

# The Newark Academy

London Road, Balderton, Newark, NG24 3AL

**Inspection dates** 24–25 April 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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

- When the principal took up post in January 2013, standards at the end of Year 11 were low and rates of progress too slow. The current Year 11 are making better progress as a result of closely targeted support.
- The quality of teaching requires improvement, particularly in mathematics. Teachers do not consistently stretch the most able or raise their aspirations of what they are able to achieve. Questioning sometimes lacks sufficient challenge.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent and often does not provide sufficient advice on how students can improve their work or how to reach their targets.
- Although the new leaders have high expectations for students' behaviour, and students report a dramatic improvement, the new strategies for managing behaviour are not yet consistently applied by all teachers across the school so some low-level disruption remains.
- Attendance rates are below average.
- As a result of the sixth form provision being delivered at a different site from the main school, sixth form students have insufficient opportunity to act as role models for younger students and are not fully involved in the life of the academy.

### The school has the following strengths

- Students say that they value the good care and support they receive, that ensures they are safe. Students facing challenging circumstances are extremely well supported.
- Students are polite and courteous and the atmosphere around the school is calm and orderly. Relationships are strong and students get on well together.
- The principal, well supported by the senior team and the governing body, has high expectations of staff and students. Her positive approach is raising staff morale and has led to improved teaching and higher attainment.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. The quality of teaching is good and leadership strong. Students say how well they are guided and supported.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons, six of which were seen together with one of the school's senior leaders. They also made a number of further short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with students, parents, governors, staff, and with a representative of the academy sponsor.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at policies, the school's own assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and its development planning, records of lesson observations, information about students' progress, safeguarding documents, and samples of students' work.
- The views of the 41 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account, together with the school's own survey of the views of parents and carers. Inspectors also took communications from parents into account as well as the 33 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Mary Davis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Elizabeth Macfarlane

Additional Inspector

Roisin Chambers

Additional Inspector

Colin Lower

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Newark Academy was established in November 2012. When the predecessor school, The Grove School, was last inspected in 2011, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is below average. Very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- Full- or part-time off-site alternative courses are followed by 28 students at Maple, Newark College, Buxton Training, SOLO, the Old Library, CAST project and First class 1:1.
- The very small sixth form is currently taught at a separate site but will join the main school after its planned rebuild.
- As the school converted to an academy midway through the last academic year, there are as yet no examination results relating to The Newark Academy.
- The principal took up post in January 2013 and the vice-principal shortly afterwards.
- The academy has recently suffered some disruption to staffing, particularly in the mathematics department, where the academy is seeking to recruit a new leader.

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

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good or outstanding, particularly in mathematics, by:
  - raising the expectations of both students and teachers of what students are able to achieve, making sure that tasks are sufficiently challenging to stretch the most able students
  - using challenging questioning to encourage students to think more deeply about their learning and to provide extended answers enabling them to justify their opinions
  - improving the consistency of written marking so that students understand how well they are doing and what they need to do next, and ensuring they use this advice to improve their work.
- Fully embed the new behaviour policy, making sure that it is consistently applied by all staff, and communicate with students and their parents the importance of full attendance.
- Provide opportunities for sixth form students to take a more active role within the main school and to raise the aspirations of younger students by acting as role models.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students typically join the academy with broadly average basic skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics, but there is a below-average proportion of higher attaining students. Year 11 assessments at the start of 2013, following the academy conversion, show that standards were low and rates of progress were below average, particularly in mathematics.
- New leaders have taken firm action to address this underachievement, including the provision of focused additional sessions in English and mathematics. The school's current assessments indicate that standards are rising and that students are now progressing at a much faster pace, with a dramatic improvement in mathematics.
- Where there has been stability of staffing and high-quality teaching, students make good or outstanding progress. For example, in a top set English lesson observed, it was clear that these high-attaining students had made exceptional progress over time, showing a secure understanding of the subject and how they will be assessed. Year 11 students in mathematics have experienced disruption to staffing in recent years and therefore have not been able to make the same progress.
- The academy now does not limit students' chances of achieving higher grades by entering them early for their mathematics GCSE.
- Students enter the small sixth form with attainment that is generally below that seen nationally, although all are required to have attained at least a grade C in English and mathematics. They make good progress and assessments show that students are on line to meet their targets by the end of the year.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is equal to that of their peers. This is as a result of the support they receive, which is well coordinated across the school. There is no significant difference in achievement between students of different ethnic backgrounds or the very few who speak English as an additional language and other students.
- The Year 7 'catch-up' funding is used appropriately to provide support for those students who join the school with low basic skills in numeracy and literacy. One-to-one tuition and reading catch-up sessions are ensuring that students have the skills they need. During the inspection, students were observed reading confidently and with expression. The library is used well, and teachers share their love of reading with their students, indicating the book they are currently reading.
- Assessments show a wide gap in achievement in English and mathematics in Years 10 and 11 between students for whom the school receives additional pupil premium funding and their classmates. Leaders are rigorously addressing this and all staff are now focused on promoting the achievement of this group. Assessments over the year show that the gap in expected progress in English and mathematics is now beginning to close, particularly in Key Stage 3.
- In the sixth form, the academy provides a bursary for students previously eligible for the pupil premium, and these students are currently outperforming their peers.
- Students following full- or part-time alternative courses achieve well. Their progress and attendance are closely checked and all are well cared for and supported.

**The quality of teaching** requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies too widely. Teachers' questioning is sometimes insufficiently challenging to encourage students to think deeply and to provide extended answers. Teaching in mathematics requires improvement because students are not making sufficient progress in lessons across the academy and students' progress over time indicates that they have been underachieving.
- Although leaders have taken action and the quality of teaching is now improving, inspectors observed lessons where there was not enough challenge for the most able, and these students were not expected to aim high enough. Where teaching requires improvement, teachers place too much focus on the minimum level to be achieved and expect all students to start at the lowest level and work upwards rather than matching the task to each student's ability.
- Students know their target grades or levels but are not so clear on what they need to do to achieve them. Feedback through written marking is inconsistent across the school; particularly so in mathematics, where little detailed information is being provided to ensure that students understand how to improve their work. Teachers do not ensure that students act upon the advice they are given.
- Many opportunities are provided for students to be actively involved in their work enabling them to build their skills rapidly during the lesson. Teaching is particularly strong in physical education. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, student coaches identified good practice and provided feedback to the whole group, showing a secure understand of coaching methodology and success criteria. Here students showed an outstanding level of participation and commitment, leading to a strong improvement on their 'personal best'. A well-organised task, high expectations and challenge ensured a fast pace of learning.
- Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good. Teachers know students well and have good subject knowledge, planning well to match the different ability levels in their groups. Regular, detailed feedback enables students to make good progress. Despite being taught at a different site, students value access to their teachers whenever they need help, through using email. Teachers use questioning skilfully to probe understanding although, in some lessons observed where groups were small, some students lacked confidence in contributing to discussion.
- Where teaching assistants are present in classrooms, they are well deployed and provide good support, using questioning well and knowing when to stand back and encourage students to work on their own.
- Students were keen to tell inspectors how much they value the support their teachers provide and the warm relationships that exist.
- Good use is made of peer assessment and, in many lessons, students show a good understanding of how they will be assessed which enables them to improve their own work.

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

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Although students told inspectors how much behaviour had improved over the past year and say that teachers have a lot more control as they are more consistent, inspectors observed a small minority of lessons where students were not fully engaged in their learning and classrooms were noisy.

- Students were keen to tell inspectors how much the school has improved since January in terms of their well-being. Parents and staff express positive views about behaviour.
- Students value the new reward systems where they can build up points for good behaviour and attitudes to learning. In the majority of lessons observed, particularly in Key Stage 4, they show enthusiasm for learning and are keen to do well. They now have a much clearer understanding of the academy's expectations of good behaviour, and sanctions are applied appropriately.
- Behaviour around the school is orderly and calm; students are polite and courteous to each other and to adults. Students of all ages express how much they value being listened to and trusted by leaders; one saying that she felt confident that, 'The principal will stand by what she says.'
- Exclusion rates are low. Students facing challenging circumstances regard the internal inclusion room as a safe haven, and a positive approach from staff in this area encourages and supports those who display challenging behaviour.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements.
- Students and parents agree that the academy keeps them safe and there is always someone to whom they can talk. The academy provides comprehensive support for students and their families facing challenging circumstances. Strong partnerships with a variety of external agencies further enhance this support.
- Students of all ages have a good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take but say that incidents are rare. As one student said, 'We are quite an accepting school; we accept difference as normal.' Racism and homophobic bullying are rare and are quickly dealt with.
- The academy have been working to promote the importance of full attendance and the proportion of students who are persistently absent has fallen, but attendance overall is still below average. Attendance rates in the sixth form are outstanding. Students across the academy are consistently punctual to lessons.
- A strength of the academy is the provision of opportunities for students to develop leadership skills, particularly in sport, where the sports leader scheme successfully enables students to support younger ones and forges links with the primary schools. Sixth form students, however, located at a different site, currently have little opportunity to take part in whole-school activities or to promote sixth form study by providing positive role models for younger students.

## **The leadership and management** are good

- The principal, well supported by the vice-principal, the wider senior team, and the strong governing body, has a clear understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses, and has been quick to identify priorities for improvement. She keeps a constant check on all aspects of the academy's work through the 'Principal's Dashboard', which includes progress and attainment data and attendance rates.
- The principal has been rigorous in communicating with staff and students her high expectations of all, but also in establishing a positive atmosphere where staff feel valued and supported. As a result, good teamwork is now being established and staff morale has risen, with all staff

expressing positive views about the school's work and future.

- The progress of students across the school is rigorously tracked and analysed so that underachievement can be quickly identified and addressed. This information is now provided for all teachers, including information about the performance of different groups, so that teachers are able to plan more effectively to promote their progress.
- Systems are now in place to better hold teachers to account for the progress made in their classes and opportunities are provided to share good practice. This ensures that teachers are well supported and that all are able to take part in the monitoring of teaching across the academy. Training is closely matched to the needs of individual teachers.
- The capacity of subject and other leaders is being developed and subject and pastoral leaders take a full role in monitoring the work in their areas of responsibility and driving improvement. Senior leaders are currently seeking to strengthen the leadership of mathematics.
- The curriculum is well planned to match students' individual needs and interests, taking into account the views of students, staff and parents. The promotion of literacy and numeracy is leading to rising standards and the Year 7 'catch-up' funding is used effectively to ensure that those with low basic skills on entry are well supported, enabling them to make rapid progress. A wide variety of alternative courses are well matched to the needs of those students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, enabling them to remain in education and to succeed.
- A particular strength of the curriculum is the promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a wide range of cultural, social and community activities, school trips and 'challenge days'. For example, students spoke with pride about their recent performance of *Oh What A Lovely War*, not only performed in school but being taken on tour to the local primary schools and to Ypres in Belgium later in the year. The sports leadership programme also promotes students' social and leadership skills and enables them to develop self-confidence.
- The sixth form 16-19 study programme meets requirements. The curriculum is currently narrow because of the small numbers involved, but an enrichment programme and work experience are provided, developing personal skills and preparing students well for their next steps in education or employment. The leadership of the sixth form is good. The head of sixth form plays a central role in the review and support of students' progress. Links have been forged with higher education and local employers to extend the curriculum and increase the range and quality of learning opportunities.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors, closely linked with the academy sponsors, express a determination that the school will be successful and communicate their high expectations for the school. They are very well organised and keep a close watch on all aspects of the school's work, providing appropriate challenge and support. They have a wide range of expertise in business and education, and use this to good effect to support the academy and provide a wide range of opportunities for its students. Progress tracking information is closely monitored and compared with national expectations, health and safety arrangements rigorously checked and the impact of additional funding carefully evaluated. Governors know about the quality of teaching and spend time in classrooms observing lessons at first hand. They reward good teaching and see that underperformance is tackled. Governors say they embrace professional development, seeking training to enable them to improve the way they carry out their role.

## 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>	138872
<b>Local authority</b>	Nottinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	440080

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	743
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	32
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Margaret Surna
<b>Principal</b>	Karine Jasper
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01636 615000
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