

Garstang Community Academy

Bowgreave, Preston, Lancashire, PR3 1YE

Inspection dates 25–26 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	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

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 and continues to be above the national average.
- Progress is good across many subjects and continues to rise for most students, particularly in English and mathematics, so that students do well compared to their peers nationally.
- Teaching is good and continues to improve as a result of the clear focus by governors and leaders to raise the overall quality.
- Students enjoy school. They are happy and are proud of their academy. They behave very well in lessons and around the school.
- The pastoral care of students is good. Leadership has a positive effect on improving students' personal development so they are well cared for and feel safe.
- Bullying is extremely rare and when it does occur is dealt with quickly.
- Parents are extremely positive about all aspects of the school and share a strong sense of commitment and support for the academy.
- There are many opportunities for students to experience life beyond the classroom. The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- Leadership and governance are having a positive impact on improving teaching and achievement. The school is well placed to continue to get even better.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, teachers do not always demand the most of their students or set work that challenges individuals equally well, particularly the less able students.
- Marking and feedback to students does not always tell them how to improve their work.
- The development and application of literacy skills across the curriculum is inconsistent.
- Middle leaders do not always check closely on the quality of teaching, especially marking.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 29 lessons or part lessons, 5 of which were observed jointly with leaders from the academy.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work and looked at a wide range of records and supporting documents including those relating to child protection and safeguarding, the leaders’ views of the academy’s performance, the performance of teachers, monitoring of progress in lessons, achievement data and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Formal meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders, groups of students and the academy’s improvement partner.
- In addition, inspectors had informal discussions with students during lessons, at break times and lunch in order to gather their views about learning and behaviour across the academy.
- Scrutiny of students’ work was carried out during lesson observations in all subjects and, in addition, jointly with senior leaders to look at progress in English, mathematics and science.
- Inspectors analysed 62 responses to staff questionnaires and 50 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Keith Worrall, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Rebecca Lawton	Additional Inspector
Alan Parkinson	Additional Inspector
John Ashley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Garstang Community Academy converted to become an academy school on 1st of September 2011. When its predecessor school, Garstang High School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.
- The academy is smaller than most secondary schools.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students known to be eligible for extra support from the pupil premium funding is lower than the national average. The pupil premium supports those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The academy enters students early for GCSE examinations in English, mathematics and science.
- The academy makes use of Myerscough College for early transfer of students on a part-time basis to access some vocational courses.
- The academy has links with the Fylde Coast Teaching School Alliance and undertakes a variety of partnership activities linked to professional development and training for staff.
- The academy is supported by an independent improvement partner for advice, guidance and challenge for leaders.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring teachers provide high quality feedback on spelling, punctuation and grammar in all subjects and make sure students know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve
 - providing more opportunities for students to apply their literacy skills across the curriculum
 - providing work that challenges individuals equally well, particularly the less able students.
- Improve the leadership and management role of middle leaders by further embedding opportunities to check the quality of teaching to ensure consistency in approaches, especially in the quality of marking.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leadership team are relentless in the drive for improvement. They have put in place effective strategies that are improving the quality of teaching as well as further supporting students' achievement across the academy.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of what is working well and aspects that need attention. Priorities for the school are clear and actions are raising attainment. Steps to measure success are precise and leaders and staff are fully held to account for progress in all areas.
- Leaders monitor students' progress closely to help students achieve well in GCSE examinations. Checks are made on the quality of learning accessed at Myerscough College, which ensures students benefit from specialised provision. They enjoy learning and make good progress.
- Leaders use the information about students' achievement effectively to identify the progress of students of different abilities. However, the subsequent actions have tended to focus more on the most able students and this has led to some inconsistencies in the challenge for other groups of students, especially the less able students.
- Overall, leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. Senior leaders undertake appropriate checks so that all are aware of strengths in teaching and aspects to improve. They check that all teachers monitor closely the progress students make.
- Middle leaders are effective in planning improvement in the subjects they lead. They are less successful in ensuring aspects of teaching that need attention are consistently addressed.
- Teachers are set targets based on their performance and only progress through the pay scales when these are achieved. Staff who are new to the school are well supported, including those new to the profession. Teachers say that they receive good quality induction and value opportunities to share their practice.
- Leaders have been very successful at sustaining high attendance and reducing persistent absence and permanent exclusion rates. Equally, the use of fixed-term exclusions is lower than average.
- Spending of the pupil premium funding has been effective in providing personalised learning programmes, targeted at the disadvantaged, so that their learning gains are becoming more rapid and overall their gaps in attainment are closing. This effective support was recognised formally by the government minister, David Laws MP, who wrote to the academy in January 2014 congratulating staff and students on their success.
- The school is a harmonious community. Although at times the less able are not always set hard enough work, overall students enjoy equality of opportunity and good relationships in an environment free from discrimination.
- The curriculum offered by the academy is appropriate and leading to students' greater enjoyment of their learning. Students have good opportunities to acquire the skills and knowledge to enable them to progress to the next stage of their education. Students are well informed about course options and receive good quality information, advice and guidance so that they make informed choices about next steps in their education.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of learning are supported well across the whole curriculum. Although cultural development is not always as strong as other aspects, students do learn about aspects of different cultures. For example, in one religious studies lesson, students compared the characteristics of civil rights leaders and explored the similarities and differences between communities. Students show a good understanding of British values and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- **The governance of the academy:**
 - Governors, led by a very experienced and committed Chair of the Governing Body, are clear about the vision and ethos of the academy and work hard supporting progress in all areas of provision.
 - Accurate and detailed information provided by senior leaders, plus visits to classrooms and talks with students, ensure that governors have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching. Governors attend review meetings to consider data on students' progress and compare these with the national data. They robustly hold the headteacher and leaders at all levels to account for results and students' achievement.
 - Governors ensure that performance management arrangements are fully in place and are used effectively to tackle under-performance. Salary awards are linked to performance and examination results.
 - The governing body ensures safeguarding requirements are met.

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

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Students demonstrate consistently good standards of behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Attendance rates are high and have been sustained. Rates of persistent absence have reduced and permanent exclusions are rare. Equally, the number of fixed-term exclusions is low. Early intervention and effective behaviour management systems have contributed to improvement.
- Students take care in their appearance and are immaculately dressed. They are very courteous and polite to each other and to adults and appear happy at all times. Students take pride in their school. The school environment is well cared for and there is little evidence of litter. Staff and students told inspectors that this was typical of the behaviour around the site.
- Students are eager to be involved in all the school offers. Many participate in extra-curricular activities and value visits to the theatre and other cultural events.
- Lessons start on time and students arrive well prepared with the necessary equipment. They are eager to learn. However, in a few lessons their enthusiasm for learning fades when they are not sufficiently challenged and tasks fail to excite them.
- Students enjoy good relations with staff. Around the school site and in lessons staff manage behaviour well. Positive relationships result in classrooms providing a very supportive and engaging learning environment.

Safety

- The school'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 are fully in place to ensure students keep safe in the academy. Students are fully aware of how to keep safe and this is having a positive impact on their learning and personal well-being.
- Through personal, social, health and citizenship education programmes students are made aware of how to be safe when using the internet. They are knowledgeable about substance misuse and sex and relationships education.
- Internal systems to record any type of bullying are secure. Students understand the harm that their comments can make, including homophobic and racist comments. They say bullying is extremely rare and staff records are analysed closely to identify patterns or trends of bullying that may emerge over time.
- Risk assessments are completed for offsite provision and checks undertaken to ensure the safety and well-being of all students.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is improving and, as a result, the standards being reached in GCSE examinations continue to rise. This quality of teaching ensures students' progress is good overall.
- Teachers focus on the progress of individuals and groups of learners alongside the drive for higher grades. This is particularly evident for the most able who successfully reach the highest possible grades.
- Teachers know their subjects well. This expertise and enthusiasm inspires, motivates and engages students well in lessons.
- Teaching of vocational subjects, such as health and social care and horticulture, is good and leads to positive success rates. This is also the case for a small number of students who access some of their learning at Myerscough College.
- At times teachers do not demand the most of their students or set work that challenges individuals equally well, particularly less able students. When this occurs, the learning of these students slows and they do not make the best progress.
- Questioning is used effectively to challenge students' thinking and this enables them to extend their learning. In a Year 10 geography lesson, students were asked to formulate their own questions about how farming can adversely affect food production. The ensuing debates showed insight into food production and changes that affect farming methods.
- There are many opportunities for students to work together and share their learning. Students plan group activities and present their work to others. They also provide feedback to each other and offer suggestions to help their peers improve their work.

- Many teachers are applying the whole-school approaches to marking and assessment and this is having a positive impact on students' understanding of how to improve their work. However, this approach to marking and feedback is not consistent. Consequently, some teachers do not always use this to best effect giving only cursory feedback or general comments rather than identifying clear strategies to help students improve their learning.
- The teaching of literacy is good overall and reflects teachers' secure subject knowledge. However, there are inconsistencies. For example, teachers do not always point out errors in students' work, particularly in grammar and punctuation, so students do not learn from their mistakes. Skills are not always promoted well enough in other subjects, so students are unsure of how to use specialised vocabulary or lack confidence to read and use technical language.
- Mathematics is taught well. Staff promote numeracy skills across the curriculum so that students learn how to apply their knowledge.
- Deployment of adults in the classroom is effective and ensures students' needs are met, both pastorally and academically.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students achieve well in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
- Students enter the academy with standards that are in line with the national average. Students make good progress and leave at the end of Year 11 with standards above the national average. In 2014, the number of students attaining five good passes at GCSE examinations including English and mathematics was above the national average at 63%.
- The progress students make has risen in the last three years. In 2014, over three quarters of students made more than expected progress in English; this is above the national average. In mathematics, a similar proportion made more than expected progress, also above the national average. This indicates good progress from their starting points on entry in Year 7. Equally, the number of students who made better than expected progress has also risen to above the national average in English and in line with the national average 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 support the development of literacy skills and those students who need extra support to access learning across the curriculum.
- Students undertaking the health and social care and land-based horticulture courses make similarly good progress. Equally, students enjoy lessons and attain well in music and the performing arts where the needs of all students are particularly well met. In art, one student described the lessons as, 'like therapy'.
- Disadvantaged students make good progress. They attain, on average, one GCSE grade lower than other students nationally and are a grade and a half lower when compared to other students in school. The gap in attainment is closing. GCSE results for both English and mathematics in 2014 show that the attainment of disadvantaged students, and also those with special educational needs, is improving at a faster rate than similar groups nationally.
- Students who are disabled and those with special educational needs make good progress overall. However, at times, tasks are set that are not hard enough for the lower-attaining students and this prevents them consistently making the best possible progress. Nevertheless, overall provision meets their needs because they often benefit from additional support either individually or in a group.
- The most able students achieve well and make good progress overall. The number of students achieving the highest grades in English and mathematics is above the national average.
- Students who attend the Myerscough College make good progress in extending their basic skills. They are well prepared for moving on to the next stage of education, apprenticeships or employment.
- Senior and middle leaders undertake regular monitoring and tracking of students' progress. Data analysis is good and information used well. The gap between the progress of different groups of learners is closing over time and any variation is checked to ensure even greater impact on gaps that are not closing quickly enough.

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	137342
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	448870

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	703
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tom Ibison
Headteacher	Philip Birch
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
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