

Knole Academy

Knole West, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 3LE

Inspection dates

November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress in relation to their starting points and abilities in this good, and rapidly improving, academy
- Leadership is good and improving strongly. Leaders and managers at all levels share an ambitious vision that results in high expectations for staff and students. Leaders are driving continuous improvement through accurate and regular checking of the academy's work and rigorous and effective management of the quality of teaching.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Behaviour is good and good relationships at all levels support learning well.
- Teaching is good and improving. Staff have high expectations of what students can achieve and promote their learning and personal development well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not consistently good or better. Teachers do not always plan opportunities for students to respond to the helpful advice they are given when teachers mark their work.
- Sixth form provision is good, and improving, but achievement in the sixth form requires further improvement to be outstanding.
- The curriculum has been designed carefully to meet the needs and interests of current students. However, the changing profile of the student population means that further revision is required and the structure of the academy day limits opportunities for learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 49 lessons, looked at students' work, listened to students reading and talked to them about their work.
- They held a conversation with governors, school leaders and managers and held discussions with a group of parents and four different groups of students.
- They discussed professional development, safeguarding, performance management and the effectiveness of teaching and learning with teachers and other staff.
- Inspectors reviewed documents relating to governance, self-evaluation, improvement planning and the monitoring of teaching. Inspectors also examined records relating to behaviour and attendance and analysed the school's assessment data.
- Inspectors also took account of 37 inspection questionnaires completed by school staff and 48 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Robert Ellis, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Roger Garrett	Additional Inspector
Patricia Goodhead	Additional Inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Additional Inspector
Lesley Leak	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy was created in 2010 from the merger of Bradbourne School for girls and Wildernesse School for boys and is sponsored by Gordon Phillips, Sevenoaks School and Kent County Council.
- The academy has specialisms in expressive arts and languages, with a strong focus on developing communication and literacy.
- The academy operates across two sites. All students start their day at Knole West, where most lessons take place. A small proportion is then taken to Knole East where some physical education, science and technology lessons are taught.
- Some lessons are taught in temporary accommodation in the 'pod'. Development work to provide state-of-the-art facilities in music, dance, drama, science, business studies, visual arts and sport on the Knole West site is at the planning stage.
- Around one in ten students is known to be eligible for the pupil premium. The pupil premium is government funding targeted to support students entitled to free school meals, children in local authority care and children with a parent in the armed forces.
- Most students are White British and speak English as their first language.
- There are three times as many girls as boys, although in lower years the gender gap is closing with an equal balance of boys and girls in Year 7.
- Around one in four students have been identified as having disabilities or special educational needs, predominantly learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, but the proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The academy's recent GCSE results exceeded the government's floor standard, which is the minimum level expected for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by:
 - providing planned opportunities for students to respond to the helpful advice given when teachers mark their work
 - consistently promoting students' skills in thinking for themselves and learning independently.
- Improve the curriculum by:
 - ensuring that the range and levels of courses offered are appropriate to the needs, interests and aspirations of all students, particularly those in the sixth form
 - reviewing the structure of the academy day to ensure the length of lessons is appropriate for the different learning activities and to minimise time lost when students move between lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When students join the academy, many are working significantly below the standards for their ages found nationally in most subjects, particularly those students in the older year groups.
- Most students make rapid progress in their learning, so that by the time they leave the academy many have made better than expected progress. Standards are rising and the academy is rapidly narrowing the gap between the attainment of the academy's students and the average for all students nationally.
- The academy inherited a situation in which boys were underperforming and there was a large gap in attainment between boys and girls. The academy has been successful in accelerating boys' progress and consequently the gap is closing rapidly.
- Several initiatives to support pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium have been introduced. These include the appointment of specialist teachers to work with small groups of Key Stage 3 students to improve their reading and writing skills. This has been very effective and has produced excellent results.
- The gaps in average point scores, a measure used to compare overall GCSE attainment between all the different groups of students, including those who are eligible for the pupil premium and those who have disabilities and/or special educational needs, are closing rapidly. The academy monitors these groups closely and has taken effective steps to support their learning, particularly in relation to improving reading and writing.
- Some students achieve very well in the sixth form, but students' progress is uneven across subjects. Results in many subjects in 2012 were below the national average.
- Observation of lessons and scrutiny of the academy's data on student progress confirm that most current students are making better than expected progress and are on track to achieve challenging targets. Despite their low starting points, many younger students have made rapid progress and they are already working at the expected levels for their ages.
- Students are entered early for English language GCSE. Those who are successful in gaining the higher grades then concentrate on GCSE English literature accreditation in Year 11 and the remainder have additional support to help them achieve a better grade in English language. It is too early to judge whether this has a beneficial impact on improving students' performance in English.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and improving, but not consistently strong enough to be outstanding. Most of the teaching seen was good or better, but a few lessons did not enable students to make rapid progress and therefore required improvement to be good.
- In the lessons with good or outstanding teaching, teachers show that they have a clear understanding of how students learn and what interests and motivates them. Teachers plan their lessons so that there are opportunities for students to work together and by themselves. In these lessons, students are given responsibility to lead learning and to evaluate how well they and others are doing. This develops their ability to work collaboratively and to have an accurate view of their own progress.
- Where teaching requires improvement, teachers sometimes talk for too long and this prevents students from having sufficient time to tackle challenging problems and to think for themselves. In these lessons opportunities for discussion are sometimes missed and the pace of the lesson is too slow.
- Skilful questioning ensures that teachers know what students have understood and whether they are ready to move on. Teachers often give students an opportunity to discuss a question with a partner so that they can rehearse their response. This improves students' speaking and listening

skills.

- Most teachers set work that is hard enough and which takes account of students' previous learning. Work which is done in students' exercise books is generally marked thoroughly and teachers give good advice on how students can improve or develop their work. Students are not routinely given sufficient time to respond to this advice and complete unfinished work or make corrections in all subjects. However, this does happen in the best lessons.
- Teachers can measure accurately the progress that students make and provide timely support and guidance to address any underperformance, because they carry out regular and well-organised checks.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Most students behave well in lessons and around the academy. They understand the behaviour that is expected of them and treat others with appropriate respect and courtesy. Students say that they feel safe and that adults will help them if they have any concerns.
- Although most students display positive attitudes to learning, a small minority are too passive in lessons and depend on prompting from adults to keep them working at the right pace. Consequently, these students do not develop sufficient resilience and independence, skills that are important for their future success.
- Most students attend the academy regularly and are punctual. The academy has supported and challenged those students who previously had poor attendance so that they attend more regularly. Consequently, attendance has improved and is currently above average.
- Students are confident that the rare instances of poor behaviour and bullying will be dealt with promptly and effectively by staff. As behaviour has improved, incidents involving behaviour poor enough to result in students being excluded from the academy have fallen significantly.
- The academy is a very welcoming community. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated and students from different backgrounds socialise and learn together well. This results in a calm and orderly environment for learning.
- The school's very positive and supportive ethos promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, particularly their social and cultural development. A good range of trips, visits and other enrichment activities helps to build their confidence and self-esteem. The range includes an annual creativity festival where students have opportunities to participate in some way or other in public performances.
- Students understand about how to deal with risks they might face and have a good understanding of issues relating to electronic communication and the abuse of social networking sites on the internet.
- Sixth form students have been trained as mentors and provide good role models for younger students.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders rigorously check and judge the academy's work and use the information to plan the next stages of its improvement. They have worked hard to improve the quality of teaching. As a result, teaching and the standards achieved by students are improving rapidly.
- Arrangements for teachers' performance management are robust and closely linked to salary progression. Leaders at all levels scrutinise teaching particularly thoroughly and check the extent to which improvements in teaching are leading to improvements in the standards that students reach. All teachers have performance targets that are linked to accelerating students' progress.
- The curriculum meets most students' needs well and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. There is a strong focus on developing numeracy and literacy, particularly for the most vulnerable students.

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- The sixth form curriculum has been changed to take account of the changing profile of students and previous underperformance of some subjects. These changes will come into effect in September 2013. Partnerships with sixth form groups in other schools, intended to further social and academic opportunities, are at an early stage of development.
 - The dispersed nature of the main site and travel between the two sites mean that some learning time is lost while students move between lessons. The current 50-minute duration of each lesson sometimes limits the range of activities that can be undertaken. Some sessions are taught as double lessons and this imposes limits on the flexibility of the timetable.
 - The academy has developed good and productive partnerships with other schools, with local organisations and with education, care and health professionals to support students' learning and personal development. Independent consultants have been used well to test the academy's view of how well it is doing.
 - The views of parents are sought regularly. Academy and inspection evidence shows that most have few, if any, concerns. The academy works closely with parents to keep them informed and to help them to support their children's learning. Parents who spoke with inspectors felt that academy staff were very approachable.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors monitor all aspects of the academy's work and are well informed about the academy's strengths and areas for improvement. They ask challenging questions and hold senior leaders to account for continuous improvement. Governors look at how well students are doing and keep a close check on what is being done to improve teaching and learning. They are not reliant on information provided by the senior leaders but visit regularly to check for themselves and commission consultants to review the work of the academy. The academy's safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and adults who work with the students receive regular and appropriate training in keeping children safe. The governing body fulfils its statutory requirements
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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	136128
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	399806

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	
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1144
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne- Marie Lenehan
Principal	Mary Boyle
Date of previous school inspection	NA
Telephone number	01732 454608
Fax number	01732 742262
Email address	enquiries@knoleacademy.org

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