

# Furness Academy

Park Drive, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA13 9BB

**Inspection dates** 21–22 April 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
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

- The achievement of students requires improvement. The progress that students make over time is not rapid enough and varies too much between subjects.
- The most able students do not always reach the higher grades of which they are capable in GCSE examinations.
- While improving, the quality of teaching has not been consistently good enough over time to compensate fully for students' previous underachievement. Therefore, the quality of teaching requires improvement.
- The quality of marking and assessment does not always ensure that students receive precise and carefully considered feedback on how to improve their work. Teachers do not routinely ensure that work and corrections are completed.
- Students' behaviour requires improvement because some students do not have positive attitudes to learning. They do not routinely participate actively in their work and sometimes low-level disruption occurs when teaching fails to engage their interest.
- Although improving, attendance is below average and too many students are excluded.
- Despite the improvements that senior leaders and governors have brought to the academy, the strategic leadership of the academy is not yet good, notably in providing clear direction to the work of middle leaders in holding their teams to account.

### The school has the following strengths

- The achievement of most students currently attending the academy has improved markedly, compared to the outcomes in tests and examinations in 2014. Gaps in the progress of disadvantaged students, disabled students, and those who have special educational needs have narrowed significantly in the current year.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make at least similar, and often faster, progress than their peers.
- The staff know their students well and relationships are positive. High-quality care and support are provided for those students who are vulnerable.
- The academy's arrangements for safeguarding its students are effective.
- Senior leaders, including governors, have brought about improvements in the quality of teaching and in the achievement of most students since the last inspection. Their evaluation of the quality of teaching is honest and accurate and their judgements about teaching over time matched closely those of inspectors.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence during the inspection, including through observations of teaching, some of which were undertaken with senior leaders.
- Inspectors visited tutor periods and an assembly.
- Meetings were held with academy staff including the acting Principal, senior and middle leaders, representatives of the governing body, groups of students and two parents. Telephone discussions were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and the National Leader of Education (NLE) who is supporting the academy as its executive headteacher.
- The academy benefits from the services of another experienced headteacher who is also an executive headteacher.
- Inspectors spoke with students in lessons, during breaks and at lunchtimes.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation including development plans; the academy’s view of its own performance; data relating to students’ attainment and progress; information on attendance; documents and records about behaviour and safeguarding; records of the monitoring of teaching and learning and information about the performance management of staff. Inspectors looked at students’ work during lessons and additionally considered a further sample of written work from students across the academy.
- Inspectors analysed the 69 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire completed by staff and 35 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the academy’s own surveys of the views of parents and students.

## Inspection team

Susan Wareing, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Jonathan Smart

Additional Inspector

Naomi Taylor

Additional Inspector

David Woodhouse

Additional Inspector

## Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the academy no longer requires special measures.

### Information about this school

- When the academy was inspected in May 2013, it was judged to require special measures. Subsequently the academy was inspected on five occasions. At the last monitoring inspection in November 2014, the academy was judged not to be making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.
- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It opened in 2009, catering for the 11-to-16 age range and bringing together three predecessor schools on two sites. In 2013, the academy moved to a new building on a single site.
- The academy has previously been sponsored by Barrow Sixth Form College, Furness College and the University of Cumbria. The academy is now in the process of transition to a new sponsor, BAE Systems, with effect from September 2015, when a new Principal will also take up his appointment.
- Almost all students who attend the academy are of White British origin.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students, those known to be eligible for the pupil premium, is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- After declining student numbers over the last three years, the demand for places at the academy for September 2015 has risen significantly, demonstrating the growing confidence of parents and carers in the provision.
- Thirty students are educated partly away from the academy. Eight students are educated through home and hospital provision and three students follow courses through the Rathbone youth organisation. Four students attend the Dropzone and a further four are placed with NACRO. Seven follow courses at Gen2 Engineering Provision and three students attend South Cumbria Pupil Referral Unit.
- The acting Principal has been in post since September 2014.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations of students' attainment and progress.
- The academy won National Citizen Service champion school status award.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good and raise students' achievement by ensuring that:
  - any remaining gaps in attainment between different groups of students, for example, the most able and others nationally, are swiftly closed, so that the progress of all students matches or exceeds that of other students nationally
  - day-to-day planning develops greater confidence and resilience in all students, but especially the most able, in responding thoroughly to oral and written tasks and activities, so that they achieve as well as they can at the highest levels in tests and examinations
  - marking and assessment are sharp, succinct and carefully considered, so that all students know exactly how to improve their work, and that corrections, incomplete work and poor presentation are always followed up, so that students acquire good learning habits and have good models for revision
  - intensifying strategies to improve behaviour, especially students' attitudes to learning, so that absence and exclusions are further reduced and students do not miss valuable learning time.
- Develop further the skills of leaders at all levels to secure leadership and management that are consistently at least good by making sure that:
  - the gains made since the last inspection are fully embedded and built upon, to enable all students to make progress that is good or better, compared to students nationally

- all senior leaders set a clear, strategic direction for the work of middle leaders, based on the priorities of the academy's improvement plan, to reduce variation in the performance of different subjects
- middle leaders have a shared understanding of what constitutes good learning and progress, so that they can hold their teams fully to account for the quality of teaching and students' progress in their subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management

### require improvement

- Since the academy's last inspection, leaders and managers have demonstrated, through raising standards of attainment and accelerating progress for most students, the capacity to bring about improvement. Leaders' roles and responsibilities have been restructured and more clearly defined. This has led to improved teaching so that the achievement of current students has risen across a range of measures in comparison with previous years. Nevertheless, the academy recognises that senior leaders have not yet secured good or better outcomes in national tests and examinations for all students.
- Senior leaders and governors have established very robust systems for teachers' performance management. These are used rigorously to account for the progress made by students and to inform decisions about salary progression.
- Middle leaders are not all fully effective in ensuring that students make good or better progress. The checking of the quality of teaching and learning in some subjects has not yet led to improvements in student outcomes.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, with a good choice of academic and vocational courses; it prepares students effectively for life in modern Britain. Students learn about democracy and other British values through themed assemblies, personal development courses and a range of other subjects. Extra-curricular activities include a wide range of sports as well as music and drama.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well, for example, through specific assemblies. Good relationships are promoted effectively. Students also have many opportunities to take on responsibilities, for example, through membership of the Academy Council and as reading 'buddies', sports leaders and student support mentors.
- Careers information, advice and guidance are effective and students interviewed spoke of the good, realistic advice they received when selecting options for future studies and careers. The impact of this provision is seen in the high proportion of students who progress into further and higher education, training or employment.
- The academy has wisely ceased early entry to short courses in a range of subjects that limited students' achievement and did not provide suitable progression routes into further education, employment or training.
- Students have many opportunities to develop reading, extended writing and speaking skills across subjects, but teachers' marking does not always support students' literacy in all subjects.
- Senior leaders can point to effective use of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding in closing gaps in literacy and mathematics, but measures of the success of support are not sharp enough. Students have fewer chances to practise their mathematical skills across subjects.
- Senior leaders and governors have narrowed the range of alternative provision to ensure that students involved are all following courses that help them to succeed.
- There are effective links between the academy and alternative providers that enable the rigorous checking of attendance and behaviour and the tracking of students' progress. Students now have clear routes into apprenticeships or post-16 study.
- The academy takes its responsibilities to promote equal opportunities very seriously. Students are clear that no discrimination of any kind is tolerated by the academy.
- Senior leaders and governors ensure that arrangements for safeguarding meet all statutory requirements and are effective.
- Students have begun to benefit from the academy's drive to raise achievement. This determination is strengthened by strong external support from a National Leader of Education and executive headteacher at the academy and by another experienced headteacher from Cumbria's Local Alliance of System Leaders. Senior leaders and teachers are developing increasingly strong links with experienced leaders and staff from good schools with whom teachers are beginning to share good practice.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is becoming increasingly effective. Governors are highly committed to improving the academy. They have undertaken a review of their effectiveness, carried out by a National Leader of Governance. As a result, they have formed a strategic core group to ensure that their practice is more focused on students' achievement and that their procedures are more professional.
  - Governors have been proactive, during a period of significant uncertainty for the academy, in taking steps and sometimes hard decisions to secure the academy's finances. They have also pursued with determination the appointment of a substantive Principal with effect from September 2015, in the

context of new sponsorship of the academy.

- Governors know very well the strengths and weaknesses of the academy, in particular the quality of teaching and students' achievement. They now have a good understanding of information about students' progress and are increasingly determined to seek further independent information about the academy's performance. Inspection evidence shows governors' ability to ask searching questions of senior leaders. Governors are knowledgeable about the use and impact of the pupil premium, as of all finances, and they support and monitor how well the academy is meeting the needs of those students who have special educational needs.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

## require improvement

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement.
- Students are generally polite and respectful towards their teachers and visiting adults. The courtesy and reliability of those students who attend alternative provision are highly praised by staff.
- Most students are proud of the academy. They wear their uniform smartly and work hard to keep the academy buildings and grounds free of litter and graffiti.
- Many students contribute well to the academy and wider community, for example, by charity fundraising. They also enjoy mentoring younger students and helping them to improve their reading or sports skills.
- The attitudes to learning of some students are not always positive, especially when teaching is less effective and their concentration wanes. As a result, low-level disruption occurs and progress slows. The progress of some students also declines because they do not always take pride in their work or present it well.

### Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement.
- Students are knowledgeable about all forms of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying. The academy's recording of incidents of bullying is thorough and detailed and the introduction of anti-bullying mentors is leading to reductions.
- Despite these positive aspects, students say that some bullying still occurs; however, they say that bullying is dealt with more effectively than previously.
- Attendance, including of those who are persistently absent, is below the national average but improving. Exclusions and removals from lessons are similarly reducing, but the latter remain high, especially in English, mathematics and sciences.
- Effective procedures are in place to make sure students are safe, both in the academy and when they attend off-site provision.
- Most parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and to the academy's own surveys, indicated that their children feel safe in the academy and are well looked after.
- Most students who met with inspectors during the inspection said that they feel safe and know how to keep themselves secure; for example, they understand well the potential risks in using the internet.

## The quality of teaching

## requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is not yet consistently good or outstanding across all subjects and teachers. Senior leaders know that this is limiting the progress of some students, notably of the most able and some students in science. Senior leaders and governors have, therefore, set in place much stronger systems to manage teachers' performance and enable middle leaders to hold teachers to account for their students' progress. Teaching is, therefore, becoming increasingly good.
- Inspectors saw evidence of some well-planned learning activities over time, indicating high expectations that were clearly challenging students effectively.
- Strong partnerships between teachers and teaching assistants support students' learning well. The impact of this additional support by teachers and teaching assistants for disadvantaged students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs is seen in the narrowing, and sometimes closing, of attainment gaps for these students compared to others in the academy.
- Relationships between teachers and students are strong. Students appreciate the extra help that teachers are prepared to give at lunchtimes and after school.
- The quality of marking is not consistently helpful across subjects to ensure that students know how to

improve their work. Teachers do not always check that students have corrected their errors and finished their work.

- While some teachers are skilled in carefully planned questioning that encourages students to think more deeply, others do not use feedback from students' responses to ensure the appropriate level of challenge.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students' attainment on entry to the academy is broadly in line with the national average. In 2014, the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, was significantly below average because not all students made or exceeded the progress expected of them from their individual starting points.
- Girls outperformed boys but the proportions of students of both genders that made and exceeded the progress expected of them were also significantly below average.
- In 2014, the proportion of disadvantaged students who attained five GCSE grades at A\* to C, including English and mathematics, compared both to other students in the academy and others nationally, improved slightly when compared to 2013. Gaps narrowed in the proportion of disadvantaged students who made the progress expected of them in English, compared to others in the academy but not when compared to others nationally.
- In mathematics, the proportion of non-disadvantaged students making expected progress was similar to the national figure, but the progress of disadvantaged students lagged behind.
- In 2014, disadvantaged students' attainment in both English and mathematics was two-and-a-quarter grades below that of non-disadvantaged students nationally. Their attainment in both subjects was nearly two grades lower than that of their peers in the academy.
- Assessment information held by the academy and work seen during the inspection indicate that the attainment and progress of disadvantaged students currently in the academy are improving significantly on all these measures and gaps are closing convincingly. Nevertheless, senior leaders recognise that there is more work to be done to ensure that more disadvantaged students are successful at the higher GCSE grades.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs made better progress in 2014 than other students in the school, due to the targeted support provided to meet their academic or social needs.
- There are no significant differences in the performance of those students who speak English as an additional language and other students.
- The relatively small proportion of students from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds achieve similarly to their peers.
- The personal and academic progress of those students, often the more vulnerable, who attend alternative provision for part of their education, is carefully tracked and, as a result, they gain skills and knowledge that allow them to move on to Level 1 courses and apprenticeships at the end of Year 11.
- Assessment information held by the academy indicates that most students currently in the academy are making much better progress than in 2014. A higher proportion of students are on track to gain five or more GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, in the 2015 GCSE examinations. More students are also poised to gain grades A\* to C in English and mathematics. Inspection evidence indicates that the proportion of students set to achieve the English Baccalaureate in 2015 is also likely to increase.
- Rates of expected progress in English and mathematics are improving rapidly, with almost all groups of students throughout the academy narrowing their gaps significantly.
- The proportion of the most able students reaching the highest GCSE grades has not been good enough over time, when taking into account their starting points. Their progress has not improved as rapidly as that of others in the academy. The raising of the achievement of this group is recognised as a priority by senior leaders.

## 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>	462629

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	840
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Edward Creighton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kevin Gill (Acting Principal)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 May 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01229 484270
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