

Bath Community Academy

Rush Hill, Bath, BA2 2QL

Inspection dates 8–9 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires Improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
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

- Teaching is not consistently stretching students' learning or challenging them enough to deepen their understanding.
- Not all teachers make good use of the information they have about individual students to plan work that will improve their learning.
- Absence remains high and a number of students persistently miss lessons, despite some successful actions to improve attendance.
- Distracting behaviour in some lessons hinders the progress of students in those groups.
- The actions the school is taking to improve literacy are not having enough impact on improving the accuracy of students' writing.

The school has the following strengths

- Academy leaders at all levels are driving forward improvement in all aspects of the academy's work, from a very low starting point. Their actions are having a clear and positive impact on students' achievement.
- The recent examination outcomes have shown a rapid overall improvement, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The academy provides clear and motivating messages, a carefully constructed plan for the work that students do, and good guidance. This is building students' confidence and helping them plan what they will do when they leave.
- The academy has in place strong systems to make sure that students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- The academy keeps students safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 part-lessons and conducted other short visits to lessons. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with academy leaders. Inspectors also scrutinised examples of students' work.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, senior leaders, leaders with subject responsibilities, members of The Academy Council, the executive Principal of the Cabot Learning Federation, and groups of students.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including information on students' achievement; the academy's self-evaluation report; outcomes of the academy's monitoring; its improvement plan; the academy's website; and records relating to the monitoring of teaching, behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors took account of the 15 responses to the online Parent View survey and the academy's own survey of parents' views.
- Inspectors examined case studies that recorded how safeguarding issues had been addressed by the academy.

Inspection team

Alan Hinchliffe, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julie Miriam

Additional Inspector

Fran Ashworth

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school converted to academy status in September 2012.
- The academy is part of the Cabot Learning Federation.
- The academy is much smaller than the averaged-sized secondary school and most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for looked after children and for students known to be eligible for free school meals, is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is well above average.
- The academy does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Alternative provision for three students is provided at the Cabot Learning Federation Studio.
- From September 2014, the academy no longer has provision for sixth form students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to good or outstanding so that achievement continues to rise rapidly for all students by:
 - making better use of the existing good and outstanding practice to raise standards of teaching across the academy
 - ensuring that all staff use the marking and feedback systems to improve the accuracy of students' writing
 - improving teachers' use of questioning to deepen students' understanding and develop their subject knowledge
 - ensuring that teachers make better use of the information that they have about individual students' achievement to plan work that will improve and extend students' learning.
- Improve the behaviour and safety of students by:
 - reducing the proportion of students who are persistent absentees and increasing overall attendance to match the national average
 - ensuring that all adults consistently and quickly apply the academy's policies to deal with misbehaviour in the classroom so that students' learning and progress improve.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal is highly effective in leading the improvement of the academy. The actions of the Principal and other academy leaders are having a direct impact on improving achievement. They have taken effective steps to tackle long-standing difficulties. A striking example of this is the steep rise in the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above, including English and mathematics. This figure doubled between the 2013 and 2014 results, much faster than the national rate of improvement.
- Subject leaders and other staff with whole-academy responsibilities work effectively as a team to tackle weaknesses and build on the academy's emerging strengths. This group is enthused by the strong leadership provided by the Principal and members of the academy council. They are held firmly to account for their responsibility to improve teaching and achievement; they demand more, in turn, from the staff they manage.
- The collective action taken by the academy leadership is building the confidence that parents and other community members have in the quality of the education it provides.
- Teaching is improving because leaders have clear, high expectations of the quality of teaching. In addition leaders carefully monitor teachers' practice. They correctly identify that some exceptional teaching is contributing strongly to rising achievement, but that the influence of the best practice is not shared sufficiently.
- The academy has in place a thorough system of self-evaluation that is used effectively to check whether plans for improvement are working. The reports are clear about the progress being made by students, and enable academy leaders to provide high-quality information to teachers about students' learning needs.
- The academy adapts the broad requirements of the National Curriculum to run courses that suit its students and improve their progress. For example, more time has been given to students in Year 7 to improve their literacy. The subject choice for students in Year 10 and 11 has been designed to match the needs of the local area and to allow students at all levels to progress into a higher level of education when they are 16.
- Students receive good guidance on making choices about their future and they are given direct help to take the next steps in their learning. For example, students from the final Year 11 are provided with daily transport from the academy to enable them to attend sixth form provision.
- The positive and well-organised actions taken by the special educational needs coordinator have made sure that students with educational needs are now making better progress.
- The academy uses time during the school day well to offer students access to the range of culture available in the city of Bath. For example, the school Christmas carol concert takes place in Bath Abbey. The extended activities the academy organises for students, and the programme of assemblies, have helped them to consider moral and spiritual issues. It successfully encourages students to be reflective, considerate, and know the difference between right and wrong. It fosters interest in, and respect for, others' faiths, cultures and beliefs.
- The academy's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The academy has an effective local governing body, the academy council, and is part of an active, supportive and dynamic federated body of local academies.
 - Academy Council members use their experience well to develop an accurate view of the quality of teaching and the achievement of students in the academy when compared with other schools and academies nationally.
 - The council is directly involved in the allocation of the additional pupil premium funding for disadvantaged students. Their good support for the progress of disadvantaged students, and students with special educational needs, demonstrates the academy's strong, inclusive ethos.

The collaborative work of the federation has provided the academy with the structure and resources needed to rapidly improve historically poor outcomes. The federation has in place a performance management system that is used within the academy to reward good teaching with higher pay. Governance through the wider federation provides the academy with extensive support and a high level of challenge.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**require improvement****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement because distracting behaviour remains in some lessons, where it interrupts learning and hinders students' progress. Nonetheless, the strong actions taken by managers have almost eliminated disruptive behaviour and improved the opportunity students have to learn.
- Outside lessons, students are supported by an effective and visible staff presence around the academy. They behave well and are safe. Managers are successfully establishing a culture of respect where less intervention is needed.
- The academy has a positive system of rewards and clear sanctions but teachers do not always apply them consistently.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement. It is not yet good because too many students do not attend regularly enough and cannot therefore benefit fully from the support the academy offers.
- Although managers are taking action to improve attendance, this has not yet had a significant impact. Students with high absence rates have gaps in their learning, so that their progress slows; the need for them to catch up also disrupts the flow of work for those who attend regularly.
- Teaching programmes include guidance for all students on staying safe. For example, teachers of computing provide a programme that helps students understand the dangers of persuasive influences they may encounter online.
- The academy has clear systems to make sure that the adults it employs are safe to work with children.
- Bullying is rare but, when it occurs, the academy deals with it well. The actions taken by staff support students well and they keep careful records to show what has been done. As a result, students feel safe and well supported.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- Teaching does not extend and deepen learning enough by offering more challenging tasks, or through teachers' effective use of questioning to find out what students have understood.
- Teachers use the academy's systems for giving feedback to students consistently and well. Students know how well they are doing in each subject and they know what they need to do to improve their progress.
- Teaching is not having enough impact on improving levels of students' literacy because errors in the accuracy of their writing are not always corrected; this is restricting their progress.
- Teachers make good links between the work that students do and the way that examinations are marked. They help them understand what they need to do to prepare for examinations, and the differences between examination grades.
- Teachers have clear information about their students. However, some make better use of it than others. In the best examples, teachers plan work to allow all students to succeed. In some lessons, there is no variation in the work students in a group are asked to do, so that it is too easy for some and too hard for others.
- In some cases, the planned learning fails to captivate students and it either results in students who are cooperative losing concentration, or some becoming openly distracted.
- Teaching groups are on average small and regularly have teaching assistants present. The contribution of those teaching assistants is typically good. However, some teaching assistants do too much of the work for the students rather than encouraging them to complete the tasks themselves, with their support.
- Staff encourage students to keep their work in neat, well-presented books. This is supporting them well to take a pride in their achievements and helping them to learn.
- Teachers successfully help students understand equal opportunities issues and to have a positive approach to tackling discrimination.

The achievement of pupils**requires improvement**

- The attainment of students in GCSE examinations has improved rapidly from a low base but the proportion achieving five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, remains low compared with national figures. Nevertheless, the GCSE results for both English and mathematics improved significantly in 2014, according to provisional data.
- The academy checks the progress of each student from the time that they start at the school. This allows them to take into account the large number of students who have started with them in the middle of a school year and ensure that they receive good support to catch up quickly.
- The outcomes for disadvantaged students in GCSE examinations improved in 2014, closing the gap between their attainment and the attainment of similar students nationally. Students with special educational needs are now making better progress than in previous years.
- The school does not have a policy of entering students early for public examinations.
- The few students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are making progress that is at least in line with that of all other students in the academy.
- Some students with high prior attainment are currently failing to reach their potential. In 2014, around one third failed to achieve five GCSEs at grades A* to C. However, the number of higher grades increased in 2014 as some teachers are starting to provide these students with a higher level of challenge.
- The academy is taking action to remove the blocks to achievement that exist through a lack of students' literacy skills, poor attendance and distracted behaviour in lessons. That action is starting to improve the outcomes for students.
- The progress of the few students who attend an alternative off-site provision is checked carefully and records show that they are making good progress.

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	138394
Local authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	440044

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	301
Appropriate authority	The Academy Council and The Cabot Learning Federation Board
Chair	Con Alexander
Principal	Adam Williams
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01225 426268
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