

# The Academy at Shotton Hall

Passfield Way, Peterlee, County Durham, SR8 1AU

**Inspection dates** 4–5 July 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b> <b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- The Principal, governors and all leaders and managers have a relentless and successful focus on maintaining high standards and further improving the academy. Consequently, both students' achievement and the quality of teaching are outstanding.
- Students make outstanding progress from their starting points. Current Year 11 students have already achieved well above average standards in gaining grades A\*-C in GCSE mathematics and are on track to reach similar levels in English and science.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers are extremely knowledgeable, have very high expectations of students and give them the confidence to succeed. They are increasingly focused on ensuring that even more students make better than expected progress.
- In a small minority of lessons, students do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their research, thinking and problem-solving skills or to practise their mathematical skills.
- Students have excellent attitudes to learning and are extremely keen to succeed. Their behaviour is exemplary and they feel completely safe at the academy. Lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.
- Leaders and managers continually review the academy's progress. Staff are given high quality training to improve their skills and they share their excellent practice with each other. As a teaching school, the academy shares its valuable expertise with staff and students from other schools.
- Students and staff feel valued and have great pride in the academy. Morale is high.
- A very rich curriculum, coupled with the academy's specialist focus on performing arts, gives students the confidence to develop their talents in dance, drama, music and sport, to travel to new places and to take part in a huge range of varied and exciting enrichment activities. All of these activities enhance students' personal development.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 lessons of which five were joint observations with senior staff. They also listened to students read.
- Discussions were held with students, staff and governors.
- Inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at students' workbooks, students' progress data, safeguarding information and other documentation.
- Seventy-five responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) were considered as well as those from the academy's own parental surveys and from academy staff.

## Inspection team

Ann Ashdown, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Sophie Gillies	Additional Inspector
Colin Scott	Additional Inspector
Tony Price	Additional Inspector
Nigel Drew	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Academy at Shotton Hall converted to become an academy school on 1st February 2011. When its predecessor school, Shotton Hall School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding. It is a designated teaching school.
- This academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority) is well above average.
- A well-below-average proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and a similar proportion speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action is average, whilst the proportion supported at school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The academy meets and exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy has specialist status in the performing arts.
- Sixty-six Year 10 students attend vocational courses at East Durham College and a very small number of students attend the Green School in Lanchester.

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

- Ensure an even larger proportion of students make better than expected progress, particularly in mathematics by;
  - giving students more opportunities to practise and apply their mathematical skills in all subjects
  - further developing students' research, higher level thinking and problem-solving skills.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- From their below average starting points, Year 11 students gained above average overall scores in GCSE examinations in 2012. Early GCSE examination results for students in the current Year 11 indicate standards have risen further this year and students' progress in both English and mathematics is outstanding.
- Over recent years, the academy's expectations of their students has risen even further. The increasing focus, particularly in mathematics, on ensuring more students make better progress that is usually expected has led to even higher standards and more rapid progress. Work seen in books and the academy's excellent student tracking data all confirm that students' achievement is outstanding.
- In many lessons, students were seen to be making outstanding progress, to be thoroughly enjoying learning and to have a real desire to achieve their very best. Year 7 students, for example, made rapid progress in an English lesson as they explored and analysed the language Shakespeare used in 'Romeo and Juliet'.
- A consistent approach and a firm focus on teaching literacy in all subjects helps students make excellent progress in developing their literacy skills. Students who need help to improve their reading are given very effective specialist help so they make rapid progress. Opportunities for students to use their mathematical skills in all subjects are not yet quite as numerous but are now increasing, as this becomes an academy focus for improvement.
- The academy enters students early for GCSE examinations in both mathematics and English. Careful consideration is given to the needs of each student so that they gain confidence from early success in examinations but are not prevented from achieving the highest grade of which they are capable.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs and those few students who speak English as an additional language make excellent progress because they receive timely, expert help from very knowledgeable and well-trained teachers and teaching assistants.
- Extra funding (the pupil premium) and Year 7 catch-up funding is spent very wisely on, for example, specialist teaching for small groups of students. This is ensuring that gaps between the achievement of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and that of other students is narrowing rapidly. This year those students known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding in Year 11 are achieving standards in line with those found nationally for all students. Early GCSE results indicate they are less than a grade behind that of their peers at the academy in both mathematics and English.
- The work of students who attend courses off-site at East Durham College and at the Green School is monitored rigorously. Records show that these students attend regularly, are kept safe and are making excellent progress.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Much of the teaching at Shotton Hall is outstanding and it is very rarely less than consistently good. Staff willingly share their best ideas for lessons and their excellent skills with each other, with trainee teachers and with staff from other schools.
- Teachers are extremely knowledgeable and their passion for the subjects they teach shines through in their lessons. Consequently, students are absorbed in their learning and achievement is of the highest order.
- Expectations are high. Teachers give all students the self-belief that they can succeed. This coupled with very well-paced lessons where teachers use a range of exciting and stimulating resources enables students to reach high standards in many subjects.
- In a geography lesson, older students were absorbed in their work as they used a range of well-designed resources to complete their interesting fieldwork. Even very heavy rain had not

dampened their enthusiasm or prevented them from collecting good quality geographical data on their field trip to Newcastle.

- Teachers use perceptive questioning to elicit high quality answers from students. Lessons are meticulously planned and work is carefully pitched to the right level for all students. This allows all students, including disabled students, those who have special educational needs and those few students who speak English as an additional language, to make excellent progress from their different starting points.
- The way in which students' work is assessed is one of the academy's many strengths. Students are given clear advice and good opportunities to respond to teachers' marking so a really productive discussion takes place on how work can be improved and higher standards reached.
- In a small minority of lessons, students do not always have sufficient opportunities to work on their own to develop their research skills or to think more difficult problems through to find their own solutions.
- In lessons, students' moral and social development is constantly and successfully promoted. For example, students cooperate particularly well when working in pairs, groups and teams and are quick to offer help to other students when they need it.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Students' behaviour around the academy is typically excellent. Records show there are very few incidents of poor behaviour and exclusions are very rare. In lessons students have very proactive attitudes to learning. Most students do not simply comply with teachers requests, they seek out more information and are genuinely keen to achieve their best.
- Students are punctual to school and attendance is above average. Students' attendance is very carefully monitored by highly skilled staff. This is part of an excellent support system for all students, but particularly those whose circumstances might put them at risk, to ensure they make the very most of their education and the best progress possible.
- Students are keen to take responsibility and develop a real air of confidence through the opportunities the academy gives. This was very apparent at the hustings taking place in assembly where students were eloquently and amusingly making their case for why they should be elected head boy and head girl.
- Students state they feel extremely safe at the academy. Parents also comment on how well they feel the academy cares for their children. Students are knowledgeable about different types of bullying, including homophobic and cyber bullying, but feel that should this occur it will be dealt with very swiftly and effectively.
- Students have a very sensible approach to risk taking. They have a clear awareness of the dangers of, for example, alcohol and drug abuse. They speak confidently whilst expressing carefully balanced views about social and moral issues.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The strong, fair and open-minded leadership of the Principal is well supported by governors and very able senior and middle leaders. All staff are fully involved in the academy's constant quest for better teaching and higher standards.
- The academy's work and the quality of teaching are monitored rigorously and the academy's view of its performance is very accurate. Staff are given excellent guidance on how to improve their skills and many staff have done far more extra training than is expected of them.
- Staff performance is managed extremely well. Senior leaders are very receptive to new ideas from all staff. Consequently staff feel valued and are proud to teach at the academy. Those who leave the academy are regularly being promoted to more senior posts. New teachers have often trained at the academy are keen to continue to teach within it. They contribute significantly to

the academies ability to sustain its current high standards.

- Students' progress is tracked exhaustively and consequently extra help for those who need it is timely and very effective. All students are given excellent equal opportunities to succeed and as a result any gaps in their performance are narrowing rapidly. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Safeguarding meets and exceeds requirements. Staff are exceptionally well trained and fully aware of policies and procedures for risk assessment and child protection.
- The curriculum is balanced and meets the needs of students very well. The range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities which take place are impressive. For example, the links with, and visits to, many different countries add to students' cultural development and to their enjoyment of learning.
- The academy's specialism in the performing arts has a major impact on developing students' spiritual, moral and social development. The academy enables children from the age of five to take part in dance activities and a wealth of dramatic, musical and sporting events which gives all students the chance to develop their considerable talents.
- As a teaching school, Shotton Hall successfully shares its outstanding practice with other schools and makes a significant contribution to improving the quality of teaching for students in other organisations.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are fully aware of the academy's strengths and provide support and challenge in equal measure. Individual members of the governing body make good use of their skills and expertise to support the academy. They are knowledgeable about the academy's performance data, how pupil premium monies are spent and they ensure finances are well managed. They monitor the academy's work and have a clear view of the quality of teaching and how good teaching is rewarded.

## 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>	136451
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	413359

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1167
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Roy Simpson
<b>Principal</b>	Lesley Powell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 5180222
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