Gainsborough Academy

Sweyn Lane, Off Corringham Road, Gainsborough, DN21 1PB

Inspection dates 1–2 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Over time, the achievement of students has not been good enough, especially in the case of boys and higher ability students.
- Students have been entered too early for examinations and in some cases have studied qualifications which were not well-matched to their abilities.
- Teaching is not yet well-matched to the needs of students because teachers do not always make best use of the information they have about what students already know and can do.
- Teachers' use of questioning does not support enough students to fully explain their thinking and deepen their understanding.
- The development of students' English and mathematical skills is improving but has not yet helped some older students fully catch up on earlier under-achievement.
- Teachers mark work regularly but not all of them check students are acting upon their feedback and this can slow down progress.
- While students' conduct is good, previous under-achievement has caused some to lose confidence and not give their best in lessons when they do not understand their work. Their attitudes therefore require improvement.
- Subject leaders have not always made consistent use of assessment information to set realistic targets for students.

The school has the following strengths

- The determined Principal, governors and new senior staff have a clear and realistic view of the academy's strengths and remaining areas for improvement. As a result they have managed to tackle important weaknesses quickly.
- Leaders have tackled teachers' under-performance and the quality of teaching is now better for students currently at the academy.
- The achievement of students is no longer inadequate and is improving steadily.
- Students are safe and well-cared for and their attendance has improved.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is now a strength of the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 38 lessons and five part lessons, of which 14 were seen jointly with the Principal or senior leader. Inspectors also toured the site and made observations of students' behaviour and attitudes.
- Inspectors studied a range of documents including the academy's view of its own performance improvement plans and checks on the quality of teaching. They also studied information about students' progress, attainment, behaviour, attendance and their safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, senior leaders, subject leaders, the chair of governors and the Chief Executive of the academy sponsoring group to which the academy belongs.
- Inspectors formally met with over 60 students on the first and second day of the inspection, in order to discuss their views on behaviour, safety and academic progress.
- Inspectors took account of 88 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 41 responses of teachers and staff who completed an inspection survey.
- At the time of this inspection, there were 66 examination appeals pending relating to the GCSE English results of Summer 2014.

Inspection team

David Turner, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Sa'ad Khaldi	Additional Inspector
Kathleen Yates	Additional Inspector
Christine Staley	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- This is a below-average-sized secondary academy school.
- When inspected in May 2013, the school was known as The Trent Valley academy and was judged to be inadequate and requiring significant improvement.
- At the time of the previous inspection, the organisation sponsoring the academy was the EACT Academy Group. This arrangement changed in June 2014 when the academy changed sponsor. It is now part of the Lincoln College Academy Group which consists of Lincoln College, the Newark Academy, the Gainsborough Academy and two further education colleges located in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- At the time of this inspection, the Principal had been in substantive post for less than half an academic term but had been acting Principal since early in the Spring Term of 2014. Several senior and subject leadership post holders were also appointed as recently as September 2014.
- Also at the time of the inspection, of 54 teaching staff, over 30 had joined the academy since September 2013.
- The academy operates within an area where some students attend grammar schools.
- The vast majority of students are White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students for whom the academy receives the pupil premium (additional government funding) is above average.
- There are 106 disabled students and those who have special educational needs receiving support through the new education, health and care plan. The proportion of students supported through a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- 24 students attend part-time offsite education at Gainsborough College where they study a range of work-oriented practical courses.
- At the time of the inspection, the academy did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. However, there were 66 appeals pending for the GCSE English examinations of summer 2014 and all earlier appeals so far submitted had seen an improvement in students' grades.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure teaching is consistently good, raises standards and supports good achievement over time by ensuring:
 - all pupils, and especially boys and the most able, receive increasingly demanding work as they move up through the school to secure their knowledge and deepen their understanding in all subjects
 - all teachers can set more challenging work by making full use of the information they have about what students know and can do, so work is better-matched to their abilities
 - activities support all students to improve their skills in English and mathematics
 - questioning and discussion are used to support students to fully explain their answers
 - teachers always check that students understand how to use the advice they receive when work is marked or discussed.
- Raise achievement by ensuring that:
 - within this current academic year, attainment in English and mathematics is firmly raised in line with national standards across Year 10 and Year 11, by thoroughly preparing students for their examinations and recover their confidence
 - remaining gaps in students' knowledge and understanding across different subjects are firmly reduced, by ensuring work moves on quickly to the next area of learning once students understand the step they are currently working through.

- Improve behaviour and safety by ensuring:
 - all teachers set clear expectations on classroom attitudes and make consistent use of school behaviour policies.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring
 - information about student progress and attainment is used more quickly by subject leaders in order to improve the way teaching is organised across all subjects
 - ensuring improvements to the ways in which literacy and numeracy skills are taught across different subjects are accelerated.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The Principal is a determined and capable leader who has been in post for a short period of time. She leads with clarity and purpose, sets high expectations and is well supported by the academy's sponsor. A new team of senior leaders is in place and their work is now improving the performance of the academy. However, until recently, students' achievement was not secure and required significant improvement. While leaders are securing better teaching, behaviour and achievement, their actions have not yet brought about sufficient improvement to secure a good quality of education. Older students are catching up following past under-achievement but their progress is not yet good.
- Staffing arrangements are now stable but there have been large changes in staffing which have affected the quality of teaching and student achievement. The Principal and governors, offer teachers a clear view on how the academy will perform and improve and support them to work well as a team. As a result, the very large majority of staff support the leadership of the academy.
- Previous evaluation work was sometimes inaccurate. In the case of teaching, leaders often judged it without taking sufficient account of students' achievement. Leaders now know the strengths and weaknesses of teaching very well and understand the overall performance of the academy with clarity. As a result, they tackle any underperformance quickly and support teachers to improve through high quality training and clear performance management procedures which closely link pay rises to the quality of teaching.
- The quality of improvement planning is effective because leaders link it closely to their understanding of the academy's performance. Targets are realistic and set out in a timely manner. Regular arrangements for checking on progress are in place and leaders are held to account for their areas of responsibility.
- As a result of these improvements, the quality of teaching is improving quickly, especially for those students who are taking examinations and who did not learn as well at earlier points in their education, while younger students are making better progress.
- The use of pupil assessment information has not supported good achievement. Students' targets have not always been challenging enough and tracking information did not help identify students who were falling behind. Leaders recognise this and have put in place more effective systems to support pupils who might otherwise under-achieve.
- Leaders have acted quickly to improve the curriculum, in order to ensure it is broad and balanced and well-matched to students' different abilities. In recent years, students studied courses which were too difficult for them or they were entered for examinations before they were ready and failed to achieve the best grades they were capable of. Courses offered to students are now more closely-matched to their abilities and they take examinations when they have completed their studies.
- The curriculum is more effective in helping students develop their English and mathematical skills because subject leaders cooperate effectively to ensure this happens. Equally, setting arrangements and additional classes are helping students catch up, particularly those who are taking examinations and those who experience difficulty with reading and mathematics.
- The majority of subject leaders are new to post. In the past, the use of assessment information in departments has lacked accuracy and this has not supported effective target-setting for students. However, new leaders understand their most important priorities and this is helping improvement. They are accountable for their subjects, understand the strengths and weaknesses of their departments, set clear goals and have been well-supported by senior leaders.
- The academy is in the early stages of organising how students will be assessed properly when National Curriculum levels are removed. Leaders understand what is required and are cooperating with schools across the region to ensure arrangements are made carefully in the interests of students' achievement.

- Leaders do not work alone and share best practice with thirteen local schools, especially for the improvement of teaching. They consult the chief executive of the academy group who provides highly effective strategic advice, the governors and private advisers to help them improve the academy's performance. Importantly, they are increasingly drawing on the expertise of staff within the academy.
- Pupil premium funding is now used to support the achievement of disadvantaged students to greater effect. Funding supports additional classes for reading, writing and mathematics. If students are behind in reading and mathematics when they join Year 7, 'catch up' funding is also used effectively to support their achievement.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. They are reflective about their beliefs and thoughtful about the importance of democracy. This is because many of them are in elected posts of responsibility and have contributed to the academy's improvement. They understand the value of personal freedoms, tolerate different opinions and know the dangers posed by political extremism and behaviour which is unlawful. Students are also well aware of the sacrifices made by others to uphold these values including the armed forces.
- Systems to ensure students are safe are effective and meet all statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is effective, well-led and has a strong focus on the improvement of the academy. Several governors are new in post following changes in academy sponsorship but they have been carefully recruited and bring important experience and skills to their role. They are closely involved in the academy's work and understand its strengths and remaining areas for improvement owing to the reports they receive and their regular visits. Where required they receive high quality training and their knowledge of performance data, performance management and finance has improved. As a result, they are able to hold leaders to account on the way the pupil premium funding is used and its impact. Equally, they have brought greater clarity to the arrangements for teachers' performance management, so that pay rises are well-linked to students' progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. The main reason for this is the variation in their attitudes to learning which are improving but are not yet good.
- Across the last two years, there have been considerable changes to staffing. Students have been taught by a range of teachers across different subjects, making it harder for effective relationships to develop or consistent expectations for behaviour to be set. Some students have lost confidence owing to gaps in knowledge which has affected their commitment to work. Staffing is now more settled and attitudes towards learning are clearly improving as teachers get to know their classes but there are still instances where students do not start their work quickly enough, or do not listen properly when their teachers are trying to explain lesson activities or lead discussions.
- Sometimes, teaching does not support all students to understand their work. As a result, while they are given enough time to complete activities, they can lose interest and examples of low-level disruption occur. In some instances, teachers do not always challenge this quickly enough.
- There are also examples of good behaviour in lessons. Attitudes are at their very best where both new and longer-serving teachers have carefully built up good relationships with students. They have organised their teaching so students understand what they are doing and feel able to tackle more demanding work and make up lost ground. This was clearly the case in food technology where students have been supported to try difficult new recipes, owing to the supportive relationships they enjoy with their teacher and teaching assistants.
- Conduct is now good around the academy. Students are normally polite and respectful to teachers, visitors and each other. They move between lessons calmly and safely and respect the facilities. During lunchtimes, they queue for food sensibly and there is little evidence of litter being dropped. The vast

majority respect the academy's rules about mobile telephones and they wear the new uniform with pride.

- The number of exclusions has reduced, as have the numbers of sanctions including detentions and students report the academy is now a better place in which to learn, although they agree attitudes in lessons are still varied.
- Leaders and teachers have secured a calmer and settled environment. More staff are applying the clear behaviour policy consistently and there are good opportunities for students to contribute to the leadership of their school through the respected school council and well-supported house system. Members of these elected bodies have worked closely with teachers to set a good example and are a credit to the academy. As a result, many more students are now proud of their school and say so.
- During the last year, some parents have recorded concerns about the behaviour of students at the academy, particularly with regard to bullying. However, during the inspection, most parents who recorded their views indicated behaviour was now clearly improving.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe is good. Entry into the academy is secure and all staff and visitors are carefully checked to ensure they are suitable. Leaders and teachers do not tolerate behaviour which is unacceptable. Inspectors met with over 60 students formally and others around the school who reported they feel safe and are confident any concerns they disclose will be addressed. They believe bullying is now rare and are clear about the different forms it can take. Students report their confidence in the academy to quickly tackle bullying when it is reported.
- Students of different ages are organised into the same tutor and house groups. This has allowed younger students to become more confident in their relationships with older ones, who have taken up roles including mentoring and acting as 'buddies' to help them.
- Students are aware of the dangers when using the internet and social media. They demonstrate this when they explain how they use such media and how they stay safe when communicating with others.
- The academy has supported a number of very vulnerable students to successfully complete their education and achieve good examination results despite some very challenging personal circumstances.
- Students' attendance and punctuality has improved since 2013. At the time of the inspection it was close to the national average. The numbers of students who are persistently absent has also reduced. This is because the academy works closely with all families to support students attend well and on time.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not good because it varies too much and over time this has prevented student achievement from being as good as it can be, resulting in low attainment and less than expected progress.
- Teaching quality has been affected by large changes in staffing. Staffing is now more settled and new teachers are helping raise student achievement. However, some students have sometimes experienced a number of teachers in the same subject, which has not helped them to make progress.
- Where teaching requires improvement, it is not helping students to secure and develop their knowledge in different subjects, or develop their skills as far as they are capable, especially in speaking, writing and mathematics.
- Not all teachers make enough use of the information they hold about students to set work and activities which allow them to do their best. This means the more able sometimes receive less demanding work and students who are struggling can find it too difficult, including those boys who start at the academy with lower levels of knowledge and skills.
- Teachers do not always check how well students understand the purpose of activities or how far they have

progressed with their work during lessons. As a result, some are not ready when the next step in their learning begins and they struggle to keep up.

- Marking and written feedback do not yet support good achievement. Work is marked regularly and teachers often provide comments to help students improve. However, they do not always check that students understand the comments or act upon the advice given.
- Teachers' questioning helps students recall what they know but does not challenge them to explain their answers to fully develop their thinking. This prevents some students from developing more confident, speaking skills, particularly boys.
- Equally, some questioning is now very skilful and more teachers set higher expectations by the way they ask questions and lead discussions. A good example was seen in a Year 8 mathematics class where more able students were required to explain their understanding of sequence rules using mathematical language. The teacher carefully adapted the level of questioning to each student which supported all of them to explain their thinking very well.
- The teaching of mathematical and English skills across different subjects is still developing but has clearly improved. Good examples were seen in Year 11 geography where students used statistical calculations to support the findings of their field work assignments.
- Students are making the fastest progress where teaching helps them close the gaps in their knowledge and understanding from when they were younger, particularly among older students who are now in examination classes. Teachers assess classes well and organise their teaching to ensure knowledge is acquired then put to use to secure their skills. A good example was seen in a Year 11 French lesson where students were helped to improve their conversation skills to tackle a difficult examination.
- Teaching has improved in Years 7, 8 and 9 and this has reduced the differences in progress between girls and boys. Extra help is also organised in reading and mathematics, for students who start Year 7 with lower standards of knowledge and skills in these subjects.
- The quality of teaching for students who have special educational needs or who are disabled has improved since the last inspection because their progress is more carefully checked and teaching assistants are more effective in supporting their learning whether in classrooms or support lessons for small groups.
- The quality of teaching for students who attend part-time courses at a local college is improved. The academy tracks their progress carefully and arrangements are in place to ensure they do not fall behind in their other courses.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students enter the academy with knowledge and skills which are consistently below the average for their age.
- Achievement is not good because students' attainment has been low in recent years and their progress has been less than expected from their different starting points. In 2012 and 2013, the proportion of students achieving five A*-C GCSE grades including English and mathematics was low, particularly for boys. However, the proportions of students achieving some qualifications were similar to national results.
- Less effective teaching, changes in staffing and the courses offered to students have led to lower achievement. In recent years, large numbers have been guided to take courses which were too difficult for them to do, leading to lower results, particularly in the sciences. These arrangements were changed where possible before the 2014 examinations and pupils' achievement improved in sciences, languages, humanities, religious education and vocational courses.
- The use of early examination entry has not supported good achievement in mathematics, particularly for the more able students. Students have taken the examinations before they are ready to achieve their best

grades. The practice of early entry has ceased and more students achieved higher grades in mathematics in 2014.

- Students' achievement is clearly improving for all those currently attending the academy.
- The development of English and mathematical skills has not been good over time but they are getting better across different year groups owing to the priority given to their improvement.
- The development of reading skills is more effective and older students use effective strategies when analysing stories and poetry. They identify critical language and explain its importance and purpose. This was demonstrated in a Year 11 English lesson which explored metaphorical language in the poems of Carol Ann Duffy.
- The quality of written work is improving. Students are being supported to explain their knowledge more fully for different purposes across subjects. In a Year 7 geography lesson, the quality of boys' written field work matched the girls owing to the effective help they have received.
- Mathematical skills are improving because students practise them more widely and are helped to see how they can be used in real life and in their future careers. There was a good example of this in a Year 9 science lesson where all students and especially boys, were helped to solve potential life-or-death situations by their use of formulae and knowledge of electrical circuits.
- Over time, the achievement of boys has been lower than girls across most subjects but gaps in progress have narrowed in Years 7, 8 and 9. In Years 10 and 11 where the difference has been greatest, boys are catching up because teaching is now better matched to their needs and abilities.
- The achievement of the most able students at the academy is improving. More of them achieved higher grades in 2014 than in previous years. This is a result of improvements to examination arrangements in subjects including mathematics and science. Teaching has also been better organised to ensure they receive suitably demanding work which better prepares them for examinations and helps them develop their knowledge and understanding more fully.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs requires improvement. Many have a range of complex needs but they are learning more quickly because of improvements made to their assessment, the arrangements made for their teaching and checks on their progress. Special attention is paid to the most vulnerable to ensure they are well cared for and can cope in mainstream lessons.
- The achievement of disadvantaged students eligible for the pupil premium requires improvement. In 2013, in English, the gap between these students and other students nationally was the equivalent of a whole GCSE grade but the gap in school was half a GCSE because of the lower attainment of other students. In mathematics, the gap was the equivalent of around one-and-a-half grades compared to other pupils nationally but the gap in school was half a grade within school owing to the lower attainment of other pupils. GCSE results for 2014 and evidence for students currently attending show these gaps are narrowing.
- Year 7 students who join the 'catch-up' programme are making better progress. They read more confidently because of better knowledge of phonics (the sounds made by words and letters) and can explain the plot and purpose to a story. They also show good inferential skills when asked to describe the characters they are studying. Their numeracy skills are also improved by the extra help they receive.
- The achievement of students who attend part-time courses at college is more effective because courses are carefully matched to their abilities and equal attention is paid to checking their progress for academic courses.

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	135666
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	447728

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	802
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Serna
Principal	Vicky Simcock
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2013
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