

Branston Community Academy

Station Road, Branston, Lincoln, LN4 1LH

Inspection dates 19–20 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The progress made by different groups of students is not monitored effectively by leaders.
- The information as provided to inspectors to reflect the academy's self-evaluation processes is incomplete because it does not include the achievement of the school's current students.
- The academy improvement plan is not precise enough. It does not contain details of the specific actions to be taken or set out precisely when progress towards priorities will be evaluated.
- School leaders do not review the impact of the pupil premium closely enough to ensure that the money is supporting particular groups of students to improve their rates of progress.
- Middle leaders did not demonstrate the impact of their leadership actions on improving students' progress or the quality of teaching.
- Although the academy's disadvantaged students achieve well when compared with their peers nationally, the progress made by this group of students has been static in English and mathematics over a three-year period.
- The quality of teachers' written feedback to students is not consistently good across all subjects.
- Teachers' planning of lessons does not always take into account the wide variety in students' ability.

The school has the following strengths

- By the time students leave Branston Community Academy, most have made good, and sometimes outstanding, progress across a range of subjects.
- The great majority of teaching is good and it is sometimes outstanding.
- The Principal is fully committed to improving the life chances of the students in his care. Together with other senior leaders he has brought about improvements in both teaching and achievement over time.
- The behaviour of students is very good. They feel safe in the academy and are polite, friendly and work very well together. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good.
- The academy is very well-regarded by members of staff, parents and students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students learning in 41 lessons taught by 39 different teachers. Seven of these lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, senior and middle leaders, and three members of the governing body.
- Inspectors spoke with students in meetings as well as informally in lessons.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the academy's evaluation of its own performance, the academy improvement plan, data on students' attainment and progress, attendance and behaviour records, safeguarding procedures, evaluations on the quality of teaching, and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors reviewed a selection of work in students' books.
- Inspectors took into account 28 responses to Parent View and 39 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Ian McNeilly, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kathleen Yates	Additional Inspector
Lorraine Allen	Additional Inspector
Peter McKenzie	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Branston Community Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 December 2010. When its predecessor school, Branston Community College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school for students aged 11-18.
- The proportion of students for whom the academy receives pupil premium funding (12%) is less than half that of the national average. This additional government funding is for students in care of the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- At approximately 25% the proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The student population is almost exclusively White British.
- A very small number of students attend alternative provision at either Acorn Free School or The Pilgrim School, both of which are in Lincoln.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by:
 - ensuring written feedback to students is consistently good across year groups and subjects through implementation of the academy's recently introduced assessment and marking policy
 - refining the planning of lessons so that the tasks set better meet the needs of students of different abilities.
- Improve the achievement of the academy's disadvantaged students, particularly through ensuring the pupil premium is used to best effect.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - establishing effective systems for monitoring the progress made by different groups of students
 - ensuring that the information reflecting the academy's self-evaluation processes takes into account the achievement of current students
 - making the school improvement plan more focused by including specific actions and milestones
 - involving middle leaders more systematically in improving student progress and the quality of teaching.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Although school leaders track the progress made by individual students, they do not do so for groups of students. This makes it impossible to identify underachievement on a group basis, for example, by disadvantaged students or disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, until an analysis takes place once those students have left the school. If the achievement of any particular group, as opposed to the students on an individual basis, is later shown to have needed attention, it is then too late to act.
- Senior leaders rigorously judge the achievement aspect of the academy based on the performance of the students who have left the school. The same level of monitoring is not extended to the academy's current students. Senior leaders could not readily tell inspectors the proportion of students making expected progress in any given subject in any year group. This is because overall progress is primarily judged by providing an average grade for the whole year group.
- The information provided to inspectors to reflect the academy's self-evaluation processes was incomplete, despite having been recently reviewed. It did not include sufficient information about the progress being made by the academy's current students.
- Although middle leaders are involved in school improvement activity beyond their own teaching, they did not demonstrate the impact of their leadership actions on improving students' progress or the quality of teaching.
- Senior leaders are not readily able to demonstrate the specific impact of the pupil premium. When asked, they could identify what this extra funding had been spent on and cite which actions they felt had most impact but they did not provide sufficient specific evidence to support their observations. The academy's website does not include an up-to-date review of the use of the pupil premium. What is provided is too vague to be helpful to parents.
- Despite these areas for improvement, the Principal leads a school in which the overall levels of achievement, standards of teaching and the behaviour of students are good. The management of teachers' performance has resulted in teaching that is consistently good and there are regular opportunities for professional development available to teachers to help them improve even further.
- The Principal is passionate about and committed to promoting an academy-wide ethos in which good behaviour and high ambition are the norm, and to enhancing the life chances of students in his care. He seeks constantly to ensure that all members of staff share these qualities.
- Senior leaders ensure that equality of opportunity is promoted for individual students who are disabled or who have special educational needs. Once identified, these students have full access to the curriculum and to all the educational opportunities made available by the academy.
- The progress, attendance and well-being of the very small number of students in alternative provision are regularly monitored by academy leaders. Regular conversations are supported by written reports.
- The academy's curriculum is good. It covers a range of subjects and offers opportunities for academic, technical and sporting excellence. Citizenship topics are planned throughout the curriculum and tutor time, lessons, particularly in history and geography, and assemblies are all used to encourage students to discuss and learn about a wide variety of subjects, particularly those with a moral aspect, such as the rights of the individual, or crime and punishment. This supports students' social and moral, spiritual and cultural development well.
- Sporting endeavour is encouraged by physical education teachers whose practice is often outstanding. Several sports are promoted and the academy has had particular success recently in cricket at county level. Students' understanding of democracy is promoted well through the work of the school council, and particularly in Year 10 when students learn about the workings of local government. Students learn other key values such as tolerance and are well-prepared for life in modern Britain.

- The academy's careers programme, which begins in Year 8, supports students in making considered choices about their next steps. Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable are quickly identified by members of staff and given extra support, which includes engaging with parents. The academy uses work experience effectively for students in Year 10 and Year 12. This ensures they develop the skills needed to secure their employability or training. Local businesses and employers contribute well to the careers programme, especially in the sixth form.
- The academy uses Year 7 catch-up funding effectively to support the literacy and numeracy skills of students entering with low levels of attainment in these areas.
- The academy's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very well informed about the achievement of those students who leave the academy each year. They do not have the same level of knowledge about the performance of the academy's current students as that information has not been provided for them and they have not asked for it. Governors know about the quality of teaching in the academy at a subject level. The Chair of the Governing Body has had a personal impact on the quality of teaching as he has been involved in teachers' performance reviews. The Chair of the Governing Body heads a committee which carries out the performance management of the Principal; they hold him to account against agreed targets. Governors oversee the system of pay progression for teachers which is directly linked to student achievement. Governors understand their safeguarding duties and have professionals on the governing body with experience in this area to help ensure they know how to discharge these duties effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is very good. Students respond quickly to the requests of members of staff and low-level disruption in lessons is a rarity. Positive relationships between students and teachers are clearly evident and are a strength of the academy.
- Students, members of staff and parents are generally very positive about the standards of behaviour over time in the academy.
- Students are invariably polite, friendly and work very well together. They take pride in their appearance and in the academy. The behaviour of some students when moving around the academy between lessons is impeccable. Students contribute significantly to the promotion of a culture of calm and good order at all times. They demonstrate respect for the learning environment which is very well presented; no graffiti, damage or litter was noted by inspectors during the inspection.
- Occasionally, students are passive or compliant rather than exhibiting the thirst for knowledge and understanding that results in a very strong impact on their learning. However, students' attitudes to learning are generally positive and have a good impact on the progress they make.
- Bullying is rare and students have confidence in teachers' ability to successfully address it should it occur.
- Attendance is above average and improving. Persistent absence is below average and declining. Punctuality is good.
- Fixed-term and permanent exclusions are low.
- Rewards for behaviour and learning are well-structured and are appreciated by students. Procedures for overcoming unacceptable behaviour are implemented consistently by staff and have a positive impact on the small number of students whose behaviour occasionally falls below the high standards of the majority.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Procedures for keeping pupils safe both in and out of school are effective. Risk assessments take place as appropriate. Visitors are checked and their credentials are verified. Visitors without a Disclosure and Barring Service check are accompanied at all times during their stay in the academy.
- Issues relating to extremism are included in the academy's curriculum; students demonstrate good understanding of this and other issues.
- Students say that any use of derogatory language towards individuals or groups of students would be quickly and effectively addressed by members of staff.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching over time is good and sometimes outstanding. As a result, most students are served well by the academy during their time there and they make at least good progress in most subject areas.
- Most teaching is structured very well. There is a clear sense of purpose and direction to the activities which take place in almost all lessons.
- Teachers' relationships with students make a really positive contribution to their learning. Teachers' behaviour management is good.
- Teachers regularly display good knowledge across a wide range of subject areas.
- Literacy is a key component of lessons across the school and is taught well. Students are encouraged to read widely and their teachers model examples of this by promoting their own favourite books.
- When taken as a whole group, the Year 11 students who left the academy in 2014 made very good progress in English and mathematics. This indicates that teaching has been good over time in these subjects.
- Learning activities are challenging, and this generally includes the activities designed for the most-able students, even though it is not routine for this group of students to be given different activities. There are extension tasks, enrichment ideas and links to relevant websites for each subject for most-able students on the academy's website. However, completion of these is optional and the progress of the most-able students as a group, though good, is not tracked as they move through the academy. It is therefore difficult for teachers and leaders to take a view on their achievement as a cohort until they have left.
- Teachers work closely with assistants to identify individual students who may be struggling and offer support. In general, however, the lack of tracking of specific groups means that teachers do not always meet the needs of students of differing abilities. Students are usually given the same tasks to complete, even when there is a wide spread of ability in the class. Teachers are not sufficiently unaware of how well their provision for disadvantaged and disabled students and those with special educational needs is allowing them to progress as a group as they move through the academy.
- The written feedback teachers give their students is not always of good quality. Senior leaders have recognised this and have recently introduced a new assessment policy to address this inconsistency.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The achievement of Year 11 students since the academy opened indicates that good, and sometimes outstanding, progress is made in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics.

- School data show that similar progress is made by the academy's younger students. Due to the way the progress of students is tracked, it is difficult to verify how consistently this is the case, especially for specific groups of students. However, the fact that outcomes of students at the end of Year 11 are consistently good supports the view that achievement is generally good in the academy's different year groups.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs perform well overall by the end of Year 11 and, as individuals at least, their needs are well met.
- The academy's most-able students also perform well by the time they leave, a judgement that is based on the performance of students who have left the academy, over time. How well they achieve as they move through the academy is difficult to judge owing to the lack of data compiled by leaders.
- The academy's proportion of disadvantaged students is less than half that of the national average and is therefore more prone to statistical, year-on-year variations when considering achievement. While this group performs well compared to other students eligible for the pupil premium nationally, the gap between their performance and that of other students in the academy has not closed over time. In 2013, the academy's disadvantaged students were two-thirds of a GCSE grade behind other non-eligible students nationally in English and a full GCSE grade behind in mathematics. Due to the very good performance of those students not eligible for pupil premium in the academy, the in-school gaps were wider than this in both English and mathematics. In 2013; the in-school gap was double that of the national average for mathematics. While the gap in 2014 remained similar in English, it closed significantly in mathematics.
- Senior leaders' monitoring of the progress made by the very small number of students in alternative provision indicates that their achievement is generally as good as that of other students, taking into account the range of subjects they study.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The overall effectiveness and leadership of the sixth form are good. Achievement is good across all academic and vocational subject areas. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Achievement gaps between disadvantaged students and their peers are reducing.
- Teaching is good over time and in all subjects and is underpinned by teachers' good specialist subject knowledge, effective preparation and engaging delivery. Students are set clear and challenging targets and their monitoring of students' progress is effective. One-to-one and small group sessions support individual learners well.
- Behaviour is good, as are students' attitudes to learning. Relationships between students and their teachers are excellent.
- Students feel safe and have a good understanding of their health, well-being and social responsibilities.
- Leaders have ensured students benefit from a well-managed study programme, including effective careers advice and guidance. They are well-prepared for their next steps in education or employment.
- The curriculum is diverse and suited to students' needs, which is reflected in good retention rates.

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	136358
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	449428

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	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1080
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Norman
Principal	Peter Beighton
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01522 880400
Fax number	01522 880401
Email address	enquiries@branstonca.lincs.sch.uk

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