

Ash Hill Academy

Ash Hill, Hatfield, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN7 6JH

Inspection dates 19–20 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Require improvement	3
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

- Students' progress in English and mathematics is not fast enough. Attainment has risen and students are making better progress since the previous inspection, but not enough to reach the national average.
- Teaching, although improving, does not allow all students to achieve consistently well. Not all teachers are adhering to agreed procedures.
- In some students' books, work is unfinished and poorly presented.
- Some students do not respond to teachers' marking comments on how to improve their work.
- Low levels of literacy hamper the progress of some students. Students' communication skills are not sufficiently developed.
- The behaviour of a small minority of students requires improvement. Students and staff agree that behaviour has improved considerably, but some learning is still interrupted by low-level disruption.
- The sixth form requires improvement because initiatives to raise standards are not yet fully embedded.

The school has the following strengths

- This is an improving school. Under the expert leadership of the Principal and senior leadership team, well supported by governors and the School Partnership Trust, teaching, students' achievement, attendance and behaviour have all improved since the previous inspection.
- The very large majority of parents are pleased with the quality of education the school provides.
- Students feel safe in school and well cared for. The curriculum is effective in nurturing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Through a well-organised programme of personal, social and health education students have a clear understanding of traditional British values.
- The gaps in the achievement of different groups of students are narrowing. Governors ensure that all students have equal opportunities to succeed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a wide range of subjects across all age groups. Some learning was observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors held formal meetings with groups of students from each year, including those in the sixth form. They spoke informally to many other students at breaks, lunchtimes and in lessons.
- Inspectors sampled work in students' books in all year groups across a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and the humanities.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders and representatives from the governing body. A meeting was held with the regional director of the sponsor academy chain.
- Inspectors looked at a range of academy documents. These included information relating to safeguarding and child protection, attendance and behaviour, development planning, subject planning, tracking information on students' progress, performance management systems and procedures for checking on the quality of teaching and learning.
- The views of staff were gained from the 40 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire.
- Inspectors gained the views of parents from 13 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted on-line questionnaire, responses to the academy's recent consultations with parents and telephone conversations with a parent.

Inspection team

Judith Straw, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Derek Barnes	Additional Inspector
Gary Kelly	Additional Inspector
Mary Lanovy-Taylor	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ash Hill Academy, sponsored by the School Partnership Trust Academies, is a smaller than average secondary school with a sixth form. The sixth form is run in collaboration with four partner academies.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students, those who are supported by the pupil premium, is well above average and includes just over half of all students. The pupil premium is additional funding for those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- Almost all students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is just above average.
- In 2014, the academy met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy uses several providers for alternative provision. These are St Wilfred's Academy, Gateway, Engage, Distinction, the YMCA and Hair Academy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that progress is accelerated for all groups of students, by:
 - eliminating low-level disruption which slows the pace of learning
 - ensuring that students respond to marking comments and complete work that is set
 - setting higher expectations for the care and presentation of students' work
 - giving students more opportunities to develop confidence in discussing and explaining their answers
 - increasing the level of challenge for students who reach their targets early and embedding high aspirations across all subjects and classes.
- Improve the efficiency and impact of leadership further by:
 - ensuring that all staff recognise the vital role they have in securing whole-school improvement and that staff consistently adhere to and apply school improvement policies and procedures
 - continue to support new leadership in the sixth form.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The inspiring leadership of the Principal, ably supported by the senior leadership team, has resulted in strong improvement to all aspects of the academy's work. Staff morale is high, as reflected in the very positive response to the staff questionnaire.
- Leaders at all levels have an accurate view of teaching. This is because they regularly check on the quality of teaching and evidence from these checks informs staff development and training. It enables leaders to improve teaching steadily and support staff that are new to the profession.
- The academy knows itself well. Leaders do not underestimate the amount of further work required to reach a point where the academy is providing a good standard of education in all areas. Development planning and the progress already made indicate that the academy has a strong capacity to improve further.
- Leaders' accurate analysis of a wide range of assessment information is enabling the academy to tackle and address the very low levels of literacy in academy, particularly among boys. Frequent and detailed assessment systems ensure that students who fall behind are rapidly identified so that extra support can be given.
- Behaviour and attendance have improved. Attendance is supported by an additional attendance officer who works with all the local partner academies. A new sanctions and rewards policy is applied consistently by all teachers so that students know the consequences if bad behaviour occurs.
- Middle leaders have benefited from training so that they are able to play a full part in the work of improving the academy. Middle leaders take a leading role in ensuring that students gain the highest possible results by checking on the work in students' books and visiting lessons. Occasionally, the academy commissions departmental reviews which involve an in-depth analysis of work, including students' interviews and observation of all teachers. Improvement plans are based on the outcome of these reviews. However, sometimes the checking of systems is not rigorous enough to ensure that all class teachers are following agreed procedures.
- The interesting range of subjects taught across the academy provides additional opportunities for students to improve their skills in basic English and mathematics. The 30 minutes of registration and form time each morning is used effectively to provide additional tuition in basic skills for students who need this support. The curriculum ensures that students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered and their understanding of British values. Information about careers and other education options helps students to prepare for their future. Nearly every student in Year 11 goes on to further training, education or employment. Across the academy there is a strong emphasis on personal safety and skills for life.
- Leaders across the academy tackle the underperformance of disadvantaged students effectively through carefully tailored support, both in basic skills and emotional and social support, when necessary. Extra teachers in English and mathematics have been employed. The academy provides additional enrichment opportunities and effective mentoring for groups at risk of underachieving. The gap in attainment between disadvantaged students and others in academy is narrowing as a result of these actions.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used creatively to support the rapid progress of students who start Year 7 with below average skills in English and mathematics. Students are taught in smaller groups and receive extra resources to help them catch up.
- The small number of students who attend alternative courses elsewhere are successful because they are following courses which are tailored to their needs. Their attendance, behaviour and progress are all checked on closely by the academy.
- Discrimination is tackled swiftly and equality of opportunity is fostered successfully. The displays in the academy portray very positive messages showing that homophobia, racism and other forms of discrimination are not tolerated. Good relationships between staff and students are evident across the academy.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. All staff follow agreed safeguarding procedures diligently. Any student at risk of harm is identified swiftly and appropriate action is taken.
- The School Partnership Trust provides expert support in managing the academy's finance and administrative work. The school improvement section is supporting developments in leadership and the sixth form. The academy benefits from the wider partnership with other schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the academy well from direct experience. They understand the progress data which allow them to compare the academy's performance with that of other schools. They know about the quality of teaching and learning from the departmental reviews they receive, as well as tracking data

from academy leaders.

- Governors take a keen interest in the progress of all groups of students and particularly that of disadvantaged students. Staff are held personally to account for the progress their students make and salary progression is linked to students' progress. Checks on spending are thorough. Governors oversee the performance management system to make sure that good teaching is rewarded. Governors ensure that arrangements for students' safeguarding are rigorous. Governors have a high profile in the community and liaise well with parents.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Students in all year groups are unanimous in expressing the view that behaviour has improved over time and since the previous inspection. However, the pace of learning is still being slowed in a minority of lessons by small groups of disaffected students.
- Most students are positive about their learning and behaviour in lessons is often good. Many students recognise the hard work and effort put in by their teachers and respond by concentrating in lessons and completing work diligently. However, a minority do not take pride in their work and ignore comments and requests designed to help them make better progress.
- Students move around the site in an orderly manner. They dress smartly in their uniform. There is little graffiti or litter.
- Leaders have put a great focus on developing mutual respect and a sense of pride among students. This is raising expectations and aspirations. In partnership with the Arts Council and other groups, the academy is planning a celebration of the local area which students are supporting enthusiastically. For example, a visitor from the only operating coal mine in the area enthralled students in talking to them about life as a coal miner and the history of their community.
- Although students report that there is some bullying, they agree that the academy deals with this promptly and takes effective action to stop it. There is some name-calling, but students are well aware of what is not acceptable or tolerated in the academy. Actions to tackle homophobia and racism have been effective.
- Reports indicate that the behaviour of students attending courses elsewhere gives no cause for concern.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students understand how to keep themselves safe and are aware of situations where they may be groomed or encouraged to take part in risky behaviours.
- The academy works with many outside agencies to provide support in school, where necessary, for students thought to be at risk.
- Students' attendance has improved markedly and is in line with the national average. The proportion of students who are persistently absent has reduced and far fewer students have been excluded. Punctuality is improving, but some students are regularly late for school or lessons.
- The academy ensures that students attending courses elsewhere are safe.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good because there are variations in the quality of planning for different abilities and not all teachers are setting high enough expectations for the presentation of work in students' books. Teaching over time has not been strong enough to ensure that all students make good progress.
- Tracking records show that individual students are starting to exceed the targets set and make good progress. The academy is not acting quickly enough to increase the targets and make sure that all students have the right level of challenge.
- In some lessons, the very high expectations set for students' behaviour and participation result in rapid and effective learning. For example, Year 9 students made excellent progress in science, understanding difficult concepts because they were tenacious in their perseverance. Good learning and rapid progress were evident in art, physical education, English, mathematics, drama and history, among other subjects.
- Most teachers use questioning well to make sure students think deeply and develop reasoning skills. Some students, however, lack confidence in their communication skills to speak clearly and accurately in

explaining their answers and their thinking.

- Teaching assistants work in a good partnership with teachers to support the learning of individual students.
- Marking has considerably improved and is fairly consistent across subjects. There is a new clear and unambiguous marking policy which most teachers are following well. However, some teachers are not yet rigorous enough in making sure that students respond to their comments designed to accelerate progress and complete work when asked to do so.
- Expectations for the care and presentation of work are not always high enough. As a result, some books are almost illegible and do not provide students with a sufficiently accurate record of study from which to revise.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Most students who join the academy in Year 7 have achieved well below average standards in their primary schools in both English and mathematics. From their different starting points, not enough students are making good progress in learning in all their subjects. Work in students' books, examination results, the academy's own tracking data, and its own accurate self-evaluation, all confirm that students' achievement is not yet consistently good.
- In 2014, students' attainment at GCSE was well below national figures, but showed an improvement on results in 2013. Tracking data and inspection evidence indicate that progress in the current Year 11 is faster in English and mathematics. Students are reaching some challenging targets in other subjects, such as history, geography, art, science, sociology and the performing arts.
- The academy has used early entry for GCSE extensively in the past and continues to do so only in English Literature to give students early experience of examination conditions and practice. It is not limiting the achievement of students.
- Students following vocational courses, both in the main academy and the sixth form, are successful. All have passed or achieved merit in courses such as business studies, information technology, media and horticulture.
- The most-able students are supported so that most achieve the higher grades expected of them. From the start of Year 7, these students are identified and challenged across all subjects. For example, Year 7 students in English were studying the poems of Wilfred Owen and reflecting on the difference between the rhetoric and reality of war.
- The pupil premium funding which supports initiatives to improve the progress of disadvantaged students is narrowing the gap between the achievement of these students and others. However, the gap is still too wide. In 2014 in English, disadvantaged students in Year 11 attained two GCSE grades lower than all students nationally and one and a half grades below other students in the academy. In mathematics, disadvantaged students were behind others nationally by two and a half grades and others in the academy by two GCSE grades. Academy data suggest that these gaps are set to narrow further in the current year. The rate of progress of disadvantaged students is rising, but is still below that of students nationally.
- Students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding make good progress in developing their basic skills. Interesting challenges inspire students to work hard. For example, one group has been given a budget to plan an academy trip which will include refreshments. Their task is to use their mathematical skills to plan how and where the money can be spent.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are supported well when taught in smaller groups and by teaching assistants when in larger groups. Students benefit from extra literacy sessions; one student commented that he used to read like a robot but now he can read fluently and well. Overall, these students progress at least as well as others in the academy and sometimes better.
- Low levels of literacy still impede the progress of a significant minority of students. The academy has many strategies to support students, including an extensive library, recommended reading lists and specific reading sessions. A lack of confidence in communication skills, explaining and discussing their views, is holding back the progress of some students.
- Progress in mathematics is slower than in English at present. The academy has introduced basic numeracy sessions in daily registration time to support students' work in mathematics and science.

The sixth form provision requires improvement

- Achievement in the sixth form has been well below national averages for some time, including since the previous inspection. However, the academy leaders have acted decisively, appointed new leaders and overhauled the entry requirements for subjects, so that students are now following courses in which they are likely to be successful.
- Current data provided by the academy, as well as inspection evidence from observing learning and looking at students' work, indicate that many are making better progress, so that they are on track to achieve well in examinations this year.
- The subjects offered have been designed to provide choice for a range of post-16 courses which suit the interests and abilities of the students.
- Arrangements for students moving between sites have been improved, so that time is not lost and more time is spent in individual study.
- More teaching in the sixth form is consistently good. Students enjoy the greater sense of responsibility for their learning and the seminar style of teaching. They know how well they are moving towards their targets and what they need to do to reach them.
- Attendance in the sixth form has improved and is in line with national averages. Students report that they receive good information about staying safe. Students' behaviour is good and they provide a positive role model for younger students.
- Students appreciate and enjoy the limited enrichment opportunities offered in the sixth form, such as work experience and voluntary work, but this is an area for development. The academy intends to provide a wider range of opportunities from September 2015.
- Students receive useful advice about future applications and choices. Improved outcomes have resulted in an increase from 24% to 51% in university applications this year.
- The new sixth form leader has good plans for development, but these are at an early stage. Leadership is strengthened by the Trust's appointment of a post-16 director who supports all five schools in the sixth-form partnership.

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	137066
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	462283

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	792
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	114
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cris Le-Voguer
Principal	David Williams
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2013
Telephone number	01302 840961
Fax number	01302 845906
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