

Lightcliffe Academy

Stoney Lane, Lightcliffe, Halifax, West Yorkshire HX3 8TL

Inspection dates

6–7 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Pupils' progress over time and for those pupils currently in the school is weak. From broadly average starting points, pupils in Year 11 achieve much less well than others nationally in a wide range of subjects.
- Leaders do not make effective use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. For too long, disadvantaged pupils' outcomes have been significantly below others nationally.
- Rates of attendance remain stubbornly below average. Over time, levels of persistent absence have increased and, despite a very small improvement in 2018, persistent absence remains above the national average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistent absentees is high.
- Leaders do not ensure that all staff apply school policies consistently, including the behaviour policy. Although improving, pupils' attitudes to learning over time are not consistently positive.
- Leaders and governors have been too slow to tackle weaknesses in leadership and teaching since the previous inspection. This has had a detrimental effect on some significant aspects of the school's provision.
- Teachers do not always consider pupils' prior learning when they plan lessons. This and a poorly designed curriculum impede pupils' progress, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, boys and the most able.
- The provision in the sixth form is inadequate. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is too inconsistent. Over time, students' progress has declined and is now below average.
- Although leaders deal with incidents of bullying effectively, their strategies to analyse and act on patterns and trends of bullying are underdeveloped.
- Some pupils' literacy skills are poor. Leaders do not have a robust plan in place to address this.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher is well respected. He has developed effective links with parents and carers. The number of pupils on the school roll is increasing.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is improving quickly. Leadership in this area is much improved.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to increase the rates of progress for pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, boys and the most able, by:
 - ensuring that teachers use prior assessment information to plan activities that meet pupils' needs and abilities effectively
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve so that all pupils are challenged appropriately
 - identifying ways in which absent pupils can swiftly catch up on missed work when they return to school
 - introducing a school-wide approach to improving pupils' literacy skills
 - raising teachers' awareness of underperforming groups of pupils and implementing strategies to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management so that the persistent weaknesses in the school's provision improve swiftly by ensuring that:
 - all staff consistently and effectively apply school policies
 - senior leaders, governors and trustees urgently address the weaker leadership and teaching that exist in the school
 - curriculum plans provide teachers with detailed guidance on the progression of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in a range of subjects, particularly in key stage 3
 - additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used effectively
 - leaders have a detailed understanding of the patterns and trends of bullying so that they can pre-empt it or support vulnerable groups of pupils when required
 - trustees improve the quality of governance sufficiently so that governors have a significant impact on the overall quality of education pupils receive
 - senior leaders sustain the recent improvements in the quality of staff training.
- Improve the quality of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - implementing strategies to improve pupils' attendance and reduce instances of persistent absenteeism effectively, particularly for disadvantaged pupils
 - reducing instances of disruptive behaviour

- supporting pupils to be successful learners and ensuring that pupils take pride in their work.
- Improve provision in the sixth form by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently provide learning opportunities that challenge students
 - students attain highly and make stronger progress over time
 - leaders evaluate and act on their findings from monitoring activities in a timely manner
 - rates of retention on vocational courses improve considerably.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Since the previous inspection in 2016, leaders, governors and the trust have been unable to improve some important aspects of the school's provision that have a significant influence on the quality of education pupils receive. Pupils' outcomes continue to be poor, the quality of teaching remains too variable and a large proportion of pupils are persistently absent from school.
- Leaders, including governors, have not addressed weaknesses in leadership at a senior and subject level for too long. Over time, some leaders have undermined the work of others by 'blocking' improvements or not embracing change. The quality of leadership at all levels varies considerably. Consequently, many of the recommended areas for improvement given at the last inspection still apply.
- Although leaders have developed strategies to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school, they have not ensured that all staff follow them consistently. As a result, the quality of teaching varies. This leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding and, in some cases, pupils losing interest in their learning.
- The curriculum in some subjects is not appropriate. Leaders acknowledge that the key stage 3 schemes of work in several subjects are not sufficiently challenging, particularly for the most able pupils. While some subjects, such as English and science, have revised their curriculum to meet the needs of pupils, others have not. For example, Year 7 pupils in geography spend a considerable amount of time covering work that they have already studied in primary school.
- Leaders do not ensure that additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is spent effectively. Disadvantaged pupils continue to underachieve in a wide range of subjects.
- Leaders deal with individual cases of bullying effectively. However, they do not analyse patterns or trends of bullying closely. Leaders cannot describe the most common types of bullying, its frequency or the year group in which bullying occurs the most. This limits leaders' ability to pre-empt issues, adjust levels of supervision or direct support to the most vulnerable groups as well as they could.
- Senior leaders responsible for teaching and learning acknowledge that, until recently, professional development for teachers has had too little impact. Training was too generic and rarely consolidated. Training is now more focused on the needs of individual teachers. Leaders describe a 'blanket but bespoke' approach to staff training this year. The majority of teachers now feel that leaders use professional development to encourage, challenge and support their improvement.
- Leaders, with the support of the trust, have managed to improve pupils' attitudes to their learning since the previous inspection. Furthermore, recent appointments in the SEND and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) departments are now contributing to pupils making swifter progress in these areas.
- The headteacher is well respected in the school and the community. Relationships with parents are effective. While the majority of parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, would recommend the school, one in five would not.

- Teachers who are new to the profession say that they are well supported in school. However, until the overall effectiveness of the school improves, it is recommended that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Governance of the school

- Governance over time has been weak. Despite trustees' efforts, they have been unable to hold leaders to account sufficiently to improve the overall quality of education pupils receive.
- Governors do not have a detailed understanding of the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. Some governors believe that the funding assigned to significantly improve disadvantaged pupils' attendance and reduce persistent absence is working. Inspection evidence shows that this is not the case.
- Governors acknowledge that, in the past, they were too accepting of good news from leaders. Discrepancies in the school's own assessment information meant that governors had an overgenerous view of the school's effectiveness and the impact of leaders' work. More recently, governors have become increasingly proactive in ensuring that the information they receive from school leaders is accurate. They now visit the school more regularly and their questioning is more incisive. However, it is too soon to see the impact of these changes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders make appropriate checks to ensure that staff are safe to work with pupils. They meet regularly with their counterparts in other trust schools to share good practice. Leaders have a well-developed understanding of all statutory guidance relating to keeping pupils safe.
- Pupils are taught how to manage risk effectively through the extensive coverage of topics delivered in assembly and form time. During breaktime, staff are highly visible. Pupils say that they feel safe and that there are many staff that they can speak to if they have a concern.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders look for opportunities to liaise with professionals from outside the school to support their work in this area. By doing so, pupils are provided with additional specialist support to help them stay safe beyond the school gates.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Over time, weak teaching has not been tackled effectively. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is very inconsistent across the school, leading to poor progress for too many pupils.
- There is a marked variation in the quality of teaching between key stages 3 and 4. Too often, key stage 3 teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low,

particularly for the most able pupils. Consequently, pupils often cruise along in lessons, seldom reaching 'top gear'.

- There are many gaps in pupils' learning due to absence or teachers' eagerness to progress on to the next activity before ensuring that pupils' understanding is secure. Teachers do not give pupils enough time to reflect on or consolidate their learning. This reduces pupils' ability to recall important facts or articulate a thorough understanding of their previous learning.
- Leaders acknowledge that recruitment of high-quality teachers has been difficult until recently. A high turnover of staff since the last inspection has meant that some pupils have not profited from consistently strong teaching. Although this picture is improving, many pupils are still recovering from a legacy of weaker teaching over time.
- Not all teachers have high enough expectations for the quality of pupils' work. Pupils' poor standards of presentation often go unchallenged. There is a considerable difference between the standard of boys' and girls' written work. Teachers have been unsuccessful in their attempts to resolve this.
- Teachers' approach to the development of pupils' literacy skills varies within and beyond different subjects. In some lessons, teachers successfully identify and correct pupils' written errors or their spoken grammar. In other lessons, teachers make no attempt to improve pupils' weak literacy skills. Some teachers identify and encourage pupils to use subject-specific vocabulary in their work. In these lessons, pupils' written responses are more detailed as new words become more familiar. Leaders say that they are now working to change teachers' perceptions of literacy development. They want all teachers to recognise that they are teachers of literacy, not just the English teachers. However, it is too early to see the effect of leaders' increased focus in this area.
- In mathematics, some teachers' strong subject knowledge and understanding of examination specifications are helping pupils to develop their mathematical fluency and resilience at a swifter rate than in the past. Some teachers encourage pupils to 'give it a go' and persevere with the most difficult mathematical concepts. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson, pupils were urged to share their ideas to solve problems linked to bar modelling. Pupils' effective relationships, coupled with the teacher's effective questioning, led to pupils successfully solving the calculation.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Too often, teachers' low expectations of pupils in lessons are having a detrimental effect on developing their understanding of how to be a successful learner. Many pupils do not take pride in their work or produce the quality of work that they are capable of.
- At the last inspection, leaders were asked to expand provision for pupils' PSHE education so that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders have been successful in redesigning the five PSHE 'drop-down' days so that pupils learn a broader set of skills and gain a more detailed understanding of life in modern Britain. However,

in the weekly PSHE activities, teachers often focus on task completion at the expense of pupils' deeper understanding. The new leader of PSHE has a clear understanding of what needs to improve. Work has begun on refining the weaker aspects of PSHE provision but, again, it is too early to see the effect of leaders' recent actions.

- Pupils attend a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Staff lead additional sessions that successfully develop pupils' creative and musical skills, physical attributes and mental health and awareness.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare. Leaders' emphasis on restorative discussions and reconciliation enables pupils to reflect on their actions and the impact they have on others, and so individual cases are dealt with effectively. Pupils say that staff respond swiftly and appropriately when they realise pupils may be going through a difficult time.

Behaviour

- Pupils' behaviour is inadequate. Attendance rates remains low and disruptive behaviour occurs too often.
- Rates of attendance have been below the national average for several years. The school's own information for this academic year highlights that pupils' attendance is below that at the same point last year and is showing no sign of sustained improvement.
- The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has been above the national average for a number of years. Rates of persistent absence have increased over time, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. The persistent absence rate for this group of pupils is nearly three times that of other pupils nationally. Poor attendance is having a significantly detrimental impact on some pupils' learning.
- Not all teachers follow the school's behaviour policy consistently. The minority of teachers who do not follow it experience more low-level disruption or defiance from pupils.
- The proportion of pupils who are excluded from school is declining, reflecting some improvements in pupils' behaviour. However, the school's own information highlights that there have been 1,512 instances of disruptive behaviour recorded in the last seven weeks. This equates to roughly 43 disruptions to learning per day.
- During the inspection, the majority of pupils were welcoming of visitors and happily engaged in discussion about their future career plans. Most pupils responded to teachers in a mature manner.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Between 2016 and 2018, pupils' progress by the end of key stage 4 was considerably below that achieved by other pupils nationally with similar starting points. While pupils' outcomes improved marginally in 2017, this was heavily influenced by one qualification. Overall, the cohort of pupils who left at the end of Year 11 in 2018 entered the school in Year 7 having achieved above other pupils nationally in their tests at the end of key stage 2. However, when this group of pupils left in 2018, their

average progress was nearly half a grade below other pupils nationally. The most able pupils and boys significantly underachieved.

- Pupils currently in the school continue to make too little progress from their different starting points. This is because many teachers do not plan activities that build on pupils' prior understanding. Often, pupils either repeat work that they have mastered or attempt to complete work that is too difficult for them.
- Leaders acknowledge that strategies to improve disadvantaged pupils' outcomes have been largely unsuccessful. This group of pupils are not achieving well.
- In the past and currently, there are wide differences between the progress of boys and girls. Boys make much less progress than girls in many subjects, more so in English. This is partly because of boys' weaker reading and writing skills. Their presentation of work is also poor, with many boys having low expectations of themselves and low aspirations for success. Although leaders have identified this as a pressing issue, their actions to accelerate boys' progress lack the urgency and precision needed to make a difference.
- Due to a legacy of weaker teaching over time, key stage 4 pupils are having to revisit previous learning or cover work they should have been taught in key stage 3. The extra work pupils are required to learn and the limited time available lead to some teachers reducing opportunities for Year 10 and 11 pupils to deepen their understanding or apply their learning to different concepts. Consequently, these pupils are not attaining as well as they could or making swift progress from their different starting points, particularly in humanities.
- Stronger teaching and more stable staffing are beginning to improve pupils' progress in science this academic year. For example, in Year 8, the work scrutinised by inspectors demonstrates that the majority of science teachers are planning and using assessment effectively, enabling pupils to develop an age-appropriate understanding of key topics.
- More effective leadership of SEND provision is helping pupils with SEND make stronger progress recently. Teaching assistants are now deployed successfully. They provide effective academic and pastoral care to the pupils that they are assigned to support. Relationships between teaching assistants and pupils with SEND are strong.
- The proportion of pupils who progress to post-16 provision in school or elsewhere is high. The vast majority of pupils go on to sixth form, a wide range of further education providers, employment or training when they leave school in Year 11.

16 to 19 study programmes

Inadequate

- Outcomes in the sixth form have declined over time. In 2018, A-level students' progress was well below average. Disadvantaged students' progress on A-level courses is also weak. The progress made by the smaller cohort of students studying applied general qualifications has also declined and is now below average. The school's own information and inspectors' scrutiny of current students' work suggest that – in many subjects – students are still not making the progress they should.
- Leaders' strategies designed to improve the quality of education in the sixth form are in their infancy. In addition, leaders acknowledge that some of the monitoring activities

that contribute to their understanding of the effectiveness of provision are not implemented swiftly enough.

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is weak. Teachers are responsible for classes across the school, including in the sixth form. Consequently, the variability that exists in key stages 3 and 4 also exists in key stage 5. Teachers do not use students' prior assessment information to plan lessons that meet their needs. Leaders are frustrated that, in the sixth form – just as in Years 7 to 11 – teachers do not consistently apply the school's assessment and teaching policies.
- The variability in the quality of teaching means that students' progress depends on their subject choices. For example, in a Year 13 art lesson, students made strong gains in their learning because the teacher insisted on students having high expectations of their own personal reflection coursework. In contrast, in another subject, students' progress was hindered because they were unaware of how well they were doing, and the teacher did not identify students' misconceptions.
- Rates of retention vary between academic and vocational courses. Student retention is above average for academic courses but well below average for vocational ones.
- Students say that the support they receive with their university applications and advice towards their next steps are valuable. Just less than 60% of students went on to study courses at university or further education in 2018. Approximately 12% of students were not in education, training or employment when they left the sixth form.
- The school brokers external support to ensure that all Year 12 students can benefit from taking part in work experience. Furthermore, a varied enrichment programme allows students to develop their leadership skills, complete projects and gain early experience of life at university.

School details

Unique reference number	137036
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10042174

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,433
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	195
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Keith Cox
Principal	Thomas Rothwell
Telephone number	01422 201 028
Website	www.lightcliffeacademy.co.uk/
Email address	trothwell@lightcliffeacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–2 March 2016

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The vast majority of pupils attending the school are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium is just below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- A new chair of the local governing body took up post in October 2018.
- The school is a member of the Abbey Multi-academy Trust. Responsibility for the school rests with trustees, who delegate this to the local governing board. The mission

statement of the trust is 'to work in partnership to educate, nurture and empower'. The trust website is www.abbeymat.co.uk/our-vision.html.

- Students in Years 12 and 13 are part of the Calderdale post-16 partnership. Some students attend other providers for lessons, and vice versa.
- Currently, the school uses part-time and full-time alternative education provision at The Pivot Academy in Cleckheaton and 'On-track'. A very small number of pupils are supported by the local authority teams with responsibility for pupils who do not, or cannot, attend full-time education due to long-term medical needs or behaviour.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 51 lessons across the school. Many of the observations in lessons were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior and subject leaders, teachers, members of the local governing board, including the new chair of governors, and the chief executive officer of the trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work during lessons and with a group of subject leaders in English, mathematics, history, geography and science. In addition, an inspector scrutinised students' work with the leader of post-16 provision.
- An inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative from one alternative education provider used by the school.
- Inspectors held informal and formal discussions with many pupils and observed interactions during social times.
- Inspectors listened to a group of Year 7 and Year 8 pupils read.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and scrutinised a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation, analysis of performance information, action plans and evaluations, attendance and behaviour records, safeguarding files, recruitment checks and governors' minutes.
- Inspectors took account of two qualifying complaints made in advance of the inspection. One complaint raised possible concerns about the wider issues of the quality of the leadership and management of the school and the contribution made by the school to the well-being of pupils. The other raised possible concerns about child-on-child bullying not being adequately or appropriately prevented.
- Inspectors took into account the 231 responses from parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Ninety-four members of staff and 250 pupils completed Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys. All of these responses were taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Lee Elliott, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mike Tull	Ofsted Inspector
Gillian Fisher	Ofsted Inspector
David Pridding	Ofsted Inspector
Lynne Selkirk	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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