

# Armthorpe Academy

Mere Lane, Armthorpe, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN3 2DA

## Inspection dates

4–5 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement across a range of subjects requires improvement. Too few make the progress of which they are capable.
- The most able pupils and disadvantaged most able pupils do not make good progress.
- The quality of teaching is not good enough. Work is too easy, slow in pace and therefore does not challenge pupils well.
- Leaders vary in how well they drive improvements. The weak achievement of groups of pupils is not addressed rigorously.
- Senior leaders and the governing body have been over-generous in their evaluation of how much things have improved since the last inspection. This has slowed the pace of improvement.

### The school has the following strengths

- Rates of progress are rising as the quality of teaching improves. Outcomes for pupils in English are particularly strong.
- Pupils with weak reading, writing and mathematical skills on entry make good progress during their time in the school.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good.
- The quality of the 16 to 19 programmes is good. The sixth form is well led and learners achieve well.

## Full report

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

- Improve leadership and management at all levels by:
  - ensuring that the school fully meets the requirements of the 'Special educational needs code of practice'
  - spreading more widely the examples of strong leadership currently in the school
  - ensuring that middle leaders address weaknesses thoroughly and that they evaluate the impact of their actions with more rigour
  - reviewing the curriculum in key stage 4 to ensure that pupils achieve well across a range of subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and so improve outcomes for the most able and disadvantaged most able pupils by:
  - raising expectations of what pupils can do and achieve across all subjects
  - ensuring that the written and verbal feedback pupils receive from teachers follows the school's policy and gives them the information they need in order to improve.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, standards have declined significantly, falling below the minimum government expectations in 2015. In 2016 they improved, as leadership was strengthened and the improvements in teaching began to make a difference. However, much remains to be done to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for pupils become good.
- Leaders have been too quick to celebrate the improved headline figures from the 2016 examination results. Beneath these headlines lie weaknesses which are in the early stages of being addressed. As a result, the school's self-evaluation is too generous.
- Middle leaders vary in the rigour with which they analyse weaknesses, address them and then evaluate the impact of their actions. In turn, there is variability in how well they are held to account by senior leaders. In particular, middle leaders' understanding of achievement data is not always sufficiently secure to analyse the progress of groups of pupils.
- The leadership and management of special educational needs has weaknesses in how interventions are measured to see whether they are working, in addressing high rates of absence for those pupils and in ensuring that the school fully meets the requirements of the 'Special educational needs code of practice'.
- The school has the policy of allowing pupils to make their own choices of subjects to take in key stage 4. This has led to large proportions of pupils being at risk of not achieving well under the government's accountability measures for achievement. The lead inspector discussed this with the chief executive of the trust who immediately took action to ensure that pupils would not be disadvantaged by this policy.
- The curriculum is enhanced well by a programme of visits and extra-curricular opportunities, including sporting activities. A national charity partners research students with some of the school's most able pupils to encourage them to aim for a place in higher education.
- The school's pupil premium review came to similar judgements to those of inspectors. There is variability between faculties in how achievement of disadvantaged pupils is monitored. Overall, the pupil premium is having a positive impact but not for most-able disadvantaged pupils. The school's website is not up to date in giving details on the impact of the pupil premium. The website gives a good account of how the catch-up premium supports those pupils who need to catch up with reading. These initiatives are making a positive impact on raising achievement for these pupils.
- Some aspects of leadership are strong. The drive to improve pupils' literacy across all subjects is successful. Leadership of English is strong and there is scope to spread this good practice more widely.
- The trust has very recently expanded to include more than just this school, and so is now in a better position to broker support. Trust staff provide a good level of challenge which has been successful in turning around the significantly weak achievement of 2015. They are well aware of remaining weaknesses and are committed to continuing this trend of improvement.

## Governance of the school

- Governors have passion, commitment and enthusiasm. They have an impressive dedication to raising standards and improving teaching. With their support, standards have risen, but they have not yet been successful in strategically focusing leaders on raising achievement of the most able and on the weaknesses in the curriculum at key stage 4.
- Governors have been effective in analysing their strengths and areas for development. As a result, they are now asking pertinent questions to challenge leaders in meetings. However, the answers they receive from leaders sometimes lack substance or do not answer the question fully.
- Governors are generally aware of what is needed to improve in the school and are kept informed of the achievement headlines. The weak progress of disadvantaged pupils prompted the governing body to commission a review of the pupil premium. However, their understanding of the progress and attendance of groups of pupils lacks detail, which has led to the school's over-generous self-evaluation.
- With the support of the trust, the governing body has been successful in ensuring that the school's budget deficit will be addressed by the end of the year.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff receive regular training to ensure that they have up-to-date information on how to keep pupils safe.
- School leaders have ensured that the site is safe but are strengthening security further through the installation of new security gates.
- Inspectors alerted school leaders to some minor weaknesses in how staff are checked. These issues were rectified by the end of the inspection.
- Records relating to child protection are maintained well. The school works well with a range of outside bodies to keep pupils safe.
- Pupils who access the off-site provision for behavioural needs are safe and secure. Access to the site is strictly controlled. Arrangements for following up on any absent pupils are rigorous.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Across the school in too many subjects, the most able and particularly the disadvantaged most able pupils are not challenged well. Consequently, these pupils finish the work soon and are then either used as 'experts' to support others in the completion of the simple work or sit patiently and wait. Pace is then lost and learning time is wasted.
- Teachers sometimes give tasks to pupils without teaching the skills necessary to complete them. In one lesson, pupils needed to understand the principles of marketing in order to complete the task well. However, this essential piece of information had not been taught and so pupils floundered.
- The school's policy for marking and feedback is not always followed well by teachers. In some cases, they are 'to do' lists, which simply state what task the pupil should do next. This, pupils said, 'does not help a lot'.

- Mathematics teaching has weaknesses. Sometimes the work is too easy and unnecessarily repetitive, including for the most able. There are missed opportunities for pupils to solve problems using their mathematical skills. Teachers' explanations are sometimes confused or over-complicated. This leads to pace being lost and pupils becoming a little passive.
- There are also considerable strengths in teaching. English teaching is strong because the quality of verbal and written feedback follows the school policy and gives pupils the information they need to improve their work. Any pupils that are at risk of falling behind are picked up promptly and action is taken by teachers to help them catch up.
- In mathematics too there are strengths. Challenge is sometimes high and teachers ensure that gaps in pupils' fluency in using numbers are addressed. Moreover, in science, the quality of teaching is improving steadily in the challenge that is provided for the most able, but inconsistencies remain.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the care and welfare provided for their children. Many comment on the 'excellent communication' to solve problems and worries they may have.
- Pupils feel safe from any threats of bullying. Some said that bullying occasionally happens, but that there is always a caring adult to turn to. 'Teachers really care about us,' was the way one pupil summed up the high-quality care provided to pupils.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is generally good, although leaders are working to strengthen this further in the curriculum. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of rules, respect for others, of democracy and individual liberty. Consequently, they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Around the site, pupils' behaviour is extremely positive. They are polite to each other and to adults. Inspectors were impressed by their manners and how they take a pride in wearing their uniform correctly.
- Since the last inspection, the school has been very successful in improving behaviour in lessons. Teachers follow the behaviour policy consistently well. Consequently, this has enabled teachers to spend more time teaching and less time dealing with low-level disruption.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good, but their attention does tend to wane at the end of the day or when teaching does not fully challenge them.
- Attendance overall is broadly average, but remains low for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The rates of fixed-term exclusion have been high for some groups of pupils, but this is now being addressed and exclusion rates are falling.
- At the time of the inspection, no pupils from the school were accessing the off-site behaviour unit. However, pupils' behaviour in the unit is good.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils overall rose significantly in 2016. However, progress between subjects and between groups of pupils varied significantly and so achievement has not improved to the point where it is good.
- Most-able pupils in 2016 made weak progress. This was due to them not making good progress in any subject with the exception of English. The disadvantaged most able pupils underachieved on average by nearly one grade in each subject. This continues a trend of underachievement of the most able that has lasted for several years.
- Overall, the progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved in English and mathematics since 2015, so that there are diminishing differences between their progress and that of others nationally. The pupil premium is used more effectively in some subjects than in others, but overall, it is making a positive difference.
- In humanities subjects, pupils made weak progress. This includes the most able and disadvantaged pupils.
- The most able pupils currently in the school are not making as much progress as they could, including the disadvantaged most able pupils. This is clear from the school's own tracking system and from inspection evidence.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress that is close to all pupils nationally with the same starting points.
- Pupils who need to catch up because they have weak reading, writing or mathematical skills make good progress. In 2016, their progress was on average half a grade higher than all pupils nationally with the same starting points. This is largely the result of the school's successful methods to improve literacy across the curriculum.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## Good

- The sixth form is well led by a leader who now has a new role in the school due to the closure of the sixth form. Despite this, she continues to ensure that provision is good, that progress is tracked meticulously and that the requirements of the 16 to 19 programmes are fully met.
- Standards in the sixth form have improved and the progress students make is broadly average. For those that needed to retake the GCSE in English and mathematics, a greater proportion succeeded in obtaining at least a grade C than in previous years.
- The curriculum is enhanced well by various enrichments. Students take part in activities such as listening to younger pupils reading and supporting in the feeder primary schools. All students complete an element of work experience as part of their studies.
- The advice and careers guidance given to students is good and has led to more students going on to further study at university. They told inspectors about how staff had supported them in their applications to universities and had helped them in their choice of suitable further training. The school has good relationships with Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Lincoln, where students have used library facilities for research.

- Teaching is better in the sixth form than in the rest of the school. Improvements in teaching are very obvious when contrasting some of the old coursework, which is carelessly presented and does not meet course requirements, with the much more impressive work being done currently by students.
- In one English lesson seen, the teacher constantly probed for better answers from students that increased their vocabulary and made them think deeply. Consequently, students made rapid progress.
- Students feel well supported. They told an inspector that sixth-form staff 'work their socks off' to make sure that any worries they may have are dealt with. Safeguarding is strong, with all students easily identified by their distinctive lanyards.

## School details

Unique reference number	138314
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	10019755

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	570
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sally Shearman
Headteacher	Andy Cope
Telephone number	01302 831582
Website	<a href="http://www.armthorpeacademy.org.uk">www.armthorpeacademy.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@armthorpe.doncaster.sch.uk">admin@armthorpe.doncaster.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	20 November 2014

## Information about this school

- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the curriculum and the pupil premium strategy.
- The school is part of the Consilium Academy Trust. The school receives support brokered through the trust from staff from other trust schools and from independent consultants.
- The school uses Learning Central, a shared off-site provision with three other Doncaster schools to support pupils across the 11–16 age range who have behavioural needs. Nine pupils in key stage 4 currently use the site to support their curriculum.

- The school's sixth form is scheduled to close in July 2017 and so the last cohort of Year 13 students are completing their courses. There is no Year 12.
- In 2015, the school did not meet the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school commissioned a review of the pupil premium in June 2016.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited a range of lessons. They heard pupils reading and met with groups of staff and pupils. An inspector visited the off-site provision for pupils with behaviour needs. Some of these activities took place alongside senior staff from the school.
- Inspectors analysed the 40 responses that had been submitted to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View), several questionnaires completed by staff and by pupils.
- The inspectors scrutinised a number of documents, including school development planning, achievement information, the recent pupil premium review and anonymised records of performance management.

## Inspection team

Robert Jones, Lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Gillian Fisher	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew West	Ofsted Inspector

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