

The Farnley Academy

Chapel Lane, Farnley, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS12 5EU

Inspection dates

11–12 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Outstanding 1
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 Farnley Academy provides students with an outstanding level of education.
- Standards are high by the time students leave the academy. Students make impressive rates of progress from their different starting points across all subjects.
- Students are confident in using their well-developed literacy and numeracy skills across all areas of the curriculum.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Much is inspirational.
- Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects, which has a profoundly positive effect on students' motivation, enjoyment and engagement in learning.
- As a result, students display a rare thirst for learning and an eagerness to succeed, both in school and when they leave for the next stage in their education.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary. They wear their uniform with pride, display impeccable manners to each other and to adults and concentrate well in lessons at all times.
- Students feel very safe from any threats of bullying and have full confidence that staff will support them should they have cause to report instances of bullying or harassment.
- The sixth form is good. Academy leaders are aware that even though achievement in the sixth form is good, it could be even better.
- Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels. Middle leaders insist on the highest of standards consistently and are held closely to account by senior leaders.
- Leadership is strengthened by students themselves who are taken very seriously when expressing their views about teaching and the progress they make.
- First-rate support from The Morley Academy has ensured leadership and teaching are of the highest possible quality.
- The governing body keeps a close watch on improvements and has an impressive understanding of what is needed to improve further still.
- The local community and parents are wholly supportive of the school and justifiably proud of the academy's considerable successes.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 39 part lessons taught by 39 teachers. Six of these lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Inspectors spoke to members of the governing body, the Executive Principal from the GORSE Academies Trust, staff and students from the academy.
- A range of documents was scrutinised, including information relating to teachers' performance, minutes of governing body meetings, monitoring and evaluation records and the tracking of students' progress.
- Inspectors analysed the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Additionally, inspectors received several letters from parents and the results of a recent questionnaire completed by parents.

Inspection team

Robert Jones, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional Inspector
Gillian Salter-Smith	Additional Inspector
Helen Gaunt	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized secondary academy.
- An above average proportion of students are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care and for those known to be eligible for free school meals and children from service families.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs and supported at school action is below average.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs and supported either through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds.
- In 2013, the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The academy uses The Morley Academy as an off-site curriculum provider for Key Stage 4 students.
- This sponsored academy opened in February 2012 and is part of the GORSE Academies Trust, which also includes The Morley Academy. Both academies share an Executive Principal who is also a National Leader in Education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensuring that achievement in the sixth form improves further still and becomes outstanding by:
 - making sure that those students who opt for AS levels are thoroughly prepared for the additional demands of the courses when they are in Year 11.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students enter the academy with attainment that is below average. All students, including the most able make outstanding progress in English and mathematics. By the end of Year 11, they have reached standards that are above or well above those expected of their age.
- The proportion of students achieving five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, is well above average. The proportion of top grades achieved by the most able is high and increasing.
- School predictions of achievement are accurate and show that the impressive progress made by the Year 11 in 2013 is set to accelerate for the current cohort of Year 11 students. The current Year 11 are already making better progress in all subjects even though on average, they are less able than the previous year group.
- Students use their well-developed literacy and mathematics skills to solve problems across many subjects. In geography, students were seen making calculations relating to sea levels. In science, students confidently used graphs to evaluate the results of experiments.
- The academy library is used extensively throughout the school day, including after school, and has helped to raise the profile and importance of reading. Inspectors were impressed by the many students who used their spare time reading and borrowing books to read at home.
- All pupils in Key Stage 3 follow intensive reading courses, regardless of their ability when they join the academy. This means that across all subjects, they are able to cope very well with the demands of researching and looking for information in books and on the internet.
- Because all students have their needs so well met, very few fall behind and consequently, fewer students than average have special educational needs. Those that arrive from primary schools with weaker skills are quickly diagnosed to see which courses and interventions suit them best. Their progress is meticulously tracked and customised carefully for individuals. Where necessary, teaching assistants provide close, effective support. Consequently, disabled students and those who have special educational needs make outstanding progress in English and mathematics.
- In the sixth form, attainment is above the national average. However, the academy is working to ensure students who opt for AS levels are better prepared in Year 11 for the increased demands these courses make.
- Spending on the pupil premium is carefully planned to ensure those students funded by it receive the maximum possible benefit. A member of the senior leadership team oversees the provision for these students, which includes organising revision and catch-up sessions, smaller class sizes, special literacy programmes and holiday study sessions. Overall, they make outstanding progress as a result of these programmes which are constantly checked for their effectiveness.
- Those known to be eligible for free school meals make outstanding progress. The difference in standards between these students and others is narrowing quickly. In English, the difference was equivalent to three-quarters of a grade and in mathematics it was one grade.
- The academy does not enter students for GCSE mathematics early so no students are disadvantaged.
- The Year 7 catch-up premium is used to boost the reading and mathematics skills of those who begin in Year 7 with low skills in those areas. One-to-one support and an intensive programme of reading and writing are proving extremely effective in raising achievement for those pupils.
- All teachers keep a very close watch on students' progress to ensure no group is left behind and senior leaders track the progress of these different groups rigorously. This ensures that the school promotes equal opportunities exceptionally well.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching across the academy in all subjects and in all years is outstanding. Inspectors observed many examples of inspirational teaching in English and in mathematics but also in other subject areas. The academy's own records of observing teaching confirm that the high standard of teaching observed during the inspection is normal.
- Teachers are very aware of what students of different abilities must do to achieve as well as they possibly can. They use their assessment data with great precision to tailor tasks to different abilities. Students are very clear what they must do to be 'even better', because this is always stated to them by teachers.
- Teachers demand the best answers from students. If a student answers a question using simple language or without using a full sentence, the teacher constantly prompts them for a better answer until one is received. This ensures that students improve their vocabulary and reasoning skills across all subjects.
- Teachers mark students' work meticulously so they are absolutely clear what they should do to improve and are then able to make immediate improvements to their work while it is fresh in their minds. These improvements are then checked again by teachers.
- In all subjects, teachers insist on high standards of presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- In mathematics, lessons are varied and highly interesting for students, which give them a thirst for learning. Mathematics is always made relevant to the real world and students never spend time completing repetitive problems.
- Students show a remarkable commitment to their learning. In one physical education lesson, students pushed themselves physically to improve their basketball passing skills. They constantly gave each other encouraging comments as the teacher used his excellent subject knowledge to challenge them.
- Teaching assistants know just how much support to give students while also being acutely aware of the need to encourage them to become independent.
- In lessons, teachers use learning time very effectively so students have the opportunity to work in groups, look at examples of high quality work, gain inspiration from each other, discuss problems and debate issues. The resulting variety of tasks that students work through in lessons gives them a wealth of ideas which enables them to learn very effectively.
- Newly qualified teachers are able to improve their teaching skills very quickly and effectively as a result of the excellent role models in the school and the excellent support available to them from experienced colleagues.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Throughout the academy, there is a real sense of mutual respect between students and between staff and students. The trust that this generates between staff and students is the cornerstone of the academy's success.
- Rules and regulations are understood by all and are crystal clear. As a result, few students break them since they are abundantly clear what the consequences are of doing so. All students spoken to during the inspection appreciated the need for clear rules and were at pains to say how much better the academy was because all teachers followed them consistently.
- Students wear their uniform with pride. Many told inspectors that wearing their uniform smartly actually helped them to behave better.
- They say that bullying does occur but very rarely. When it does happen, staff deal with the issues quickly and robustly and to the complete satisfaction of those who were victims.
- In lessons, outstanding behaviour was observed in most lessons observed by inspectors. Records show that outstanding behaviour is the norm. Students in lessons concentrate hard and are eager to help and encourage each other. Teachers encourage argument in the context of a debate in class and students handle the resulting differences in opinion with great maturity;

acknowledging each others' contributions and giving encouraging comments.

- In breaks and at lunchtime, students socialise, play sports with each other or use the well-stocked academy library and resource centre to complete work, use the virtual learning environment or have school council meetings. They say bad language is a thing of the past and is rarely heard. Homophobic name-calling as one student put it, 'just doesn't go on, we wouldn't put up with it'.
- Students have a good understanding of how to stay safe on the internet and when using mobile phones.
- Students in the sixth form are excellent role models to their younger counterparts. They take on responsibilities supporting younger students, listening to them read and coaching sports teams.
- Attendance has improved and is now above average as a result of the academy's very rigorous policy to reduce persistent absence and to reward good attendance.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- School leaders at all levels share the common aim to ensure students receive nothing but the best. There is a palpable sense of shared responsibility to meeting this aim and there is no hint of complacency in the light of the exceptionally high standards achieved in the first year of the academy's existence. The Principal ensures leaders at all levels constantly strive to make things even better.
- Teachers are held very well to account by middle leaders, who constantly keep a close check on the quality of teaching in their departments. These checks are far from superficial, since they take in a breadth of evidence including short visits to lessons, lengthier lesson observations, rigorous scrutiny of students' work and incisive data analysis. The result is that senior leaders have a very clear picture of the quality of teaching and, when things begin to deteriorate, they can intervene with precision and speed to ensure students do not suffer from potentially weak teaching.
- Other areas of leadership across the school use rigorous systems which are constantly under review. Special educational needs provision is expertly managed so no students fall behind and their progress is meticulously tracked. Attendance is managed by dedicated staff who make home visits, constantly liaise with parents and track attendance of different groups of students, comparing figures with national averages to ensure they are always better. Behaviour is sensitively managed to ensure incidences of poor behaviour are minimised and have a minimal impact on learning.
- The curriculum is well balanced and customised to meet students' needs at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Academy leaders are well aware that the ability to read well is prerequisite to good learning; particularly given students' reading skills are weak on entry. Correspondingly, they have placed reading at the heart of the curriculum and this is reflected in the outstanding progress students make in this key area. The sixth form curriculum is outstanding, with opportunities for students to engage in many enrichment activities, such as supporting, counselling, first aid certification and sports coaching.
- Safeguarding meets all current government requirements.
- Students develop an excellent sense of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues through membership of the debating society, studying world religions, high quality assemblies where students consider moral issues and participating in the ample musical, drama and sporting activities on offer.
- The academy enjoys first-class support from The GORSE Academies Trust. The two academies share expertise with each other, which is particularly beneficial to small department areas, such as art and music, which might otherwise work in isolation. Policies and management systems are shared between the two academies and some governors are on both governing bodies which leads to clarity of vision and purpose in raising standards and improving teaching further still.
- The Executive Principal is a National Leader of Education and gives considerable support to an increasing number of primary and secondary schools across the North; particularly those striving

to become good schools. There is good evidence of teaching expertise being shared with these schools that has resulted in the quality of teaching and achievement improving.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has a detailed overview of the academy's strengths and areas for further development. Its members have a detailed understanding of the school's achievement data and how this relates to national statistics through high quality training the academy provides. Members have well-developed skills in knowing just the right questions to ask school leaders to hold them closely to account. They are well aware of how funding from the pupil premium is being used and some have read research papers on how students can gain maximum benefit from it. The governing body sets rigorous, challenging targets to manage the Principal's performance to ensure the academy produces some of the country's best rates of progress for its students. Similarly, the governing body keeps a close watch on the existing rigorous management of teachers' performance and how their pay relates to the quality of their teaching.

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	137577
Local authority	Not applicable
Inspection number	399899

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1,049
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Greaves
Principal	John Ziltener
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0113 263 0741
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