

Accrington Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135649
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	361307
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Bernard Campbell HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1049
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tony Cann
Principal	Mr Andrew Bateman
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 33 lessons taught by 32 teachers, and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, and groups of students. They observed the academy's work and looked at improvement plans, monitoring records and safeguarding documentation. They also took account of questionnaires from 134 parents and carers, 150 students and 51 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the academy's work. Inspectors looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- What has been the impact of the academy's actions to improve the progress of the current Year 11, especially in English and mathematics?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and assessment?
- How effectively is the sixth form developing?
- What is the impact of leaders at all levels in using self-evaluation and precisely targeted actions to drive improvement?

Information about the school

Accrington Academy is an average-sized secondary school, which opened in September 2008. The small sixth form started in September 2009. The academy is a member of the United Learning Trust. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is average, and a higher than average proportion has a first language other than English. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with statements, is above average. The academy has specialisms in mathematics and sports. The academy holds the Inclusion Quality Mark and Investors in People awards, Healthy School and 'School of Creativity' status as well as Sportsmark.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Accrington Academy is a good school that has made significant improvements in student outcomes since it opened. The governors, the principal and the senior team successfully communicate their ambition and high expectations. They are rigorous and imaginative in developing the quality of provision. Attendance has increased dramatically and behaviour and achievement have improved.

Achievement is good. Students enter the academy with attainment that is below average. They make good progress in gaining a wide range of academic and vocational qualifications so that attainment is broadly average by age 16. Attainment has been lower in English, mathematics and science. This year, early entry GCSE results show a significant improvement in English and mathematics. However, achievement in mathematics remains a weakness due to difficulties in recruiting staff and inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Too few students achieve at the higher levels in mathematics.

Attendance was average in the first year of the academy. A marked increase each year has resulted in attendance which is now high. Behaviour is good and levels of exclusion are significantly lower than in the predecessor school. Outstanding care, guidance and support are highly effective in promoting the well-being of students. The outstanding quality of safeguarding, including internet safety, is a model of good practice within the United Learning Trust.

Overall, teaching is good. In mathematics, however, some teaching is aimed narrowly at passing the exam and in these lessons students are not developing sufficient understanding and practical skills for solving problems. Many teachers make good use of assessment to develop learning. However, planning does not consistently link the different levels of challenge to particular groups of students. The good curriculum is well-matched to students' needs, aspirations, and interests and has contributed to increased enjoyment, attendance and achievement.

The new sixth form is at an early stage of development. The leadership and management of the sixth form are evolving satisfactorily. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although inconsistent, and this leads to variation in the progress students make in different subjects. Systems for monitoring students' progress and analysing data are not yet fully developed.

Governors make an exceptional contribution to the work and direction of the academy. The principal provides strong and dynamic leadership. Senior and middle leaders make rigorous and accurate evaluations of performance and act promptly and effectively to implement improvements. The academy has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in mathematics by:
 - recruiting and developing staff to ensure consistently good teaching
 - improving students' understanding and application of mathematics so that more achieve at the higher levels.
- Extend the use of assessment for learning to ensure that:
 - students are consistently given specific challenges that match their abilities.
- Improve the effectiveness of the new sixth form by:
 - improving the quality and consistency of teaching and student outcomes and the systems for evaluating student progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The proportion of students that gained five GCSEs at grades A*–C including English and mathematics has been low. In 2011, the early entry GCSE results indicate that this

measure will be much closer to the national average. The percentage that gains a qualification in literacy and numeracy is above average and students develop good skills in information and communication technology.

Although staffing difficulties persist in mathematics, robust action has been taken to improve performance. In English as well as mathematics, students have been provided with earlier opportunities to take GCSE examinations. Teaching has been more closely targeted on identified gaps in knowledge and skill. Additional tutoring has been well-focused on individual needs. As a result, students in the current Year 11 have made much improved progress in English and mathematics. No groups underachieve and students eligible for free school meals make notably good progress in English.

Students achieve well because they are keen to learn and they are receptive to the stimulus and guidance provided by staff. They enjoy their learning and are keen to get actively involved and to contribute their thoughts and ideas. They persevere in tasks and collaborate well. Some are less confident in taking the initiative and in articulating their ideas at length.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well. A significant proportion of students enter the academy with low levels of literacy. The dedicated programmes of literacy teaching are making an effective contribution to improving the reading and the handwriting of the weakest students. Those with emotional and social difficulties make good progress in their personal development through the work of the nurture group and other forms of support.

Students feel safe and secure. They behave considerately towards each other and with adults. They develop healthy lifestyles through the variety of good opportunities to get involved in physical activities. They develop their understanding of health issues on the special learning days focused on personal development. A high proportion of students are involved in extra-curricular activities within the academy and in the local community. Students regularly contribute their views on school life. A good number take on roles of responsibility or represent the school in a variety of projects, including a trip to San Francisco to present their work on the eco-classroom. Students develop the skills and qualities for living and working together well. They develop a good understanding of society's shared values. Through the wide range of experiences and opportunities on offer they actively develop their understanding and aspirations for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	3

Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good and includes outstanding elements. A very small minority of teaching is inadequate and the academy is tackling this effectively. The best teaching sequences learning activities well. The varied tasks and stimulating resources motivate students and engage them in meaningful activity. The teachers' enthusiasm and good subject knowledge inspires and directs the learning. Good relationships and probing questioning are used to draw out students' thoughts and opinions and to develop their verbal confidence. Good examples were seen of effective support materials being used to develop students' writing skills in lessons other than English. Teaching assistants are used well to develop students' literacy in sessions outside lessons. On occasion, teachers move on too quickly and questioning does not probe thinking in sufficient depth. At times, research on the internet is too open-ended and lacks a clear structure for learning. Marking is regular. Students know their levels well and are regularly informed about what they need to improve.

The innovative approach at Key Stage 3 organises subjects into themes and promotes students' personal and thinking skills by linking them with the academy's specialism in sports. From Year 9 onwards, the good choice of both academic and vocational courses is extended through the school's effective partnership with local schools, colleges and other providers. These options provide clear purpose to students' learning, including those at risk of disaffection with school. The pathways are well matched to the varied

capabilities and interests of students. The curriculum is strongly enriched by an extensive range of popular extra-curricular opportunities, including educational visits and residential experiences. All students in Years 7 and 8 benefit from a well-organised enrichment programme, which is compulsory.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The steps taken to improve attendance and reduce exclusions have been remarkably successful. Actions are systematic and well-focused and successfully support students and their families. They are informed by detailed monitoring of students which provides an accurate basis for early and well-targeted intervention. Close relationships with primary schools mean that the academy has a detailed knowledge of students, so that provision, such as the nurture group, is planned before they arrive. Information and advice are much improved and provide good guidance for options at Key Stage 4 and post-16. The academy provides a very welcoming and positive environment for students.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Students and parents express a high level of confidence in the leadership of the academy. Staff demonstrate a strong, shared commitment to what the academy is trying to achieve. Academic and pastoral staff keep a sharp focus on the achievement of students in all subjects and year groups in the main school. Systems for analysing student progress are rigorous and continuously evolving. The close monitoring of the participation and achievement of different groups leads to concerted action to promote equal opportunities. Systems of accountability are robust and staff frequently review their performance. Teaching has improved as a result of systematic observation and analysis. An extensive and creative range of professional development draws on the good practice of external partners. Any inadequate teaching is tackled with effective support and robust challenge. The quality of middle leaders has improved and is good overall although there are a few inconsistencies which are being tackled.

Governors communicate a very strong vision and clear priorities. They have an impressive range of expertise which is used to provide a high level of professional support and challenge. The sponsor and the United Learning Trust are very closely involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the academy's performance. They are proactive in supporting improvements, have strong links in the community, and enable the academy to work with a diverse range of partners. Activities to promote community cohesion are based on a strong awareness of the community's religious, ethnic and socio-economic context. Innovative activities focus on the challenges provided by cultural diversity. For example, students engaged effectively with members of the public in a community-based project to influence their perceptions of the diverse cultures in the school. Further plans are in the pipeline to develop national and international links.

Partnerships make a strong contribution to the curriculum and the quality of care and guidance. Partnerships with other schools are being used to help develop the sixth form. Work with creative practitioners is regularly used to enhance aspects of provision, for example in literacy. The large increase in attendance at parents and information evening is indicative of the academy's good relationships with parents. Parents are informed six times a year about their child's attainment and progress. Arrangements to consult with new parents foster good relationships and promote good attendance from the start. Safeguarding policies and procedures are rigorous and constantly reviewed and updated.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Students enter the sixth form with qualifications that are lower than average. In 2010 the first results for AS-level and vocational courses were below average. In the current Year 12 and 13, module results show improvement, and academy monitoring information indicates that students are making satisfactory progress. No external value-added data is yet available.

Students enjoy being in the sixth form. They appreciate the support they receive, and feel that they are well cared for. They are making a growing contribution to school life: for example, by supporting younger pupils with their reading and assisting with activities on the special whole-school learning days. The academy is providing a growing range of academic and vocational courses. These are well matched to students' needs and aspirations and also reflect the needs of the local employment market.

The monitoring procedures for checking on the quality of teaching and learning are not yet securely in place. Plans to rectify this are well advanced. The opening of accommodation for the sixth form in September 2010 and the emerging sixth form council are both milestones in the development of a sixth form identity and are foundations for further development.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers are happy with their child's experience at the school. They are most positive about the teaching and how well informed they are about their child's progress. They are also positive about how well their child is making progress, how well their needs are being met, and how well they are prepared for the

future. Most believe that the academy is led and managed effectively. These comments match the findings of the inspectors.

A small minority of parents and carers do not think that the academy deals effectively with behaviour or that the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspectors found that the academy deals with behaviour well and that it is responsive to parental concerns. Inspectors also identified that the academy intends to increase the number of parents who are engaged with the academy. A very few written comments expressed concerns about the impact of temporary teachers on their child's progress, particularly in mathematics. These matched inspectors' findings about the inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Accrington Academy to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 134 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1049 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	24	86	64	12	9	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	44	33	80	60	8	6	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	59	44	67	50	5	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	35	70	52	15	11	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	34	25	92	69	6	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	21	84	63	17	13	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	16	89	66	19	14	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group,	38	28	79	59	9	7	1	1

changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)								
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	27	78	58	15	11	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	27	65	49	19	14	8	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	22	77	57	19	14	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	37	28	79	59	13	10	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	53	40	68	51	10	7	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement: the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.

Attainment: the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.

Capacity to improve: the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of

its systems to maintain improvement.

Leadership and management: the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.

Learning: how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.

Overall effectiveness: inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.

- The school's capacity for sustained improvement.
- Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.
- The quality of teaching.
- The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.
- The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.

Progress: the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Accrington Academy, Accrington, BB5 4FF

Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed meeting you very much indeed. We judged that yours is a good school. In the questionnaire that you completed most of you said that the headteacher and senior staff do a good job, you learn a lot, you know how well you are doing and are well prepared for the future.

These were the things we liked most about your academy.

- Your attendance has improved greatly and is high.
- Your achievement is good. The early GCSE results in English and mathematics have gone up significantly this year.
- Teaching is good and you are keen to learn.
- The good curriculum provides you with a good choice of courses which you enjoy.
- Individuals who need additional help get excellent support.

To help the school to improve, we have said that senior leaders should:

- Raise standards in mathematics by:
- recruiting and developing staff to ensure consistently good teaching
- improving students' understanding and application of mathematics so that more achieve at the higher levels.
- Extend the use of assessment for learning to ensure that:
- students are consistently given specific challenges that match their abilities.
- Improve the effectiveness of the new sixth form by:
- improving the quality and consistency of teaching and student outcomes and the systems for evaluating student progress.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell

Her Majesty's Inspector

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