

# Colchester Academy

Hawthorne Avenue, Colchester, CO4 3JL

## Inspection dates

5–6 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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 requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement is lower in English than it is in mathematics, particularly for boys and more-able students because teaching is not consistently good.
- Standards are not high enough in all subjects. Not all students do well enough in humanities, design technology, French and drama.
- Students supported through school action plus do not achieve as well as others because their welfare and progress are not regularly checked. The pupil premium funding is not used well enough to fully support the students it is intended for.
- Not all students educated off-site gain qualifications in English and mathematics.
- Not all teachers have high expectations of students, or encourage them to produce good quality work.
- Senior leaders do not check the impact teaching has on students' learning sufficiently.
- Students' behaviour is not managed consistently, so a small minority of students disrupt others in lessons. Too many are excluded. Attendance is below average.
- Senior leaders and governors have not taken enough steps to prevent some students from not doing as well as they should do.

### The school has the following strengths

- Standards have risen significantly. Many more students are achieving at least five GCSEs including English and mathematics.
- Students make good progress in mathematics. Girls make good progress in English and in mathematics. Standards in art, science and vocational subjects are consistently high.
- Training and regular observations of lessons are improving teaching and students' progress.
- Behaviour has improved and students say that the academy is a much safer and enjoyable place to be.
- The recent appointment of good teachers and senior leaders has increased the academy's capacity to make further improvements.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 38 lessons, six of which were carried out jointly with senior staff. In addition, inspectors made short visits to tutorials and the lead inspector toured the school with two Year 11 students.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, senior teachers, the Chair of the Governing Board and three groups of students.
- Inspectors noted four responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). The lead inspector looked at questionnaires returned by 80 staff.
- The inspection team observed the academy’s work, scrutinised the academy’s data about students’ achievement, examined records relating to behaviour and attendance, looked at documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the academy’s work and scrutinised students’ books in lessons.

## Inspection team

John Mitcheson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Nigel Sagar

Additional Inspector

Anne Pepper

Additional Inspector

David Gutmann

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Colchester Academy opened in September 2010 in the existing buildings of the predecessor school, Sir Charles Lucas Arts College. New academy buildings are currently under construction.
- It is sponsored by Colchester Institute and the University of Essex.
- The academy has specialist status in English and health sciences.
- Most students are White British, very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students who join or leave the academy other than at the usual transfer times is higher than in most secondary schools.
- The proportion eligible for the pupil premium (extra government funding to support particular groups of students) is higher than found nationally.
- The proportions of disabled students and those with special educational needs are above that found nationally. The proportion of students supported through school action and school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The academy meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A small proportion of students are educated off site at the local college, a pupil referral unit and by independent providers.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that most is good and more of it is outstanding by:
  - raising expectations of what students can do and providing them with much harder work
  - checking students' books regularly to see if they are achieving well enough over time and are meeting the standards expected of them
  - making better use of data to plan work that meets the needs of students of different abilities
  - applying agreed procedures to manage students' behaviour consistently.
- Raise the achievement of all students by:
  - setting much more challenging targets for teachers and leaders of subjects in which students do not do well enough, making sure that they meet them and talking decisive action when they do not
  - increasing the progress made by students in English, especially boys and more-able students so they achieve as well as they do in mathematics
  - making better use of the pupil premium so that these students are supported to achieve as well as others
  - checking how well students supported through school action plus are achieving
  - improving attendance and reducing exclusions
  - making regular checks of how well students educated off-site are doing, especially in English and mathematics.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring leaders:
  - make making accurate judgements about the quality of teaching and the impact it has on students' learning and progress

- checking that teachers are looking in students' books to see if they are achieving well enough over time
- making all teachers apply the agreed procedures to manage students' behaviour, and challenging those who do not apply them consistently.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- On entry to the academy, students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics are below average. Many older students who joined the academy from the previous school did so with big gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- The achievement of students with moderate learning or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and those on alternative education programmes, has not improved at the same rate as other students. The gap in their achievement compared with most students narrowed in 2012, but remains too wide. This is because the academy has focused its efforts on raising the achievement of those capable of attaining five or more GCSE C grades, and has spent less time checking the progress of other students.
- The proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades including English and mathematics has risen year-on-year since the academy's opening. More than half of all Year 11 students attained at least five C grades including English and mathematics, and the vast majority of them attained five or more C grades this year. Students, including the more able, achieve well in mathematics. Based on their low starting points this represents good progress. Most of them sit mathematics examinations early in Year 10, and resit them in Year 11 to improve their grades further. Girls also do well in English, but boys do not do as well as girls do because some teaching in English fails to capture their interest or motivate them to work hard enough.
- Pupil premium funding is spent in a range of different ways such as literacy support, attendance monitoring, careers advice and enrichment. This is helping the majority of students to achieve better than they have done in the past but it is not making enough of a difference to the achievement of those it is supposed to help the most. Consequently the gap between the achievement of these students and others is too wide. Some students eligible for pupil premium do not attend often enough which limits their learning and progress.
- Students supported through school action plus do not achieve as well as others because regular checks are not made of their attendance and progress. A significant number of these students are educated off-site. Senior leaders do not make sure that they all gain qualifications in English and mathematics.
- Learning in small classes is helping less-able students in Year 7 to catch-up in English and mathematics, and settle in to life at the academy. Standards in literacy are rising because students are encouraged to read more often, by themselves and to each other. However there are fewer opportunities for them to read aloud to adults.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Progress in lessons depends on the quality of teaching which varies significantly. Some work is not hard enough and students are not always expected to try hard, so their progress slows. Some teachers do not pay enough attention to what students are doing in lessons. Their work is often untidy, there is not enough of it and a lot is left unfinished. Teachers mark students' work regularly and provide comments to help them improve, but not all teachers ask them to correct common spelling errors, or improve the presentation of their work.
- Teachers make regular assessments of students' progress but some are not using this information well enough to plan learning for their different needs and abilities. In some lessons,

work is too difficult for less able students who lack basic reading and writing skills. Some work is too easy, so students work steadily but do not pay enough attention to what they are doing. For example, in a Year 8 English lesson more-able students did not make enough progress because the reading and writing tasks were not challenging enough and they were not expected to work hard for long periods of time.

- Views shared by students and by staff in questionnaires show that not all teachers manage behaviour in lessons consistently. Students know what should happen if they misbehave, but say that some teachers do not warn them or ask them to improve before sending them to the exclusion room.
- There is more good teaching in the academy than in the past. New teachers joining the academy, training to help existing staff improve their teaching and regular lesson observations by senior staff have increased the amount of good teaching. In these lessons, teachers are well-organised. They know their subject and their students well. They capture students' interest and challenge them to do their best. Good relations and regular praise for students promotes their good behaviour and positive attitudes towards learning.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

- Senior leaders feel that behaviour is good. However, some lessons are disrupted by low-level misbehaviour. When teaching fails to motivate students, some of them sit back and let others answer questions, and a minority of them misbehave. Senior leaders have identified a small proportion of students in Year 8 who are not responding positively to the academy's procedures to promote good behaviour and are providing them with much closer supervision.
- Outside of lessons, students are generally pleasant and helpful. They told inspectors that behaviour has improved a lot over the last two years, and most of them felt safe in the academy. However, older students said that bullying, especially name-calling and cyber-bullying remain a concern and that more needs to be done to tackle this. The proportion of students temporarily excluded from the academy has fallen significantly since opening, but it remains higher than average. Fifteen students, including some that show some of the most challenging behaviours are currently educated off-site five days a week to prevent further exclusions and retain them in learning.
- Attendance has risen and is much closer to the national average. A small minority of students are persistently absent and attempts to get them back into learning have only been partly successful. However, improved contact with parents and carers, and the recent appointment of a new manager to reduce absence and encourage more students to regularly attend is leading to improvement.

### **The leadership and management**

### **requires improvement**

- Senior leaders have not made sure that teaching is consistently good. Weak teachers have left and new appointments have been made, but teaching is not yet good enough to ensure that high standards are achieved in all subjects. In the past, teachers have progressed up the salary scale even though senior leaders' monitoring shows that their teaching requires improvement. New procedures have been put in place this year to prevent this from happening.
- In a short space of time and without the resources expected when the academy first opened, the Principal has led a number of improvements. His effective leadership has won him full support and confidence from staff and governors. Teaching is much better. Standards are higher

and the proportion of students making expected progress in English and mathematics is much closer to national averages. He knows the academy's strengths and weaknesses and has put in place detailed plans to generate further improvements. Senior leaders and governors oversee each of the main priorities in these plans, but responsibility for raising the achievement of groups of students known to be doing less well than others is unclear.

- Senior leaders' lesson monitoring shows that teaching is mostly good or outstanding but this is based on the extent to which teachers have improved over time, rather than its current impact on students' learning and progress. Self-evaluation does not fully explain why some students do not achieve as well as each others, or why some of their books do not illustrate good progress over time.
- Senior leaders provide effective support for the Principal. Recent appointments made to the leadership team have given the academy more capacity to improve further. Leadership is good in some subjects but not in others. Not enough is being done to raise students' achievement in humanities, design technology, French and drama. Students achieve less well in English, the academy's specialist subject than they do in mathematics.
- The broad curriculum enables more students to achieve better than in the past. Activities at the end of each day encourage them to join in sport and the arts, catch-up on their learning and prepare for examinations. Daily tutorial time helps to broaden students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education but opportunities for teachers to listen to them read aloud are missed. Senior leaders have recognised that much better monitoring is needed to make sure that students educated off-site gain the basic qualifications they need for the next stage of their training or the work-place.
- Both of the academy's sponsors have provided effective support for improving teaching from its low base when the academy opened. They have helped teachers to coach others and shown them how to raise achievement in English and maths. Strategic links with the local authority have been retained to provide technical support during the construction of new academy buildings.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The Governing Board have fully supported the Principal in taking decisive action to tackle inadequate teaching and raising achievement in the academy. The chair of the governing board has a realistic view of the academy's effectiveness, based on his understanding of its current performance. However, governors are readily accepting reports on the performance of the academy and are not fully challenging the Principal to improve the effectiveness of some subjects, or raise the achievement of all groups of students. They are not checking that decisions about which teachers progress up the salary scale are based securely on their effectiveness. Safeguarding arrangements are managed effectively and meet current regulatory requirements.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136195
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	399820

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	763
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Danny Clough
<b>Principal</b>	Barry Hersom
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01206 861217
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