

# Furness Academy

Thornccliffe Road, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA14 5QP

**Inspection dates** 15–16 May 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires special measures.

- Students' achievement is inadequate and standards are too low. Not enough students make the progress that is expected nationally and very few do better than this.
- Expectations of what students can achieve are too low. The academy's targets are not challenging enough.
- Students with special educational needs are underachieving. The use made of additional support in the classroom varies and it is not always good enough.
- Teaching requires improvement as there is too much variation in the quality of teaching across the academy. Teaching needs to be better if the students' achievement is to improve more quickly.
- Although attendance is improving, it remains below the national average. The achievement of many students is held back because they do not attend the academy regularly enough.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions from the academy is high, including for students who have special educational needs.
- Academy leaders have not brought about improvement sufficiently quickly. They do not check carefully enough on the impact that their actions are having.
- The governing body has not challenged the academy's leaders to speed up the pace of improvement. It has been too reliant on senior leaders for information on how well the academy is doing and has not checked on the impact of initiatives such as the use of the pupil premium.

### The school has the following strengths

- In a few lessons, students make outstanding progress.
- The overall quality of teaching in mathematics is improving although weaknesses in students' achievement remain.
- The support provided for younger students who need help with their basic skills is helping them to grow in confidence and make better progress.
- Students feel safe in school and relationships are usually good. Students behave sensibly at social times and as they move from lesson to lesson.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 46 part-lessons, of which three were observed jointly with senior staff. Lessons were observed in a range of subjects across both sites used by the academy.
- Meetings were held with the Principal and vice-principal, other members of the leadership team, teachers with leadership or management responsibilities, and with other class teachers. The lead inspector also met with the Chair of the Governing Body. In addition, inspectors observed academy leaders reporting back to teachers on the quality of teaching and learning, and students' achievement in lessons.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including the academy's view of its own performance, monitoring records, information about students' progress, improvement planning, minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of behaviour and attendance, and records relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors met with students throughout the inspection and talked with them about the quality of their educational experience and the standard of behaviour at the academy.
- The inspection team took account of the views of 57 staff who returned inspection questionnaires and the views of the 47 parents who had responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) by the end of the inspection.

## Inspection team

Lee Northern, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Brown

Her Majesty's Inspector

Drew Crawshaw

Her Majesty's Inspector

Janice Gorch

Additional Inspector

Mark Patton

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.*

### Information about this school

- The academy opened in September 2009 and is an amalgamation of three predecessor schools. It is larger than most secondary schools and it has the specialism of sport.
- The academy is sponsored by Barrow Sixth Form College, Furness College and the University of Cumbria. It operates on two sites, which are approximately one mile apart, one of which is divided by a main road. Both sites cater for students aged between 11 and 16. It is expected that the academy will move into one new building in September 2013.
- A small number of students attend alternative provision run by 'Pit Stop' and by Furness College.
- The number of students joining the academy in Year 7 is lower than those leaving Year 11, which reflects the decline in the local student population.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The proportion of students supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after.)
- Few students leave or join the academy other than at the beginning and end of the school year.
- In the inspection of January 2012, the academy was judged to require significant improvement in relation to students' achievement, particularly in mathematics. It was therefore given a notice to improve. In October 2012, the academy received a monitoring inspection, when its progress was judged to be satisfactory.
- In 2012 the academy did not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching, and reduce rapidly the variation in the quality of teaching across the academy, by:
  - developing and implementing an academy-wide strategy for improving teaching, monitoring its impact and holding staff closely to account for agreed actions
  - eradicating the few remaining instances of inadequate teaching and sharing more effectively the examples of good and outstanding practice across the academy
  - ensuring that lessons include opportunities for students to be more actively engaged in their learning and that teachers move them on quickly to more challenging work
  - increasing the impact of homework and marking, and checking more effectively that they are making a difference to students' learning.
- Develop and implement a focused strategy to rapidly improve achievement, so that it is at least good for all students, to include:
  - raising the expectations of staff of what all students can achieve, including through the use of

challenging targets for every student

- improving the impact of support provided for students with special educational needs, including through strengthening the work of teaching assistants
- ensuring that funding provided through the pupil premium is effective in raising the achievement of those students for whom it is intended
- eradicating any instances of poor behaviour that slow students' learning in lessons, and reducing further the time lost through fixed-term exclusions from the academy
- improving the attendance of all groups of students, and reducing more rapidly the proportion of students who are persistently absent from the academy
- ensuring that changes to the curriculum and decisions to enter students for external examinations at different points in the school year do not have a detrimental impact on the achievement of any students, including the most-able.

■ Improve the strategic leadership, management and governance of the academy by ensuring that:

- action planning is based on a thorough and accurate evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy's performance, and that plans are regularly reviewed and updated in the light of progress
- information about students' progress, attendance and behaviour is used to anticipate underachievement and respond more effectively
- leaders' checks on teaching quality are closely linked to a detailed analysis of the progress that pupils make in each subject
- performance management procedures include a close link between challenging targets for staff and decisions about pay and salary progression
- governors have a clear view of the performance of the academy and more effectively hold leaders and managers to account for improvements
- the governing body takes part in, and responds to, an external review of governance to identify what support and training governors need.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- Students' achievement at the academy remains inadequate. In the examinations in 2012, levels of attainment were well below average and were lower than in the previous year. This decline was not anticipated by leaders or governors. Too many students did not make enough progress in English or mathematics from the broadly average levels of attainment they had reached at age 11. Students who have special educational needs also underachieved.
- As a result of improvements to teaching, particularly in mathematics, levels of achievement at the academy are now rising. Better support for students who have weaknesses in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly in Year 7, means that the progress made by students with special educational needs is also improving. However, the overall pace of improvement is too slow and varies too much across the academy. This is because academy leaders have not tackled with sufficient urgency or rigour the need to raise standards and ensure that students receive consistently good or better teaching.
- The achievement of students supported by the pupil premium is also inadequate. In 2012, the average point score reached by these students in English and in mathematics was equivalent to more than one GCSE grade lower in each subject, per student, than those of other students. Inspection evidence confirms that, for students currently in the academy, these differences are set to increase further. As a result, the academy's approach to the promotion of equality of opportunity is ineffective.
- Academy leaders have not kept a close enough check on the policy of entering students before the end of Year 11 for examinations in English and mathematics. This policy lacks a clear rationale and means that some students, particularly the more able, are held back from achieving as well as they should in these subjects.
- A few students in Years 9, 10 and 11 attend a local college or follow a work-related learning programme at a local provider. Some students who attend this provision gain valuable skills and develop better attitudes to education. For other students, the impact is less positive and their attendance and behaviour show little sign of improvement.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Despite improvements in some aspects since the previous inspection, the overall quality of teaching requires improvement. This is because there is not a consistent, academy-wide approach to improving teaching so that more is of good or better quality. As a result, the teaching is not strong enough to help students more quickly make up for previous levels of underachievement.
- There is some good and outstanding teaching where teachers have high expectations and build quickly on what students already know and can do. Such lessons provide a range of activities that capture and sustain students' interest. Students say they like lessons where they can work with others, discuss their ideas and use the skills they have learned.
- For example, in a very effective English lesson for Year 8 students, the teacher asked a good range of challenging questions that encouraged the students to provide detailed and thoughtful answers. The teacher demonstrated clearly what she wanted the students to learn, ensuring that they all fully understood how to improve their work.
- Where teaching is less effective, the pace of learning is too slow and does not demand much from the students. In these lessons, activities are provided for students that do not interest or more actively involve them, and do not challenge them to produce their best work.
- Across the academy, too few lessons are planned to make good use of additional adult support, including for students with special educational needs. For example, in some instances, teaching assistants wait for too long, listening to the teacher talking to the class, before providing

targeted support for those students who need it.

- In some lessons, learning is slowed because teachers use approaches and strategies without considering if they are the most appropriate for the learning being developed. For example, in an otherwise effective history lesson for Year 7 students about the Bayeux Tapestry, the teacher stopped the flow of an activity that students were enjoying in order to undertake a superficial self-assessment exercise.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics is improving, although some inconsistencies remain. For example, not all teaching emphasises the importance of developing students' deeper understanding of the mathematics they learn. As a result, many students do not have a good grasp of common misconceptions or important concepts in mathematics.
- Although inspectors saw many examples of helpful marking in students' books, there is considerable inconsistency in how students are expected to respond. The way homework is set and marked is also uneven across the academy. Although leaders and managers have developed policies to improve the quality of homework and marking, they do not check or evaluate how well these policies are implemented or if they are making any difference.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

- Students' movement around the academy is generally calm and orderly. Students respond well to requests from teachers and other adults, and little direct supervision from staff is required at breaks and at lunchtimes.
- Students say they feel safe at the academy and that bullying, where it occurs, is usually dealt with well by staff. They feel confident about who they can turn to if they have worries or concerns. Most parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire agreed that their child felt safe at the academy.
- Students' behaviour in lessons is generally good and students say they enjoy lessons where they can be more involved in class discussions or practical activities. Some disruption to learning occurs in a small number of lessons when teaching does not capture students' interest or engage them sufficiently in their learning.
- The proportion of students receiving at least one fixed-term exclusion from the academy is reducing, although the overall number of exclusions remains too high. In particular, too many students with special educational needs, and some students who are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, lose valuable learning time due to temporary exclusions.
- Although overall levels of attendance have improved since the last inspection, they remain low when compared with other secondary schools. The poor attendance of a significant minority of students in Key Stage 4, in particular, is holding back improvements to achievement. Although academy leaders are taking action to improve attendance and tackle persistent absence, the rate of improvement is not yet quick enough.

### **The leadership and management**

### **are inadequate**

- The impact of leadership and management on the quality of education provided for students at the academy is inadequate. Although senior managers have taken effective steps to prepare for the move from two academy sites to one, and to manage a programme of restructuring and significant staff redundancy, leaders are not well placed to accelerate improvements in standards.
- Systemic weaknesses in leadership across the academy mean that actions taken to raise achievement and improve teaching lack sufficient urgency and that the pace of improvement is too slow. The issues for improvement identified at the previous inspection have not yet been fully resolved.
- Leaders have put in place a variety of plans and policies to tackle weaknesses in achievement

and teaching, but these plans are either too recent to have had much impact, or are poorly coordinated with other initiatives across the academy.

- Leaders' understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy's performance is not accurate or insightful enough. For example, the evaluation of teaching is not cross-checked with an analysis of the progress that students make. Weaknesses in the way checks are carried out mean that staff are not properly or consistently held to account for their responsibilities in bringing about improvement.
- There is no academy-wide, strategic approach to ensuring all teaching is at least good. Frequent changes to the leadership of teaching have stalled the drive for more rapid improvement. As a result, there is too much reliance on subject leaders to lead developments in teaching; some have the skills to do so effectively but many do not, and the ineffective support provided by senior leaders is not helping them to improve their work quickly enough. Best practice across the academy is not being shared or used effectively to support improvements to teaching.
- Academy leaders have used the pupil premium money to provide a range of activities for particular groups of students. However, they do not check closely enough on the difference this funding is making or know which strategies are making the most or least difference. The governing body does not challenge academy leaders robustly enough about how this money is spent and the academy's website does not meet requirements in the way it reports the impact of this funding.
- Recent changes to the way the academy's leaders use performance management mean that all teachers now have a target linked to students' achievement. However, it is too soon to see the impact of these changes and, as a result, decisions about teachers' pay and progression are not linked closely enough to improvements in teaching.
- Expectations of what students can achieve are too low. The academy's academic targets are too modest and more-able students in particular are not challenged enough to make faster progress. As a result, very few students are making progress at a rate that is better than that expected nationally across a range of subjects, including in mathematics and English.
- Although the academy's leaders are developing better systems for collecting and analysing assessment information, they have yet to demonstrate high levels of confidence in the reliability of the data collected. As a result, staff are unable to use this data effectively to anticipate and tackle underachievement. In addition, pastoral and support staff do not use a range of information, including attendance and behaviour data, well enough to detect and respond to the early signs of students who may be falling behind.
- The curriculum is appropriately matched to the needs and aspirations of students at the academy and provides suitably for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, short-term changes to the curriculum, including through the use of early entry to GCSE examinations, have not brought about good results. The range of courses on offer to students in Key Stage 4, including through alternative provision, is not having enough impact on the achievement of many low-attaining students or students with special educational needs.
- The academy has benefited from the support of an external consultant to help develop teaching in mathematics. However, the capacity to maintain improvement is limited by the continuing absence of a substantive appointment to lead mathematics across the academy.
- At the time of the inspection, the academy met all government requirements in relation to the safeguarding of students and safer recruitment.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - A new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed at the start of the current academic year. He recognises that the academy must improve achievement and teaching more rapidly, and that governors have not previously challenged academy leaders effectively enough to do so. Governors have been much too reliant on senior leaders for information about the work of the academy, including how staff performance is managed and the impact of additional funding, such as the pupil premium. The new Chair has produced a proposal for strengthening governors' roles and responsibilities so that these are better aligned with the academy's needs, but this is not yet fully in place. He is also working to establish ways in which

governors are better able to gain their own view of the academy's performance, including the quality of teaching. However, many of these changes to governance have had too little time to become established and the work of the governing body is not yet effective enough in challenging leaders to improve the academy more quickly.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135940
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	399739

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,189
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Edward Creighton
<b>Principal</b>	Douglas Blackledge
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 January 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01229 814980
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<b>Email address</b>	info@furnessacademy.co.uk

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