

Gloucester Academy

Cotteswold Road, Gloucester, GL4 6RN

Inspection dates 03–04 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	N/A
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses. It is not good because

- Achievement is inadequate. The proportion of students attaining five or more GCSEs at grade C or higher, including in English and mathematics, is well below average.
- In the academy's second year, attainment declined in a range of subjects.
- The proportion of students making the expected progress in English and mathematics is below average.
- Progress varies too much between students of different levels of ability and is particularly slow for those of middle ability.
- The achievement of students who are disabled or have special educational needs, although improving, is too low.
- Teaching is improving but is not yet consistently strong enough to secure good achievement for all.
- Despite significant improvements in students' behaviour and attitudes, some disruptive behaviour still interrupts learning.
- Attendance is rising but improvements have not yet been sustained over time.
- The impact of new and re-focused leadership has not yet resulted in achievement and teaching that are consistently good.

The school has the following strengths

- There have been significant improvements in students' behaviour and attitudes, so that there is a positive climate for learning.
- The headteacher, governors and senior leaders are sharply focused on improvement; teaching is improving much more quickly than in the academy's first year.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 41 lessons, several jointly with senior staff. They also undertook 'learning walks', again accompanied by senior staff and focused on the quality of marking and on the learning and progress of students with special educational needs.
- Inspectors held meetings with staff, students and representatives of the governing body and of the academy's sponsor. They also held a telephone discussion with the Chair of the Governing Body and with leaders of work-related provision attended by students.
- The inspection team scrutinised school documentation, including self-evaluation, improvement planning and records of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents and carers using surveys conducted by the academy and eight responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) which had been made by the end of the inspection.
- Inspectors also took account of the views of 21 staff who returned inspection questionnaires.

Inspection team

Christine Raeside, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kevin Harrison	Additional inspector
Terry Payne	Additional inspector
Kate Rick	Additional inspector

Full report

In accordance with 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 it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- Gloucester Academy is a smaller-than-average secondary school, which opened in September 2010 as the result of a merger of two schools, one of which was a boys' school.
- About three quarters of the students on the roll are boys.
- About two thirds of students are White British; the remaining one third comes from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A higher-than-average proportion of students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is well above average, at about 39%, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, at 18%.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (extra money provided to schools by the government) is higher than average.
- Some students in Years 10 and 11 attend courses at Gloucestershire College, and at Bridge Training Ltd., a provider of work-related learning.
- The academy is jointly sponsored by Prospects Education Services Ltd. and Gloucestershire College.
- A new building, which will include accommodation for a sixth form, is scheduled for completion in September 2013.
- The current, permanent, headteacher was appointed in September 2011, when the academy had been running for one year.
- The academy does not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly raise attainment and rates of progress for all groups of students in all subjects through teaching that is consistently good or better, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - communicate and maintain high expectations of students throughout lessons
 - are skilled in making reliable and accurate judgements about students' levels of attainment and progress
 - make effective use of assessments of students' attainment to plan activities that are closely matched to students' learning needs and which support the development of literacy
 - routinely check students' understanding through questioning that targets individuals and that probes and develops their understanding
 - consistently and rigorously apply the academy's behaviour management systems so that learning is not interrupted
 - provide marking and feedback that are of a consistently high quality and have a demonstrable impact on the quality, quantity and presentation of students' work.
- Continue to reduce absence rates, ensuring that attendance is sustained at a level at least in line with the national average for all groups.
- Ensure that leaders at all levels, including governors, are contributing strongly and equally effectively to the drive for further improvement by:
 - challenging weak performance through routine and rigorous monitoring
 - sharing and embedding the most effective practice in school
 - implementing a coherent cycle of evaluation, monitoring, performance management and professional development that is closely tailored to individual teachers' needs and has a demonstrable impact on outcomes.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Students enter the academy with attainment that is significantly lower than average but progress has not been swift enough to help them catch up, so that their attainment when they leave is still too low.
- The progress of students who are disabled or have special educational needs has been uneven. It was broadly average in 2011, other than in mathematics where it was below average. The achievement of this group is now improving overall, but the academy's internal assessments show their significant underachievement in 2012 results.
- There is some evidence of gaps in achievement between groups closing, such as that between girls and boys, but this is not yet a sustained or consistent picture.
- The underachievement of the majority White British students is mirrored in some, but not all, minority ethnic groups. The academy's analysis of the achievement of different groups of students shows variation; there are some strengths for particular linguistic groups, for example among students of broadly 'White European' heritage, but at different stages of competence in English.
- The proportion of students making the expected progress in English and mathematics is well below average and particularly low for students of middle ability, although overall attainment in mathematics increased slightly in 2012.
- Attainment and progress in English both declined in 2012.
- The achievement of students eligible for support from the pupil premium and of those who speak English as an additional language is better than their peers'.
- Students' books are too variable in the quality and quantity of written work they contain, much of which shows weaknesses in basic literacy. Where strategies to support the development of literacy skills are well embedded in good teaching, they are reflected in carefully presented and well-structured writing, but practice is inconsistent. These inconsistencies in students' progress in literacy compromise their preparation for the next stage of work or education.
- Learning and progress in lessons are improving for all students, including for those who are disabled or have special educational needs, because students' attitudes to learning are considerably more positive than in the past and furthermore, teaching is improving. However, this has not yet had a significant or sustained impact on final outcomes.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires further improvement because not enough is typically good and improvements have not yet been sufficiently sustained to eradicate entrenched low achievement.
- The quality of teaching across the academy is too uneven. There is some that is outstanding, but also some that is inadequate, although this is reducing as a result of action taken following more rigorous monitoring.
- Teaching is good when planning is based on a close understanding of students' starting points and learning needs, to ensure rapid progress for all. In a mathematics lesson, students tackled problems that were tailored exactly to their target grades. The teacher asked questions which challenged students to explain the process involved in working out the answer. He made continual reference to the relevant assessment criteria. As a result, students in this class could assess their own progress, challenge themselves to go further and select the right questions to take them to the next level. They rose to the teacher's expectations of hard work and independent learning.
- Where teaching requires improvement, it is often because teachers' expectations are too low. The work set is unchallenging and does not link directly to students' needs. Learning may be adequate because students are compliant and attentive. They put up their hands to answer

questions and show developing understanding, but there is little probing or dialogue, so learning is not deepened or extended. Questions are asked openly to anyone, rather than targeted to stretch individuals.

- The work in students' books and their responses in class show that they need help with basic literacy skills. Their writing is often limited in scope and structure and poorly spelled or punctuated. They lack the confidence or skill to express themselves clearly or to articulate their learning fully.
- All teachers are aware of the need to tackle basic literacy development in their lessons. Their capacity to do this well varies. In the best lessons, attention to literacy is carefully woven into the subject. For example, in science, stimulating resources provided an able boys' group with complex specialist vocabulary. Carefully structured guidance for writing supported them through the expected structure of an examination response, a resource which was particularly helpful in enabling those who speak English as an additional language to establish a formal style. As a result, all students in the group produced high-quality and extended written outcomes.
- Feedback to students is patchy. Although marking is regular, it ranges from superficial responses to highly constructive detail. It has the greatest impact when students are given time to think about it and apply it to their next task, but least impact when it attends to the surface features of the work or just corrects technical aspects, without any expectation that the student should do this for him or herself.
- There is some good practice, such as in mathematics and art, where inspectors saw marking precisely targeted to the individual and responses from students to the teacher about the development of their work. However, the best practice is not consistent within or across departments.
- Students' awareness of their levels and grades and of how to progress to the next stage is also variable. Often, they know the outcome of their last assessment, but cannot explain what is required to do better in the next one.
- In the best lessons, students make excellent progress in learning about the subject, but also develop a deeper understanding of other aspects of learning, such as social and moral questions. In a Year 10 philosophy lesson, this was exemplary. The teacher's high expectations of the quality of students' work, of their participation in learning and of their capacity to think deeply about moral issues inspired outstanding learning. The central question about why people believe in a god provoked thought and led to high-quality responses. Subtle prompting and support ensured that the quality of students' writing and oral expression was high.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The academy has correctly evaluated behaviour as having improved considerably since it opened. The 'ASPIRE' system, which promotes respect and good attitudes to learning, is having a strongly positive impact.
- Senior leaders have established a positive atmosphere of pride and purpose, underpinned by stronger and more consistently applied strategies for managing behaviour.
- Exclusions are high but reducing as the impact of strategies to promote good behaviour increases.
- Students report that typical behaviour in lessons is better than it used to be, but there are still disruptions. Where behaviour is quiet and attentive, it is also sometimes too passive, because teaching is not challenging students to be actively involved in their learning and to take responsibility for it.
- There is effective internal provision to remove students whose behaviour is disruptive from classrooms and to maintain learning. Students attending this provision work diligently and are given time to reflect on their behaviour and to discuss ways of restoring positive relationships where these have broken down.
- Records indicate that sanctions are having a positive impact in reducing repeat offences, although this analysis is in its early stages.

- Behaviour around the site is generally positive and students are politely responsive to the direction of adults. However, behaviour can also be over-exuberant and boisterous, sometimes in quite cramped corridors. Students do not take enough responsibility for the impact of this behaviour on others.
- Students generally feel safe and confident that any instances of bullying will be taken seriously. Surveys show that the majority of parents and carers agree that their children are safe and that any bullying is tackled effectively. Inspectors found students well informed about aspects of safety, including the dangers of gang culture.
- A wide range of student leadership roles is increasing pride in the academy. Elections for these roles have involved a full democratic process, supported by the local Member of Parliament. Students elected to key roles display their badges with pride.
- Strategies to reduce absence are much more effective than in the past, so that the gap between attendance at the academy and the national average is closing. This improvement has not yet stood the test of time, however, and academy leaders rightly remain focused on high attendance for all groups as a key aim.
- Students are highly appreciative of rewards available for good conduct, effort and achievement. They collect merit stamps enthusiastically.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher has presided over a period of turbulence since the establishment of the academy, including considerable changes to senior and middle leadership. He has made good use of external reviews, largely brokered by the academy's sponsors and carried out by consultants, including experienced headteachers. These have provided clear-sighted and challenging evaluations of the quality of provision.
- The headteacher, governors and senior leaders have been highly responsive to external monitoring. Improvement planning has sharpened and is evaluated rigorously and routinely. Its impact can be seen in improvements in behaviour, attendance and teaching.
- The use of assessment information to track the progress of groups of students is developing, but not always sufficiently sharp or fine-tuned, nor is it used equally well by all teachers to inform their planning.
- The headteacher, supported by governors, has established clear expectations of the standard of teaching. This has been underpinned by robust challenge of underperformance, necessitating changes in staffing but bringing a sharper focus on improvement.
- Senior leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching are robust and concurred with those of inspectors. The routine and rigorous monitoring of classroom practice is now an accepted feature of the academy's work. It is used to inform the professional development of teachers, although it is not always sharp enough in responding to individual needs or in making the best use of the strongest teachers to develop others.
- All senior and middle leaders understand their role in the evaluative cycle and their accountability for improvement, although some are more skilled or confident than others in securing a positive impact on achievement. Weaknesses are being robustly tackled and strengths identified and developed, supported by experienced leaders attached indefinitely to the academy by the sponsor.
- Leadership is now more stable. New appointments in English, mathematics and special educational needs bring essential fresh expertise to the academy, but were not able to influence students' outcomes in 2012. The new members of staff have quickly taken steps to audit the quality of provision and the accuracy of teachers' assessment, and to drive higher the standards of attainment.
- The curriculum is increasingly meeting the needs of students, but leaders have faced the challenge of combining the curricula of the academy's two predecessor schools and in working through the necessary changes. Academy leaders have discontinued or changed courses that have not led to appropriately challenging qualifications. The impact of developments has not yet

been fully seen in final outcomes, although there have been initial gains in the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at any grade.

- The headteacher and governors are determined to develop an inclusive academy, in which all students can succeed. They are successfully promoting mutual respect and good relationships among students, while acknowledging that there is more to be done to ensure that equality of opportunity is demonstrated in achievement that is equally good for all groups of students.
- Pupil premium funding is currently supporting a range of interventions, including schemes, resources and staffing to accelerate reading and tackle weaknesses in basic literacy. This is not yet evaluated fully in terms of its impact, but strategic planning includes clear plans to do so and to ensure that this funding has a sustained impact on the achievement of potentially vulnerable students.
- There are good opportunities beyond the curriculum for students to develop the social and cultural aspects of their learning. Student elections have enhanced their understanding of how democracy works; spiritual development is supported through personal and social education, with opportunities to reflect on moral issues during 'thought for the day' sessions. These are co-ordinated jointly between academy leaders and a chaplaincy team which includes Christian and Muslim volunteers. Inspectors saw social and spiritual aspects of learning combine well in an assembly reflecting on one's moral duty to vote.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - understands the academy's strengths and weaknesses clearly
 - challenges the headteacher and senior leaders rigorously and systematically to bring about improvement
 - is effectively managing significant budgetary constraints, including those related to the merging of two schools and the construction of a new building
 - accepts that outcomes are not yet good enough and is passionate about driving improvement faster and more effectively, with an uncompromising insistence on good or outstanding teaching, learning, behaviour and attendance
 - fulfils its statutory duties with regard to safeguarding.

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	136199
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	398626

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	750
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul McGee
Headteacher	John Reilly
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01452 428800
Fax number	01452 384290
Email address	info@gloucesteracademy.com

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