

Hope Valley College

Castleton Road, Hope, Hope Valley, S33 6SD

Inspection dates 1–2 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires Improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
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 good school.

- Students' achievement is good. They make good progress and in 2013 attained above average results in both English and mathematics.
- Teaching is typically good, with some that is outstanding. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong.
- Students feel safe. They behave well in lessons and around the school.
- This school has improved quickly since its last inspection because of the determination of the Principal and other leaders, and the work of staff, to improve teaching.
- The school is characterised by its caring and harmonious ethos. Parents speak highly of the personal attention and care given to students, especially disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. This is not only through rich and varied learning experiences, but also through the example set by staff in treating others with respect and care.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- School leaders do not make the most of the available data to analyse students' performance and identify further priorities for improvement.
- Students supported by additional government funding are catching up with their peers at Key Stage 4, but the impact of the funding is not yet evident in Key Stage 3.
- Some subject leaders do not routinely check the quality of marking. As a result, marking is not always sharp enough for students to be clear about how to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 part lessons, three jointly with senior leaders. Three registration sessions and an assembly were also visited.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, senior leaders, four subject leaders and three members of the governing body including the Chair. The lead inspector also spoke with the school’s improvement partner.
- Inspectors spoke with four groups of students in meetings and informally in lessons and around the school.
- A scrutiny of students’ books was undertaken, partly in conjunction with a subject leader.
- Inspectors took into account the 65 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and responses to a parental survey that had been carried out by the school.
- The 30 responses to the staff questionnaire were also taken into account.
- The college’s centre for post-16 students with special educational needs was visited.
- Inspectors reviewed a variety of documents, including: the academy’s self-evaluation summary, its improvement plan, governing body minutes, anonymised performance management documents and records on attendance and behaviour. They looked at current data on students’ achievement and records of students’ progress and achievement from two previous years.

Inspection team

Deirdre Duignan, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Zarina Connolly	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Ahmed Marikar	Additional Inspector
Julie Griffiths	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average secondary school
- The vast majority of students are of White British heritage, with a very few from a mixture of other ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The number of students supported through school action is in line with the national average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is significantly above average. A high number of these students are identified with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The college runs post-16 provision for a small number of students with special educational needs.
- Alternative part-time placements, in a range of vocational subjects, are provided by a local Further Education college for students in Year 10 and Year 11.
- The academy meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' achievements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the role played by leaders at all levels to bring about further improvement by:
 - ensuring that all subject leaders check and develop the quality of marking in their subjects and ensure that monitoring activities are carried out systematically
 - rigorously analysing performance data and using it to inform the school's further improvement
 - ensuring that strategies used to raise achievement are fully evaluated to establish their impact and improve the outcomes for students, particularly those supported by the pupil premium.
- Further improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that marking always gives students clear guidance on how to improve their work
 - ensuring that assessments of students' performance are used consistently well to plan appropriate learning activities.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Since the last inspection, improved teaching has raised students' achievement, which is now good. Students' rates of progress and attainment are improving across subjects and year groups.
- In 2013, the proportion of students who attained five or more GCSEs at grade C or higher, including in English and mathematics, was well above the national average. This represented good progress from their above average starting points and also compared favourably with the previous year group.
- Students' attainment in GCSE English, mathematics, science, languages, humanities and resistant materials was well above the national average. The progress that students make in these subjects is also strong. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades in mathematics was well above average.
- The proportions making expected, or better than expected, progress in English and mathematics were well above national averages.
- Students supported by the pupil premium funding made less progress than their peers in 2013. The school's monitoring information shows that these pupils are now on track to make the same progress as their peers in English, and a much greater proportion are on track to make the same progress as their peers in mathematics. The gap in attainment between these and other students in 2013 was wide: in English, the gap was just over a GCSE grade, and in mathematics, a grade and two-thirds. The attainment gap has now reduced to half a grade in English and two-thirds of a grade in mathematics.
- Students supported through school action and those with a statement of educational needs make progress which is similar to their peers, and above the national average. This is because teachers and teaching assistants provide good pastoral and learning support for these students. Students supported at school action plus do not make as much progress as their peers. Many of these students are identified as having behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Despite the best efforts of academy leaders to help these students overcome their barriers to learning, some underachievement persists.
- Literacy is promoted well across the curriculum and, as a result, students' reading and communication skills are developing well. The Year 7 catch-up premium is being used to fund early intervention reading work. As a result, the reading ages of targeted students is increasing.
- The attendance and progress of students who have alternative provision courses at Buxton and Leek College are closely monitored by academy leaders. There is effective communication between academy and college staff. These students are progressing well on their chosen courses.
- The academy enters students early for GCSE English and mathematics where appropriate. Recent results indicate that this is not impeding their progress.
- Most parents who responded to Parent View and the school's own recent survey consider that their children make good progress.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- Teaching is typically good and sometimes outstanding. Leaders have taken a determined approach to improve teaching and students' achievement. They have done this by establishing clear expectations for every lesson, and regularly checking that all teachers comply with these standards.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge; they use this to make learning relevant, which ensures that students quickly gain new knowledge and skills. For example, in one English lesson the teacher skilfully drew upon students' own experiences of childhood play to help them understand how to interpret a poem called 'Hide and Seek'.
- Teachers know their students well and manage their behaviour effectively. Lessons are characterised by the calm approach taken by teachers.
- Most teachers provide detailed guidance to help students improve their work, and ensure that students reflect on and respond to this guidance. However, this is not carried out consistently well by all teachers. Academy leaders recognise that this is an area for further development.
- Teachers generally use information about how well students are doing to plan lessons that build on what students already know. This is not done consistently by all teachers.
- Skilled questioning by teachers enables students to develop their understanding well. For example, during one design and technology lesson, the teacher targeted his questioning according to ability level of the students. This stimulated high quality responses and improved students' understanding.
- Students usually know how to achieve well in their subjects, because teachers explain clearly what is required for them to do well in examinations. For example in a textiles lesson, students were given examples of the previous year's examination pieces, and were asked to grade each one themselves. As a result, they developed a good understanding of how to achieve their own target grades.
- Students say they appreciate the high level of support they receive from teachers.
- Teaching assistants contribute well to the learning and progress of students with special educational needs and disabilities, especially when they are supporting the same student across the curriculum. They provide timely prompts and good guidance because of their good knowledge of the students' needs.
- Most parents and carers who responded to Parent View felt that their children are taught well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**are good**

- The behaviour of students is good. Students show concern for each other, particularly those who may be vulnerable, and make a significant contribution to the ethos of care that is the hallmark of the academy.
- Behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Students make their way to lessons promptly after break and lunchtime and come well prepared for lessons. They are friendly and well-mannered.

- Attitudes to learning are good and improving. This is borne out by the school's own data, which shows that incidents which disrupt learning in lessons are declining rapidly.
- Attendance has improved steadily and is now above the national average. The proportion of students who are persistently absent from school has decreased.
- The attendance of students supported by the pupil premium and at school action plus remains lower than that of other students. However, academy leaders and staff work well with parents and external agencies to support these students, some of whom face considerable barriers to learning.
- The academy's well established tutoring system enables students of all ages to form friendships and relationships of trust and support. Students speak of the academy as 'one big family'. Older students readily take on roles of responsibility, for example by volunteering to help younger students with reading.
- Students show good awareness of different types of bullying. They report that bullying is rare, and that when it does occur, teachers and leaders act swiftly and effectively to resolve it.
- Parents speak highly of the individual care and attention given to students. Some of them took the trouble to write letters to the inspectors. One spoke of the 'unfailing support and kindness' shown to a student with significant learning difficulties and physical disabilities, as well as to his parents. Another parent wrote of how the school's child-centred approach encourages a 'blossoming and confidence that allows each child to develop to their potential'.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Safeguarding policies, procedures and practice meet statutory requirements.

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal, supported by senior leaders and governors, has made a determined effort to improve the school since its last inspection just under two years ago. Their success is evident in the improved achievement of students, particularly in the weaker area of mathematics.
- Leaders have acted swiftly to improve the quality of teaching since the last inspection. They have supported teachers by concentrating on those areas, identified through performance management and the periodic tracking of teaching over time, where teaching needed to be better. This support is resulting in a greater proportion of good and outstanding teaching, and the elimination of inadequate practice.
- Where subject leadership is most effective, for example in English, there has been sustained improvement in students' achievement in the subject. However, not all subject leaders are consistent in the way they monitor and evaluate the quality of work in their departments. This is partly a result of some instability in subject leadership, which is now resolved. Academy leaders recognise that leaders at all levels must understand their roles and responsibilities in order to drive improvement further.
- Leaders do not always analyse information about students carefully enough, or use this information to identify further priorities for improvement. For example, whilst data about students' attendance and behaviour is collected, it is not sufficiently scrutinised to allow patterns of absence and behaviour to be recognised.

- The academy's use of the pupil premium, for example to fund smaller class sizes in Key Stage 4, is helping to reduce the gaps between eligible students and their peers. At Key Stage 3, the progress that these students make is less consistent.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used well to provide reading intervention programmes for these students. Leaders have monitored the impact of this by regularly retesting students' reading ages.
- Academy leaders work well with external partners to improve outcomes for students. The academy is part of the 'Peak 11' group, a soft federation of eleven schools, part of whose work is to reduce exclusions for all young people in the area. The impact of this initiative is seen in the reduced rates of exclusions at the academy. Vocational courses at Buxton and Leek College are also arranged through this federation. The academy has retained a school improvement partner to provide an objective evaluation of its work.
- Academy leaders go out of their way to provide a rich and personalised curriculum for students, for example arranging tuition after school in subjects for students with particular interests, and providing opportunities that will allow students with particular needs and disabilities to develop. Students are grateful for the wide variety of extra-curricular opportunities available. Large numbers take part in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme and in residential programmes.
- Students feel that academy leaders provide them with good advice on their next steps, a view supported by parents. Evidence of this is seen in the very high numbers that progress to further education and training.
- The post-16 centre for students with statements of special educational needs is well led. Its impact is also seen in the improving teaching of those with special educational needs in the main school. This provision is also helping to promote tolerance and empathy amongst all students.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well developed through the academy's assembly and tutoring programme, the creative subjects, and a range of curriculum opportunities. There are increasing opportunities to learn about other cultures and faiths. For example, in a Year 9 ethics and philosophy lesson, students were taught tolerance and respect by learning about Islamic beliefs and traditions.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are using their considerable skills and experience to further strengthen the leadership of the school. They have a detailed knowledge of the strengths and weakness of the school, including teaching. They work well with school leaders to establish priorities for further improvement and effectively hold the school to account on its progress towards these.
 - Overall, finance is managed effectively. Governors know about how pupil premium funding is used, although they are less certain about its impact on students' achievement.
 - Governors are aware of the school systems in place to ensure that all staff are supported to help them improve. They ensure that performance management of staff is sufficiently rigorous.

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	137350
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	431599

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	606
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Critchlow
Principal	Bernard Hunter
Date of previous school inspection	26 September 2012
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