

The Isle of Sheppey Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number135721Local AuthorityN/AInspection number372965

Inspection dates1-2 December 2011Reporting inspectorIan Hodgkinson 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 pupils11–18Gender of pupilsMixedGender of pupils in the sixth formMixedNu mber of pupils on the school roll2182Of which, number on roll in the sixth form280

Appropriate authority

Chair

Ralph Mainard

Headteacher David Day (Principal)

Date of previous school inspection N/A

School address Head Office, East Site

Minster Road Minster-on-Sea ME12 3JQ 01795 873591

 Telephone number
 01795 873591

 Fax number
 01795 870107

Email address davidday@theisleofsheppeyacademy.org.uk

Age group 11–18
Inspection date(s) 1–2 December 2011

Inspection number 372965

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate Store St Manchester M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524 E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk W: www.ofsted.gov.uk



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 30 lessons taught by 30 teachers, and visited briefly other lessons and activities. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, students, and parents and carers. Inspectors looked at documentation, including: students' books; the academy development and action plans; records of assessment and tracking of students' progress; plans and monitoring information for the support of vulnerable students; records of the academy's arrangements for the safeguarding and protection of students; and policies and procedures for promoting equality and countering discrimination. In addition, inspectors analysed 135 questionnaire responses from parents and carers, together with those from staff and students.

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

- The effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, with a particular focus on procedures to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children.
- The effectiveness of the academy in improving students' attendance and punctuality.
- Students' academic progress, especially for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers in ensuring consistent improvements in the quality of teaching and learning across the academy.
- The effectiveness of leaders' and managers' use of monitoring data to hold the academy staff to account and plan for improvement.

Information about the school

The Isle of Sheppey Academy is much larger than the average-sized secondary school. Within the academy, students join one of five mini-schools. Three of these schools are on the East site in Minster, and two on the West site, about two miles away in Sheerness. Each school has a headteacher and a deputy headteacher. A specialist unit, the Nova Centre, has been established to re-integrate a small number of disaffected students back into education. Most students are White British and almost all have English as their first language. A very high proportion of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including significant numbers with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties and moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average.

The academy opened in 2009. Its lead sponsor is Dulwich College, and it is also sponsored by Kent County Council and the Diocese of Canterbury. It has been designated as a specialist business and enterprise school since opening. It has received a number of awards for its community work and extended services. The original principal left after a year, and for most of the academic year 2010–11 the academy was led by the two executive headteachers in charge of each site. The current principal has led the academy since September 2011. The new Chair of the Governing Body is a representative of the lead sponsor.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the learning, progress and behaviour of students and to the consistent effectiveness of teaching, especially in mathematics.

Since a monitoring inspection in February 2011 found the progress of the academy to be inadequate and reported serious concerns about the quality of education, improvements have been made in key areas. Students' attendance has improved considerably through the very effective work of pastoral staff with students and their parents and carers, and is now broadly average. Students' attainment, although low, has risen in successive years and meets national minimum standards on the key measure of five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics. Systems are well developed to identify those students most vulnerable to underachievement and those whose well-being is most at risk. Actions put in place to support these students are beginning to narrow gaps in attainment and progress with their peers. Good systems are in place to keep students safe. The curriculum has been effectively redesigned to provide students with a very broad range of options at Key Stage 4 and clear pathways through to work or study in their main areas of interest. The business and enterprise specialism drives innovative projects with the local community which offer rich opportunities for students to develop an understanding of the world of work. The sixth form's effectiveness is satisfactory and continues to improve.

These improvements all reflect well on the increasingly effective use of monitoring information by leaders at all levels in the academy to evaluate performance and plan for improvement. This confirms that the academy has a satisfactory capacity to improve further. The new principal has a very clear strategic view for the academy's development and has been strongly focused on ensuring improvements are made in the quality of teaching and learning.

There remain, nonetheless, important shortcomings in students' academic progress. Although progress in English in GCSE examinations has improved markedly, improvements in mathematics have been slower, and too few students make the progress they should. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons across the academy, and in mathematics in particular, is highly variable, ranging from

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

outstanding to inadequate. Students' behaviour around the academy site is generally calm and orderly, although a small but significant minority of lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour. This is linked in part to weaknesses in teachers' planning to engage and motivate students across the attainment range. In some lessons students are highly dependent on the teacher's direction and do not always demonstrate creativity or independence of thought. While students' individual needs are clearly identified in lesson plans, activities in too many lessons are not systematically adapted to take account of students' varying capabilities. The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving through some good and well-monitored special intervention programmes, but it remains inadequate overall because of a lack of consistently effective teaching in the classroom.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' attainment and progress, especially in mathematics, by ensuring that students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, learn consistently well in lessons.
- Improve the proportion of good or better teaching in line with the academy's own 'improvement mission' targets, so that by September 2012 the large majority of teaching will be good or better, by:
 - ensuring that lessons consistently engage and motivate students, with challenging tasks which develop students' creativity and independence
 - ensuring that tasks are always adapted in lessons to suit the full range of capabilities in the class
 - ensuring that students are given consistently good guidance in teachers' marking about how well they have done and what they need to improve.
- Eradicate disruptive behaviour by students in lessons by:
 - securing the consistent implementation by staff on all sites of the academy's behaviour and rewards systems
 - ensuring that students are fully engaged in purposeful, challenging learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

The attainment and progress of groups vulnerable to underachievement, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have improved as a result of some well-focused interventions to support the learning of these students. A very substantial improvement in attendance and reduction in persistent absence has made a significant contribution, as have specific literacy programmes in Key Stage 3. Effective curricular and extra-curricular support for Year 11 students on the grade

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

C/D borderline in English and mathematics prior to GCSE examinations in 2011 ensured that results at this threshold improved for the second year in succession.

However, there is not enough good learning in the classroom to sufficiently accelerate students' progress and overcome underachievement in all areas. In mathematics, students' progress has been weak, so that students entering the academy with weak numeracy skills do not catch up with their peers nationally. Inspectors observed wide variations in the quality of learning in mathematics, including a number of lessons where learning was inadequate, most often because students became disengaged from learning and behaviour became poor. Learning and progress varies across other subjects, too. Students generally make best progress in vocational and applied courses, and those linked to the business and enterprise specialism. These courses equip students with a good understanding of the skills needed for the world of work. Together with their effective skills in using information and communication technology (ICT) and their sound literacy development, students are satisfactorily equipped with important workplace skills, despite some shortcomings in numeracy. They take on a wide range of leadership roles within the academy and make a significant contribution to projects to improve the local community and economy. In spite of the incidence of poor behaviour in class, students generally get on well together and the large majority feel safe in the academy. Through new approaches, such as a restorative justice approach to conflict resolution, students are becoming increasingly reflective on the impact of their attitudes and behaviours. They have a sound understanding of how to keep healthy, although there is not wide participation in extra-curricular sport.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4			
Taking into account:	_			
Pupils' attainment ¹	4			
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress				
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4			
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3			
Pupils' behaviour	4			
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3			
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	3			
Taking into account:	_			
Pupils' attendance ¹	3			
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3			

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Just over half of the teaching observed on the inspection was good or better, with a better profile seen in the sixth form. However, there is too much inadequate and satisfactory teaching to ensure that students' progress accelerates quickly enough. Where teaching is no better than satisfactory, lessons are often mundane and lacking in pace and challenge. Teachers identify pupils' needs in their planning documents, but activities are rarely adapted to ensure that students across the attainment range are appropriately challenged. In a small minority of lessons, students' noisy and distractive behaviour goes unchallenged by the teacher for too long; the academy's behaviour and rewards policy is not applied with consistency in all classes. There are strengths in teachers' use of assessment to support learning; students in a number of subjects are encouraged to use criteria to assess their own work and that of others, helping them to become increasingly evaluative in developing their ideas. Students are generally well aware of their targets, and of the 'driving question' to be addressed by the lesson. Some very effective marking of students' work makes them well aware of what they need to improve, but this is inconsistent and some books are rarely marked. Teachers' questioning is often a strength, drawing out extended answers from students and encouraging them to ask searching questions themselves.

The curriculum is well-organised and matched to students' needs. The academy provides an extensive range of vocational courses alongside a full academic offer, enabling students to select from an exceptionally broad range of options at Key Stage 4. Strong partnerships with local businesses help to improve the quality and relevance of courses throughout the academy and make a significant contribution to preparing students with skills needed for later life. Skills of literacy, enterprise and ICT are promoted effectively across subjects, but numeracy less so. The new curriculum model introduced in June 2011 has enabled students to move more freely between schools and has allowed provision to be tailored more precisely to individual needs, including for more-able students, although it has not yet had time for the full impact on students' progress to be seen.

The academy's success in engaging with parents and carers to support students' learning has been variable. However, highly effective steps have been taken to engage with the families of students with poor attendance records, so that absence levels have dropped markedly. The Nova Centre has also been successful in reengaging disaffected students, with a positive impact on their progress. New systems for managing students' behaviour, including facilities for internal exclusion and to remove disruptive students from class, have yet to be fully evaluated. Very good partnerships exist with local primary schools to support transition into the academy. Students receive good advice and guidance on course choices and career pathways thereafter. The academy leaders work in very close partnership with a range of external agencies to safeguard students' well-being.

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

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
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?

The new principal has a clear strategic vision for streamlining the academy's complex organisation and improving the consistency of the quality of provision across all sites and schools. Leaders and staff at all levels have an increasingly accurate and effective flow of information with which to measure students' academic progress and personal development. While there is unevenness in the quality of the use of this data by teachers to plan lessons, leaders make effective use of it to identify strengths and weaknesses and shape more effective provision. For example, robust action is being taken to improve teaching quality through an extensive programme of monitoring and support, although this has yet to fully overcome weaknesses in all areas. While underachievement remains, attainment and progress for most groups of students has improved and gaps have been closed for the most vulnerable groups, reflecting the academy's satisfactory promotion of equality of opportunity. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, for example, had much improved GCSE results in 2011.

The governing body has largely concentrated on shaping the strategic direction of the academy since its opening. It has taken decisive action to ensure that safeguarding requirements are now fully met. However, a significant minority of staff are concerned that they do not know who governors are or what they do, so that plans are now in place to forge more effective working links between the governing body and subject departments. Academy finances are carefully managed, although value for money is judged inadequate in line with students' outcomes. The academy makes a substantial and well-planned contribution to local community cohesion through its offer of a range of extended services and its partnerships with business and community groups. Innovative links have been established with the lead sponsor school to enrich and extend learning opportunities for more-able students and develop students' understanding of socio-economic differences across the UK. 'Drop Down Days' occasionally suspend the regular timetable to explore aspects of cultural diversity and promote tolerance.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and	3	
--	---	--

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

driving improvement				
Taking into account:				
The leadership and management of teaching and learning				
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3			
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	4			

Sixth form

Sixth form students make satisfactory progress overall. Students' attainment and progress in some courses, especially law at A and AS level, is consistently very strong. Elsewhere, wide variations in performance between subjects and courses, which led some courses to close in the previous academic year, have narrowed as a result of robust action taken by sixth form leaders to tackle areas of weakness. Students' personal development outcomes present a mixed picture. Their attendance is relatively low. Students have much involvement in projects in the local community, but are not widely involved in working with younger students in the academy.

Teaching is stronger in the sixth form than in the main academy, and inspectors observed some outstanding self- and peer-assessment by students in art and in dance lessons to evaluate and improve their work. The curriculum offers a satisfactory range of courses at a variety of levels, but the lack of a broad offer of science subjects at A-level is a restriction for some. Sixth form leaders track and monitor students' progress and personal development closely. They offer good advice and guidance to students to support their choices of courses and their applications for university and employment. However, there is currently no sixth form tutorial system in place to provide students with regular one-to-one mentoring and support. Sixth form leaders have been effective in improving outcomes and provision, and have ambitious plans 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

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

The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a low response from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire. Responses overall were rather negative in comparison with the national picture, although a broadly average proportion of parents and carers agreed that their children generally enjoyed school. A few parents and carers spoke to or wrote to inspectors to say how much they valued the pastoral support provided for their children, and inspection evidence confirms strengths in these areas. Parents' and carers' written comments were mostly concerned with poor behaviour and the inconsistent quality of teaching in the academy. Inspection evidence indicates shortcomings in both of these areas, as reflected in the main report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Isle of Sheppey Academy to complete a questionnaire about their views of the academy.

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

The inspection team received 135 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 2182 pupils registered at the academy.

Statements	Strongly Agree Disagree Stron		Agree Disagree					
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	21	84	62	15	11	5	4
The school keeps my child safe	21	16	94	70	14	10	4	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	24	18	82	61	21	16	4	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	16	81	60	19	14	8	6
The teaching is good at this school	25	19	74	55	23	17	7	5
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	15	70	52	33	24	6	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	9	75	56	36	27	6	4
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)	21	16	89	66	12	9	6	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	14	72	53	33	24	4	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	20	62	46	30	22	12	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	12	72	53	26	19	10	7
The school is led and managed effectively	19	14	83	61	19	14	5	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	21	72	53	19	14	10	7

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)					
Type of school	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.

the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and Attainment:

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.

the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, Leadership and management:

> 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.

the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and Progress:

> 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 academy, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of the academy.



5 December 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The Isle of Sheppey Academy, Minster-on-Sea, ME12 3JQ

Many thanks for the welcome you gave to me and my colleagues when we visited the academy for its recent inspection. We appreciated the time many of you gave to discussions with us about life in the academy.

On the basis of those discussions and other evidence, we have concluded that the academy is improving, but that there are some important aspects which are not yet good enough. We have therefore judged the academy's effectiveness to be inadequate, and issued it with a notice to improve in the areas listed below. This means that during the next year or so, inspectors will return to the academy to check on its progress.

The academy's leaders have already begun to make important improvements. GCSE results have risen. Your attendance levels have improved very rapidly over the last year, and this has led more of you to make better progress. The curriculum offers you a very wide choice of courses and activities to suit your interests and prepare you for later life. You are well cared for in the academy. There are, however, some important areas in which the academy needs to improve.

- Overall, attainment is low in the academy and your progress remains slower than it should be in some subjects, including mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is too variable, and you need to have more regularly good teaching to help you make better progress.
- Your learning in too many lessons is interrupted by the poor behaviour of a minority of students, and this too holds back the progress you make.

I hope you will all give the academy your full support in making improvements in these key areas, by working hard, behaving positively, and continuing to attend regularly.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.