

Clacton Coastal Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135957
Local Authority	N/A
Inspection number	381980
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2011
Reporting inspector	John Mitcheson 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	1747
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Foster
Headteacher	Stephen Chamberlain
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
School address	Pathfields Road Clacton on Sea CO15 3JL
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. They visited 36 lessons in the main academy and six in the sixth form and observed 42 members of staff. They held meetings with senior and middle leaders, the chair and members of the governing board and three groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including 93 questionnaires from parents and carers, 16 from staff and 87 from students.

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

- They observed lessons to see if there is enough good quality teaching across the academy to raise achievement.
- Inspectors examined the procedures to monitor students' progress and gauge how teachers, managers and leaders are using this data to raise standards and prevent students from under-achieving.
- They talked with senior leaders, including governors to see to what extent they have built on the improvements made in the academy's first year and delivered further improvements in 2011.
- Inspectors asked students and their parents and carers whether they consider the academy to be a safe, healthy and enjoyable place to be.
- They investigated whether students in the sixth form are suitably prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

Information about the school

Clacton Coastal Academy opened in September 2009 following the amalgamation of two local schools, both of which were National Challenge schools. The vast majority of staff from both schools transferred to the academy. It is much larger than average and operates on two sites over a mile apart. Students in Years 7 to 11 are based on the Town campus and Years 12 and 13 at the Coastal campus. The sixth form is part of a consortium with another local school and Colchester Institute College. Most students come from Clacton. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals and the percentage with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including statements of special educational needs, is much higher than national averages. The majority of students are White British, with very few from minority ethnic backgrounds. Student mobility is higher than average. An executive principal has led the academy since its opening and a number of new senior and middle leader appointments have been made. It is sponsored by the Greensward Charitable Trust and the Academies Enterprise Trust. It specialises in Media Arts and English. The academy holds Healthy Schools status and the Humanitarianism, Inclusion and Investors in People awards. It had its first monitoring visit from Ofsted in October 2010 and was judged to be making good progress towards raising standards.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Clacton Coastal Academy provides students with a satisfactory education. Its strengths include a broad curriculum delivered in partnership with other providers that gives students a wide choice of GCSE and vocational learning and the good quality care, guidance and support it provides which enables students to feel safe, enjoy their learning and make good progress. Its key strength is its executive principal; his determined leadership and vision for the academy has raised the expectations of staff and the aspirations of students. His excellent leadership has accelerated a number of improvements and generated good capacity to make further gains. Restructuring of the senior leadership team has increased its capacity by aligning their particular strengths to the specific needs of the academy. A new leader of the sixth form is making improvements but has not had time to make sufficient impact on raising achievement further.

The academy is overcoming the formidable challenge presented by students' very low attainment on entry in Year 7 and the legacy of underachievement inherited from the two predecessor schools. Results have risen sharply over the past two years. The percentage of Year 11 students attaining at least five GCSE C grades is above the national average. Based on their very low starting points this represents good progress. The percentage of students attaining a minimum of five C grades including English and mathematics has also risen significantly but this is restricted by lower results achieved in mathematics where the quality of teaching and leadership is not as good as it is in English.

Attainment is low but improving strongly and learning and progress are good. The combination of better quality teaching and intensive support to prepare students for examinations and ensure that coursework deadlines are met has accelerated their progress and boosted achievement. Current tracking data indicate that the academy is on track to deliver improved results again in 2012. Improved attendance in lessons and at revision sessions shows that students are keen to do well and gain the qualifications they need for the next stage of their education, training or employment. Students talked positively about the changes made since opening as an academy and value the improved guidance and support received from staff. They say it is a safe, enjoyable and healthy place to be. Behaviour is satisfactory. Exclusion and persistent absence rates have fallen dramatically over the past two years. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory. Regular tutorials and assemblies have helped to build relations and establish common values among students during the merger into a single academy.

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In lessons, inspectors found that the quality of teaching fluctuates from outstanding and often good, to generally satisfactory. Most teachers manage students' behaviour effectively and use a range of techniques to stimulate and retain their interest. They have an improved range of assessment data to show how well individual students are achieving and have been trained to use it to plan lessons that meet the needs of students of different abilities. However, inspectors found that a significant number of lessons did not include tasks suited to all lower-ability or more-able students. A few teachers have low expectations of students and accept a minimum amount of work from them. Younger students have lessons to accelerate their reading but their literacy and numeracy skills are not systematically reinforced across all subjects.

Procedures are in place to welcome new students to the academy and ensure that they settle quickly. An 'inner college' provides good care for the students whose circumstances may make them most vulnerable, including those at risk of exclusion or being regularly absent. Students that have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive the care and support they need to ensure that they achieve equally as well as others. Improved assessment procedures provide a much clearer view of students' achievement. This enables staff to target support towards those at risk of underachieving and ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement, in particular the percentage of students achieving at least five GCSE C grades including English and mathematics, by:
 - demonstrating clear, coherent leadership of mathematics, including the management of teaching to generate better quality and consistency
 - providing additional training for mathematics teachers and targeting additional support and challenge towards those who need it most
 - systematically reinforcing students' literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects.

- Generate greater consistency in the overall quality of teaching by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what students are capable of achieving
 - using the information they have on students' prior attainment to plan and deliver tasks matched to their different abilities and interests
 - sharing best practice and devising plans to replicate specific aspects of this in their own teaching.

- Raise the achievement of students in the sixth form by:
 - improving the quality of their written work so they have detailed assignments and good quality notes for revision

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- providing students with regular evaluative feedback through marking of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work
- ensuring they have a full understanding of examination techniques and the quality of work expected of them by examination boards
- providing weekly opportunities for students to meet with tutors and mentors to discuss their progress and welfare.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Compared with their very low starting points, students make good progress. In lessons, learning is enhanced when students learn together in small groups. They respond positively to teachers’ questioning, have regular opportunities to evaluate each others’ performance and work conscientiously for sustained periods of time. Attainment in mathematics is much lower than it is in English. To remedy this, students are now entered for the examination earlier in the year and are provided with additional revision classes to fill any gaps in their knowledge. The academy’s focus on raising achievement is clearly evident in the much improved outcomes in Key Stage 4. Improvements are less pronounced in Key Stage 3 where the proportion of students attaining the expected levels in English and mathematics is below the national average.

Students feel safe, listened to and free from bullying. They know who to talk to if they have concerns and know where to seek advice and guidance on future careers and opportunities. Most students behave well but a minority of them are too passive in lessons. They lead active lifestyles but feel they are not encouraged to eat healthily because food is too expensive. Attendance has improved and is broadly average. Specialist media arts courses and events enable students to make a good contribution to the local community through performances in other schools and venues.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
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	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

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

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Most teachers use their specialist knowledge to plan learning by themselves, in pairs or small groups. They use interactive whiteboards to capture students' interest and question them effectively to test their understanding. They share good relations with students and manage their behaviour effectively. Students that have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because they are given good quality personalised support from teachers and classroom assistants. Inspectors observed outstanding teaching in a range of subjects. Students made rapid progress in these lessons because teachers made best use of time, made learning enjoyable and matched the level of work to students' abilities. This best practice is not shared across all subjects. Ineffective use of assessment data is a common weakness in some lessons, so all students regardless of their ability end up doing the same work at a pace dictated by the teacher. A scrutiny of students' work reveals improved marking procedures but also some poorly presented and unfinished work.

The Key Stage 3 curriculum is increasingly tailored to provide additional nurturing for students entering the academy and to enable the most able to begin accredited courses in Year 9. Good local partnerships enable the academy to offer a wide range of vocational courses which students enjoy and achieve well in. Not all students value weekly lessons to promote their basic skills and feel that better use could be made of this time. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of sporting, cultural and arts-based activities that make a good contribution to students' personal development and well-being. Good care and support is provided by tutors and pastoral support managers, and most students know who to approach for careers guidance and advice about their future. Arrangements to keep students safe and maintain their regular attendance are systematic and effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

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

The executive principal has a thorough understanding of the academy’s strengths and weaknesses. He has taken decisive action to tackle under-performance of staff and students. The performance of different groups of students is rigorously analysed to ensure that no students are discriminated against and all have an equal opportunity to succeed. For example, provision for vulnerable students in the inner college has resulted in their improved attendance, participation and engagement. Detailed improvement plans include challenging targets which are rigorously monitored by governors and sponsors. All senior leaders are held fully accountable for their areas of responsibility. English is at the vanguard of school improvement. Standards have risen dramatically and the proportion of students making the expected progress across all key stages is high. This good practice does not extend into mathematics; teaching is not managed well and overall leadership lacks clarity of direction. The quality of middle leadership in other subjects is reflected in the significant variation in the outcomes achieved by students.

Good governance and rigorous monitoring by the academy sponsor is ensuring that the strategic development of the academy is secured. Value for money is satisfactory. All statutory responsibilities are met including safeguarding which is good because procedures are rigorously monitored and training of all staff is of good quality. The academy makes a good contribution to community cohesion through a range of local, national and international projects, such as the academy’s annual remembrance day ceremony, engagement with the Children’s University and its links with schools in Germany, France and Ghana. Engagement with parents and carers has increased but very few chose to share their views on the academy with inspectors.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

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

A change of leadership this year is affecting change and there are clear signs of improvement. Students attend regularly and say that they enjoy what the sixth form has to offer them. They feel safe, behave themselves and take an active part in academy life as councillors, sports leaders and mentors to younger students. Most students join in Year 12 with lower than average prior attainment. They make satisfactory progress to attain standards that are lower than average but are improving. A higher proportion of them are choosing to continue their studies in Year 13. In a few vocational subjects delivered in partnership with other providers, students make good progress and achieve high standards.

Most teaching is satisfactory. Teachers share good relations and make good use of the excellent facilities at the Coastal site. In lessons, a large proportion of teachers rely upon worksheets and computer-aided presentations that limit opportunities for students’ extended writing. The quality of note-taking is variable and lack the detail needed for revision purposes. In some subjects, not all students have opportunities to learn examination techniques or review the quality of work expected of them by examination boards. Not all marking provides regular evaluative feedback of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work. Improved assessment procedures enable staff to monitor students’ progress much more effectively and intervene where necessary to support those at risk of underachieving. Students value the enhanced care, guidance and support provided for them but inspectors found that their meetings with tutors are too infrequent and do not give them regular opportunities to discuss their progress and welfare.

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

Only a few parents and carers returned questionnaires. Those who did respond were overwhelmingly supportive of the academy, feeling that it keeps children safe, meets their needs and is well led. A small minority commented that they would like more information on how well their child is progressing and want the academy to take their views into account. Inspectors investigated this and found that arrangements are in place to communicate with parents and carers via email, texting and telephone, and improved reporting arrangements are becoming more regular.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Clacton Coastal 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 93 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1747 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	27	60	65	7	8	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	33	35	57	61	3	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	21	23	61	66	7	8	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	29	55	59	7	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	22	24	64	69	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	19	20	59	63	11	12	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	14	67	72	10	11	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	22	24	58	62	3	3	2	2
The school meets my child’s particular needs	20	22	65	70	3	3	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	22	61	66	4	4	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	12	63	68	9	10	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	21	23	64	69	3	3	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	29	31	57	61	4	4	1	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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:	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 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.



11 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Clacton Coastal Academy, Clacton on Sea CO15 3JL

Thank you for welcoming us to your academy and taking the opportunity to talk with us. In particular can we say thank you to those of you who met with us to share your views. You were good ambassadors for the academy and a pleasure to talk with.

We found that the academy provides you with a satisfactory education. It has made a number of improvements over the past two years. Better quality teaching, a broad curriculum and good care, guidance and support are enabling you to make good progress. I am sure you are aware that results have improved significantly and staff expect further improvements from you this year, so keep up the hard work.

We found a few aspects of the academy that need more attention in order to make them really effective. These include:

- improving the teaching and leadership of mathematics so that more of you achieve a minimum of five GCSE C grades including English and mathematics
- improving the way your teachers use the information they have on your prior attainment to plan and deliver tasks suited to your different abilities and interests
- raising achievement in the sixth form.

The academy is well led by Mr Chamberlain. You can help him to make further improvements by letting him know your views on what else needs to be done. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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