

Castleford Academy

Ferrybridge Road, Castleford, Wakefield, WF10 4JQ

Inspection dates 24–25 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The percentage of students who gain five good passes at GCSE, including English and mathematics, has risen steadily so that it is now above the national average.
- Progress across most subjects continues to rise for most pupils, particularly for English and mathematics, so that students do well compared to their peers nationally.
- The support offered to students with special educational needs, particularly in the hearing-impaired unit, is very strong so that those students do as well as their peers.
- Teaching is continuing to improve due to the successful drive by governors and leaders to raise the overall quality.
- Students are happy. They are particularly proud of their academy and they behave extremely well in lessons and around the buildings and yard.
- Bullying is extremely rare and students feel safe. When bullying does occur, it is dealt with swiftly.
- Staff and parents are extremely positive about all aspects of the academy and hold a strong sense of support and belief in the academy and its staff.
- Leaders continue to seek opportunities to further raise standards of behaviour and the achievement students make across all subjects. They are swift to deal with underperformance of staff so that students receive a good education.
- The pastoral care of students is excellent. There are many opportunities for students to experience life beyond the academy and support for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is strong. There is also good support for the promotion of British values, such as encouraging the involvement of students in the democratic process.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not yet high enough across all subjects to maximise the progress all students can make and as a result achieve the highest standards in GCSE examinations, particularly for the most able and those who are disadvantaged.
- Fixed-term exclusions remain high despite improved inclusion and behaviour management procedures, particularly for Key Stage 3 boys.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Although the standards reached in vocational subjects across the school are high, students' progress in English and mathematics in the sixth form is not yet good.
- Leaders tend to concentrate overly on the attainment of students and the grades they will reach instead of also ensuring that the progress individual students make is maximised.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 39 lessons and part lessons, three of which were observed jointly with leaders from the academy.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work and looked at a wide range of supporting documents and records, including those that relate to safeguarding and child protection, the leaders’ views of the academy’s performance, the monitoring of progress in lessons, the performance of teachers, achievement data and governing body meeting minutes.
- Formal discussions were held with the headteacher, Chair of the Governing Body, senior and middle leaders, three groups of students and the academy’s improvement partner.
- Additionally, informal discussions were held with students in lessons, at lunch and at break times in order to gather their views about the behaviour of students and their learning across the academy.
- Scrutiny of students’ work was carried out during lesson observations in all subjects and additionally as separate exercises to ascertain progress in English, mathematics and science.
- Inspectors analysed 73 responses to staff questionnaires, 27 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the information received from a telephone call from a parent.

Inspection team

Colin Scott, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Mary Lanovy-Taylor	Additional Inspector
Frank Cain	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Additional Inspector
Clive Hurren	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this academy

- Castleford Academy is larger than most secondary schools and almost all students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students eligible for extra support from the pupil premium funding is higher than the national average. The pupil premium supports those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The academy is part of a multi-academy trust that includes Glasshoughton Infants Academy, Castleford Park Junior Academy and Three Lane Ends Academy.
- The academy makes use of Wakefield College for alternative provision for students on a part-time basis to access some vocational courses.
- The academy has recently begun to register students in its own sixth form, as opposed to previous years where students were registered elsewhere in the authority.
- The academy is supported via an independent academy improvement partner for advice, guidance and challenge to leaders.
- Wakefield's provision for the hearing impaired is sited at the academy, where eight students from across the authority access its support.
- The headteacher has been in post for one year and there is a relatively new leadership team supported by a long-serving governing body.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of students supported through school action plus or with a statement of educational needs is above average.
- The academy enters many students early for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for student's' attainment and progress.

What does the academy need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching so that all students reach the highest standards they can by:
 - using data more rigorously to identify the performance that groups of students are making and supporting teachers to develop further skills in their planning for lessons to target and challenge those students more effectively
 - continuing to close the gaps in achievement between disadvantaged students and their peers
 - continuing to enhance the teaching of English and mathematics in the sixth form so that students are able to improve the GCSE standards they reached in Year 11.
- Improve leadership at all levels so that further rigour in the data collected enables a sharper analytical view to be taken of the link between the progress students are making and the performance of teachers, and of the quality of lessons and effectiveness of any extra support provide for students.
- Further reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The relatively new headteacher and senior leadership team are quickly developing strategies for improving behaviour and standards that are further supporting students' achievements across the entire academy.
- The quality of teaching is improving steadily as leaders of learning develop support systems for staff that are helping to improve the outcomes for their students.
- Teachers are led well and this view is overwhelmingly supported by parents who responded to the online survey (Parent View) and staff who responded to their questionnaire.
- Support for teachers is strong, particularly those new to the profession. Teachers new to the academy say that they have been given clear and regular help to develop their skills and that their needs are met well.
- Middle leaders, through the drive of governors and senior leaders, have worked tirelessly to help students at the academy to reach higher standards in GCSE examinations. However, as much focus on the personal progress of individual students in English, mathematics and science is required so that everyone is able to reach their personal best at all times.
- The leadership of the hearing impaired unit is excellent and impacting significantly on the happiness and progress of those students who attend its provision. Support for the needs of those students with special educational needs is also good.
- Leadership and monitoring of students who receive some of their learning through alternative provision is good. Some learners are able through this provision to excel where education in the main academy was not successful for them.
- Leadership of the relatively new sixth form has secured excellent vocational results for the students who participate in those courses. However, they have not been as successful at securing improvements in the standards reached for students who re-sit GCSE English and mathematics in Years 12 or 13.
- The academy's own evaluation of its progress is mostly accurate and matches the views of the inspection team. However, it does not always clearly identify measurable outcomes of some of the planned activities so that leaders can be fully held accountable for progress in the academy at all times.
- Leaders are also generally accurate in their view of the quality of teaching. However, there are some occasions where this view is slightly over-generous due to the developing skills of some leaders to monitor the progress learners make in lessons and over time.
- Although teachers are only able to progress through the pay scales if they reach their given targets, and governors ensure it is not automatic, those targets do not always link to an accurate understanding of the impact an individual teacher has on students' performance.
- Gaps between the progress made by different groups of learners, particularly the disadvantaged and the most able, have not always been identified accurately in order to close achievement gaps nor consistently challenge learners. However, swift action is now impacting on this.
- Leaders have been extremely successful at increasing attendance and reducing persistent absence and permanent exclusion rates. However, the use of fixed-term exclusions remains higher than average.
- The spending of the pupil premium funding has been effective in supporting personalised learning and mentoring programmes, targeted at the disadvantaged, so that their learning gains are becoming more rapid and is supporting the closing of gaps well overall. This was recognised formally by the government minister, David Laws MP, who wrote to the academy in January 2014 congratulating them on their success. However, despite an increase in the progress such students do make, the Year 11 group who left in 2014 saw a gap that widened. This is not the case overall and across other year groups where this gap is narrowing.
- The curriculum offered by the academy is appropriate and leading to students' greater enjoyment of their learning. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of learning are supported well across the whole curriculum, including British values. For example, there is strong support for students to actually participate in a truly democratic process of student elections.
- **The governance of the academy:**
 - Governors, led by a very passionate and committed Chair of the Governing Body, are clear about the vision and ethos of the academy and work hard to support progress throughout all areas of provision.
 - Governors understand the quality of teaching in the academy based upon the information that is given to them by senior leaders. However, further checks to challenge leaders' perceptions of the quality of teaching are needed to solidify more accurately governors' understanding of that area.
 - The governing body ensures safeguarding requirements are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say they feel safe and this view is overwhelmingly supported by parents and staff. Procedures for keeping students safe in the academy, such as being safe in practical lessons, are impacting positively on their safety and well-being.
- Attendance rates have increased and persistent absence has reduced so that they now match the levels expected and permanent exclusions are now rare. However, fixed-term exclusions remain high despite the positive impact of internal behaviour management systems.
- Groups of students, including disadvantaged, those with a special educational need or those of different abilities attend as well as their peers. There are negligible differences in their rates of absence.
- Procedures to check and record the credentials of staff are well kept and systems to record any and all types of bullying are secure. Although bullying is extremely rare opportunities are sometimes missed to analyse and identify any patterns of bullying that may develop over time.
- Risk assessments are thorough ensuring that the academy is doing all it can be expected to do to keep students safe, for example on field trips. Risks are managed well.
- The behaviour of students is good. They are immaculately dressed, prepared for lessons with the right equipment, courteous to each other and appear happy at all times. They look after their surroundings and litter during the inspection was non-existent. They told inspectors that this was typical of the behaviour around the academy.
- There are many opportunities for students to learn about other sections of society. In addition to trips to other countries, teachers regularly use lessons to support students' awareness of other cultures. For example, in one French lesson, students explored other countries around the world who also speak French and were able to look briefly at the differences of those communities.
- Students are punctual to lessons and appear keen to do well. However, in a few lessons their obvious desire to excel in their studies is not always matched by the opportunities given to them by their teachers, occasionally leading to their aspirations being lowered. There are instances where in a few lessons students failed to get excited by their tasks and this led to them becoming less engaged in their learning.
- The academy staff manage behaviour around the buildings, yards and in lessons consistently well, with all teachers following the academy's assertive discipline approach to behaviour management. This has led to behaviour that is supportive of the learning environment and ensures students are happy and able to learn. Due to the current 'zero tolerance' approach to embed the academy's assertive discipline policy, fixed-term exclusions have remained higher than average as students are adapting to the consequences of any poor behaviours they do display.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has continued to improve so that the standards being reached in GCSE examinations are rising further. It is leading to students' progressing more rapidly overall. However, as much focus on the progress individuals and groups of learners make, for example, the most able, should be considered alongside the drive for higher grades, so that each learner can achieve their very best at all times and are able to reach the highest possible grades.
- Teachers know their subjects well. They are generally enthusiastic in the delivery of their lessons and this is helping students to remain inspired and engaged.
- The teaching of vocational subjects in the academy, such as physical education in the sixth form, is good and leads to high success rates. This is also the case for students who access some of their learning through alternative provision.
- Occasionally, teachers do not always demand the most of their students or set work that challenges individuals equally well. When this happens, students' learning slows, their engagement wanes and they are not able to achieve the highest possible standards.
- There is strong support for the quality of teaching by both students and parents. Inspection evidence supports that the quality of teaching is good. There are occasions, however, where the impact of teaching on learners' progress is not always as consistently strong as it could be, particularly for the most able.
- The academy is using consistent approaches to marking and assessment, such as 'EBI' (even better if). These are beginning to impact well on the progress learners make. Sometimes teachers do not always exploit this to best effect as they often give identical targets to students of all abilities.
- The teaching of literacy is strong across the academy and this is evident in the understanding students

have of the curriculum they are studying, for example in being able to read technical language. It is also helping to cement clearer progress for all students in English as a result. The support for numeracy skills across the academy is not as well developed as it is for literacy, but it is also beginning to support learners' development of mathematics.

- Other adults in the classroom ensure students' needs are looked after well. Mentors in particular are highly regarded by students and parents for the individual support and nurture they give to learners, not just pastorally but also academically.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the academy with standards that are well below average. Despite this, leaders ensure that students leave their main education in Year 11 with standards above the national average. In the last year alone, the number of students attaining five good passes at GCSE examinations in 2014 including English and mathematics rose by 4% to 64%.
- Standards have also risen in most other subject areas. In the few subjects in which students did not do as well as others, leaders have been swift to tackle this underperformance and appointed new staff.
- The progress that students make has also risen in the last few years so that 81% now make three or more levels of progress in English and 72% in mathematics. This demonstrates good progress, particularly from their starting points on entry in Year 7. However, the number of students who make four or more levels of progress has not risen as sharply, particularly in mathematics.
- Most students entered early for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics achieve their highest results with only a few not reaching their anticipated highest grade.
- Year 7 catch-up funding has been used effectively to help strengthen the literacy skills of those students who need extra support to access learning across the curriculum.
- The students who attend off-site provision for part of their learning do as well as their peers within the academy and the curriculum they receive is very appropriate to their individual needs.
- Progress tracking of students by leaders is regular and monitored well. Gaps between the progress of groups of learners is narrowing over time. However, leaders do not always use this information to identify the particular performance of groups and how they are progressing in order to make greater impact on the gaps that remain in their progress.
- In 2013 GCSE English, the results of disadvantaged students were about three-quarters of a grade lower than their peers in the academy and those nationally. Provisional GCSE English results for both disadvantaged students and their peers in 2014 have improved although this gap has remained steady. In 2013, in GCSE mathematics the results for disadvantaged students were lower than their peers in the academy by just less than a grade and more than a grade lower than students nationally. In 2014, provisional results for disadvantaged students show that this gap has widened slightly in the last year in mathematics to just over a grade compared to their peers in the academy. However, the actual progress made by all groups of students in both English and mathematics is stronger than in previous years, given their starting points in Year 7.
- The most able students make good progress overall. For example, many are now attaining the highest grades possible in academic science subjects. However, this is not consistent across some subjects, particularly mathematics
- As the sixth form is relatively new to the academy, students having previously been registered at other colleges, it is currently small in numbers and the courses on offer limited to three vocational subjects. As a result, data for achievement over recent years is limited and trends cannot be accurately established. However, early indications demonstrate that students studying vocational subjects, particularly health and social care where 94% of students reach their target grade, make good progress overall. The support for sixth form students to improve their GCSE examination results in English and mathematics is less secure. More than half of students fail to reach a higher grade in English and just less than half of students have failed to reach a higher grade in mathematics.
- The achievement of students who have a special educational need and those who have a hearing impairment is as good as their peers in the academy with negligible differences between their progress measures and that of other groups of students.
- Those students who access some of their learning through alternative provision are able to achieve extremely good results due to the support and teaching they are given. For example, one student who was not succeeding academically in the main academy has been able to achieve Level 2 in functional skills studies as an alternative. This has meant that they are now able to progress to Level 3 courses in line with their peers.

The sixth form provision requires improvement

- The academy has recently begun to offer courses to students in the sixth form. Previously, students accessed A-level and vocational courses via other providers across the authority or were registered at other establishments. The sixth form now registers students at Castleford Academy itself.
- The academy works in partnership with other providers across the authority to allow its students leaving Year 11 to choose their preferred A-level or vocational course options. Castleford Academy has concentrated an offer around three main vocational subjects and not academic ones. However, students continue to be supported to improve their GCSE results in English and mathematics.
- Leadership of the sixth form is developing. It is making good progress at strengthening the opportunities the sixth form offers to its students and students themselves speak highly of the care, guidance and support they receive from their teachers.
- Actual vocational results are limited to date for the students registered in the sixth form at the academy. They are, however, beginning to show promising potential for the future. Lessons observed and work scrutinised in these subjects in the sixth form demonstrate progress is particularly strong for health and social care, but teaching is not yet good enough across both vocational and academic subjects overall to securely state that students' progress is good overall. In particular, the support for English and mathematics has yet to prove that it is effective at enabling most students to gain better academic grades than they achieved in their GCSE examinations when in Year 11.

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	136633
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	447734

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,268
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	William Clift MBE
Headteacher	George Panayiotou
Date of previous school inspection	25 September 2012
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