

Red House Academy

Rutherglen Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR5 5LN

Inspection dates 16–17 January 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Since the previous inspection, last year's students did not achieve as well as they could have done in their GCSE examinations. A significant number of boys did not achieve their anticipated grade C in English. In addition, the proportions of students making good progress in English and in mathematics were below average.
- Students' numeracy and oracy skills are less well developed than their literacy skills.
- Attendance is not consistently at least average.
- Not all subject leaders are fully effective.

The school has the following strengths

- The achievement of last year's Year 11 students in courses other than English and mathematics was good.
- Since the previous inspection, the progress made by students in other years has continued to improve, including in English and in mathematics.
- The academy is led very well by its governing body and principal who are determined to provide a high quality education for their community. As a result they take rapid and decisive action to make key improvements which are effective.
- Additional funding for students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is spent well. Their attendance and behaviour has improved and the gap between their achievement and that of others in the academy is narrowing.
- The quality of teaching has continued to improve. Much credit for this goes to the high quality, extensive and frequent training teachers and teaching assistants receive.
- Improvements to students' literacy skills are being seen. This is due to an academy-wide initiative where every member of staff has a key role to play.
- Over the last term, rates of attendance rose rapidly from below average.
- The students should be congratulated on their contribution to maintaining a safe, orderly and calm atmosphere within the academy.
- The academy has further developed its work in helping some parents support their children's education. Already parents are acknowledging the difference it is making.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 26 part-lessons taught by 26 of the 43 teachers employed by the academy. Inspectors worked with senior staff while observing teaching and learning and reviewing work previously completed by students.
- Inspectors spoke to many students during breaks, lunchtimes, and lessons. They also spoke to a group of Year 7 students about their skills in reading.
- Inspectors observed activities taking place during form time and visited a school assembly.
- A telephone meeting was held with a member of the Trust and Governing Body. Meetings were held with senior leaders and other staff. A discussion was held with an external consultant who works with the academy.
- Parental surveys conducted by the academy were taken into account since, at the time of the inspection, there were insufficient responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors spoke to parents and students attending the Year 11 consultation meeting.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including reports, internal and external data about students' attainment and progress, behaviour and attendance records and students' work. They scrutinised safeguarding procedures and records.

Inspection team

Neil Mackenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Graeme Clarke

Additional Inspector

Mark Patton

Additional Inspector

Anne Smedley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Since the previous inspection the academy has appointed two new senior assistant vice-principals, each with the responsibility to improve the progress students make in English and in mathematics. In addition there are currently two temporary subject leaders for English and mathematics.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority, is well above average.
- The vast majority of students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is high; so too is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standard which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy makes no use of external alternative provision.
- The academy does not currently make use of early entry to GCSE examinations.
- Within the last 12 months, the academy has achieved the Gold Standard Anti-Bullying award, the Gold Standard Award for Cultural Diversity and the Gold Standard award for Investing in Community Engagement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the good progress made by students in Key Stage 3, and the faster progress now being made at Key Stage 4, leads to higher Year 11 examination results, particularly in English and in mathematics.
- Continue the academy's drive to improve students' basic skills so that their numeracy and oracy skills improve at the same pace as their literacy skills.
- Use the good and outstanding practice already in the academy, to help eliminate teaching that requires improvement by ensuring that all teachers:
 - use assessment information to plan learning activities and provide resources that are at the right level of difficulty for students
 - check students' understanding throughout lessons, and adjust activities or strategies when the rate of progress slows
 - ensure that students can explain their answers and justify their ideas clearly and by doing so demonstrate secure knowledge and understanding.
- Continue to improve the attendance of students so that it consistently matches the national average.
- Improve the quality of the work of subject leaders to that of the best within the academy.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **requires improvement**

- Results have been improving over a long period of time at the academy. However the grades reached by some Year 11 students last year in their GCSE examinations in English and mathematics were disappointing. These students did continue to achieve well in other subjects, for example science and those courses taken through the academy's engineering faculty.
- In other year groups students progressed well. Teaching is improving and this has led to progress improving at a faster rate over the last term. This is particularly evident in English. Improved progress in mathematics is not as rapid as in English, but nevertheless a measurable improvement can be seen over this short period. The progress students are making in other subjects is generally good.
- Students in Key Stage 4 joined the academy with significantly below average levels of attainment and weak literacy and numeracy skills. Although attainment on entry to the academy for students currently in Key Stage 3 has risen, weak literacy and numeracy skills can still be a barrier to their rapid progress.
- Across the academy the progress of the most-able students is good. They have positive attitudes to learning and respond well to good teaching.
- Due to previous weak attainment, the academy has been monitoring the progress of boys closely and currently their performance is not significantly different from that of girls.
- The gap in attainment in English between students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and others has narrowed considerably from almost two GCSE grades, to one grade in the last year. This gap is continuing to narrow for current students although not as rapidly in mathematics as in English.
- Students who are weak readers receive additional support. Overall this is very effective in improving students' reading ages. For example, students who are disabled or with special educational needs made improvements to their reading ages equivalent to at least 24 months over a 12-month period. Students who are known to be eligible for free school meals made significantly more than a year's improvement over a year. This strong progress continues with current students and represents good use of the additional catch-up funding.
- High quality care and support provided by teachers and teaching assistants, have helped to improve the rates of progress that disabled students and those with special educational needs have made in recent years. Again this positive trend continues for current students.
- The academy's promotion of equal opportunity requires improvement as the results of some Year 11 students last year did not reflect their potential. However, currently this situation is improving as the achievement gaps between different groups of students are narrowing.

The quality of teaching **is good**

- The impact of teaching that is typically good is accelerating students' progress across the academy. The gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils and subjects are narrowing rapidly and standards are rising.
- The quality of teaching in the academy is improving because of good training, rigorous accountability and a staff who want to do well for their students. As a result, the progress that students are currently making is improving and is good.
- When parents or older students are asked about changes, they consistently remark on the improvements to teaching. Students are also quick to compliment their teachers on the care and support they give.
- Although teaching is good overall and some is outstanding, there is still some that requires improvement to ensure that at least good progress is an outcome of all lessons.
- Students respond well to the positive culture within the academy and the strong relationships

between adults and students. These are powerful tools in giving students self-confidence. Most teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of students very well and so plan work and prepare resources that are effective in helping students learn. In the small number of lessons where teaching requires improvement, activities or learning materials are not well-matched to what students already know and understand. In such instances students can lose interest because for some work is too easy and for others it is too hard.

- Recent training has helped teachers to ask more searching questioning in order to establish how well students are learning. Most use the responses from students to adapt the pace or the course of the lesson when they realise students do not understand well enough. Occasionally, when this strategy is not used well, teachers carry on regardless and students learn too little.
- Low-ability students learn quickly because teachers structure their learning into small steps and have a thorough understanding of each student's capabilities and interests. Teaching assistants work well supporting individual students and small groups. Teaching assistants are at their most effective when they are involved in the planning of a student's learning.
- The academy's outstanding teachers help all students and the most able in particular, to progress very quickly by asking them to explain their answers, justify their ideas or discuss their learning in groups so that knowledge and understanding are consolidated. This really helps students think more deeply about their learning and so progress is rapid.
- Improving students' literacy skills has been a major focus for all staff. There is an expectation that every lesson is planned to include the development of literacy. This initiative has increased the pace with which students build this basic skill. There is a similar drive to improve numeracy across all subjects, but it is at an earlier stage of development so has had less impact. The academy has rightly identified that most students need to improve their speaking skills and confidence to express their thoughts and ideas in class.
- Students' work is now marked frequently and well, often giving very helpful advice to students on how to improve. In some cases, teachers also give time to enable students to capitalise on this advice and this helps students to make faster progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Over some time the academy has worked hard to improve the behaviour of students. Over recent years a high standard of behaviour has been the norm. Students' good behaviour is a credit to the students themselves as well as academy staff. When in public areas of the academy, students show consideration towards each other. They are polite, courteous and helpful to adults.
- In classes, students show good attitudes to their learning. They adopt a positive approach and take pride in their work. Teachers manage the occasional outburst of inappropriate behaviour well.
- Students agree that behaviour has improved. Students clearly understand all forms of prejudice-based bullying and the impact it can have. They say there is little bullying within the academy, and when it does occasionally occur, it is always dealt with well by staff.
- The academy has worked hard with parents and students to improve attendance. Last term attendance improved significantly and was similar to the national average. Students are punctual to school and to lessons.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Students say they always feel safe in and around the academy and parents agree. Students are taught about dangers and how to manage them. This includes Internet use, health and well-being concerns. The site is secure and staff are well-trained to cope with concerns that students may bring to them. Child-protection procedures are exemplary.

The leadership and management are good

- The governors of the academy and the senior leadership team have ensured long-term improvement despite many challenging circumstances. Collectively they demonstrate a passion to provide high quality education. They are excellent role models for teachers, other adults in the academy and for their students. Significant and characteristic strengths of their leadership are the creative solutions they present after identifying an area for improvement and the rapid implementation of actions to bring about those improvements. They are often bold in their decision-making.
- The principal's strong leadership and determination to overcome barriers to academy improvement is commendable and appreciated by parents who recognise her considerable efforts and successes.
- Despite their strong leadership, the proportion of students achieving five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics dipped last year, and this was not anticipated. A rapid investigation of the circumstances that led to this resulted in an extensive range of significant improvements. These included more accurate monitoring of students' progress by key subject leaders, improved training for all staff and the addition of two senior leaders with specific responsibilities to improve the progress that students make in English and in mathematics. These initiatives are already improving the quality of teaching and the progress students make.
- Subject leaders are taking more responsibility for academy improvement. Their effectiveness is generally good, if a little inconsistent; however there are some leaders at this level who provide models of excellent practice including the leader of the engineering faculty and the Curriculum leader Science and the temporary leader of English.
- All staff are rigorously held to account for the quality of their work. Teachers who perform well are rewarded with progression through the salary structure. Support plans are proving effective where staff need to improve their performance.
- The quality of the leadership of teaching has improved. An extended and frequent programme of training for staff has been running from September. The use of academy staff to lead this development ensures that the training is precisely matched to this academy and rapidly develops the leadership skills and confidence of teachers at all levels. Good use is also made of external trainers where specific skills are needed, in for example child protection or moderation of students' work. Training has been a major contributor to improved teaching.
- The academy is rapidly developing a range of very effective initiatives to help parents support their children's learning. These include sessions for parents on how students improve their literacy and numeracy skills and home visits that help with parenting skills. Parents say these initiatives make them more confident in supporting their children and lead to their children making gains in both learning and self-confidence.
- The curriculum is adaptable and responsive to the needs of students and their future career ambitions. For example, some students successfully completed an engineering qualification by the end of Year 10 and were then able to take a further qualification in enterprise. These courses provide an excellent grounding for a wide range of careers including those strongly represented in the local economy.
- The leadership and management of behaviour and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are a strength. Students' personal development is an integral and important aspect of this academy's work. Students are taught how to take personal responsibility for their actions. A wide range of enrichment activities is well-attended and enjoyed by the students. Religious and cultural differences are respected and celebrated.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective and meet requirements.
- Students receive high-quality information, advice and guidance when choosing their Key Stage 4 courses and in preparation for when they leave the academy for their next stage of learning or training.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The academy's Trust and Governing Body have an insightful knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy because the group consists of highly effective professionals with a

wide range of skills.

- Members of the Trust and governing body are ambitious for this academy to improve. They hold the principal, and by extension the whole staff, rigorously to account for academy performance and in particular for the quality of teaching and student progress.
- They ensure financial probity and that safeguarding procedures comply with legislation.
- The governors have a clear understanding on how effectively additional funding to support students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is spent. They are able to describe how funds were used, firstly to improve this group of students' attendance and behaviour, and now how they are improving their 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	135878
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	440327

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	552
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Callaghan
Headteacher	Thérèse Quincey
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2013
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