

New Rickstones Academy

Conrad Road, Witham, CM8 2SD

Inspection dates 17–18 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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

- Some students do not make enough progress and while standards are improving they are still below average.
- Not enough teaching at the school is good or outstanding.
- Too many books are not marked often enough or in enough detail and it is not made clear enough to students what they need to do to improve their work.
- In lessons where teaching is not challenging enough, too many students do not give sufficient attention to their learning and do too little.
- Teachers do not always check students' understanding and adapt their teaching to meet their needs.
- Students in the sixth form do not always follow courses which are well-suited to their needs.
- Standards reached in AS and A2 subjects are too low.
- Key leaders have not ensured that school policies are consistently applied and that teaching is as good as it should be.
- Over the past two years, the governing body has not provided school leaders with enough challenge.

The school has the following strengths

- Standards in English are improving and are close to national averages.
- Students say they enjoy school, feel safe from bullying and are cared for by their teachers and other staff.
- Students make good progress in vocational subjects in main school and in the sixth form.
- Since the appointment of a new headteacher in September 2012, the systems used to improve the performance of teachers and managers have become more effective.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons. Of these, four were joint observations with the headteacher and a member of senior staff.
- Discussions were held with students, teachers, support staff, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, other school leaders and managers and representatives of the Academy Trust.
- Inspectors took account of the 19 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and conversations held with parents.
- Students' work in books was scrutinised.
- Information and data about students' performance in tests and public examinations was examined.
- Logs and records about students' behaviour, safety and attendance were analysed.
- Students' behaviour was observed during social times and when moving between lessons.

Inspection team

James McAtear, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Claire Austin Macrae

Additional Inspector

Martin Dale

Additional Inspector

Jacqueline Pentlow

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- New Rickstones Academy is a smaller-than-average secondary school.
- Most students are White British. The proportion of students who are of minority ethnic heritage or who speak English as an additional language is well below that found nationally.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides funding for children in the care of the local authority and for students known to be eligible for free school meals, is above average.
- The proportion of students requiring extra help at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The proportion receiving help at school action is below average.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school makes some use of early entry for GCSE examinations.
- The school's 2012 GCSE results meet the government's floor standard, which is the minimum level expected for students' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that a higher proportion is good and outstanding by ensuring that all teachers:
 - mark work regularly and marking makes clear to students, in sufficient detail, what they need to do to improve their work
 - check that all students understand what they are learning and then adapt their teaching to assist those who need further help
 - plan lessons which take account of all ability levels and provide challenge for students of all abilities
 - give students more opportunities to write longer pieces of text in a variety of ways
 - improve standards of literacy in a more sharply focused and systematic way, so that all students follow a programme of literacy work which is used by teachers across all subjects.
- Improve achievement and make sure students make good progress in key subjects by:
 - ensuring that work is always matched to the correct levels for each student
 - improving achievement in the sixth form in AS and A level subjects by ensuring that courses that students take are well matched to their needs.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all teachers understand fully the methods of teaching they are using or are expected to use
 - ensuring that all teachers apply the school's policies and procedures consistently, for example, in relation to the marking of students' work
 - ensuring the governing body challenge school leaders on issues such as the quality of teaching.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students join the school with attainment that is below the national average, as shown by tests taken in English and mathematics at the end of primary school.
- The number of students gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics was below the national average in 2011 and 2012. Even when lower than average starting points are taken into account, some students make less progress than expected. Use is made of early entry for some GCSE subjects. This has inhibited the progress of some more able students.
- Nevertheless, during this time, standards in English have improved and standards in mathematics and science have improved since 2012. This is the result of better teaching in these subjects. However, the proportion of students making expected levels of progress in key subjects is not high enough. Similarly, some students taking humanities subjects and studying modern foreign languages do not make the expected progress.
- Standards in the sixth form are too low. Students taking vocational subjects tend to achieve highly and make good progress. However, performance in AS and A2 subjects were too low in 2011 and 2012. In part, this is because some students are not well matched to the courses they take. As a result, too many students who begin sixth form do not complete two years of study.
- In 2012, some students with statements of special educational needs did not make the expected progress. Achievement for these students requires improvement. This is because they do not reach a high enough standard of literacy. Those who have special educational needs at school action plus make good progress.
- The school uses the pupil premium funding to make sure that eligible students are included in trips and in efforts the school makes to improve standards of literacy and numeracy. However, particularly in mathematics, the gap between the progress made by those who receive the pupil premium and those who do not remains too wide.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of the teaching throughout the school is too variable. Too few lessons are good or outstanding. In some cases teachers, are attempting to use teaching methods that they are not fully trained or confident in. For example, when promoting independent learning they are not fully able to make the best of the opportunities for learning this method creates. Students are not always fully trained to work independently.
- Where teaching is good or outstanding teachers plan for all levels of ability, providing appropriate levels of challenge for each student. However, this does not happen often enough. Where teaching requires improvement, teachers do not provide all students with work that challenges them sufficiently. This was particularly the case in a number of vocational subjects taught in main school.
- When teaching is good, teachers plan carefully to make sure that a wide range of teaching methods are used. This maintains the interest of students well. Where teaching requires improvement, some students are not active and do too little during lessons.
- There are too many instances where marking is not regular enough or does not contain enough

detail to show students exactly what they need to improve and how to do so. Teachers do not always apply the school's policy in marking consistently.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students say they feel safe at school. They feel cared for by their teachers and other support staff, such as their learning support assistants, 'pupil advocates' and administrative support staff.
- Students say that bullying in its various forms is rare at the school. They report that, if such instances do occur, they are swiftly and decisively dealt with by staff. Students are aware of the risks posed by the misuse of mobile phones and computers. Parents agree that the school is a safe place to be. The number of exclusions as a result of poor behaviour is below average and has steadily declined.
- The students mix well together. They are sociable and friendly, displaying concern for each other and their community. They accept difference between one another well and do not tolerate discrimination on the basis of homophobia or race.
- The attendance levels of most students have improved and are now broadly average.
- Students move around the school politely and in good order. They pay attention to their teachers and respond very positively to the best teaching. Behaviour in lessons has improved as a result of teachers more consistently applying the school's policies for managing behaviour.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Inspectors agree with the school's self-evaluation that overall effectiveness requires improvement. They agree that the support provided by the Academy Trust has been effective, for example in providing additional staff to help to strengthen the school's leadership team.
- During the last three years, the school roll has been falling. This has meant that the school's leadership has been working to avoid a deficit financial position. The academy trust and the local authority have provided considerable support during this time.
- The quality of performance management during this period of time has not been of a high enough quality to make sure that students receive the best teaching and gain the best examination results. The feedback and training given to teachers is not always as sharply focused as it needs to be to improve teaching.
- The school's leadership team has not ensured that teachers apply the school's policies about the quality and regularity of marking well enough to make sure that students know clearly how to improve their work.
- Since September, the newly appointed headteacher has rapidly made a difference to standards of teaching, behaviour and, notably, of management. For example, the systems used to manage teachers' performance are more robust than previously. However, there is still more to be done to ensure that teaching is consistently good and that achievement in main school and in the sixth form improves.
- Good provision for is made students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and this is reflected, for example, in the work of the performing arts in the school. Students have access to

a broad range of opportunities to give help for their community. These opportunities are supporting their cultural and social development.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has worked hard to deal with difficulties in the school's financial position and has helped to place the school on a more stable financial footing. They are also aware of how the resources allocated to those students entitled to the pupil premium are used and know that some of these students are not yet making enough progress. However, it has not always acted quickly enough to ensure that the performance management of staff and standards of teaching have been as effective as they should have been. During 2012, significant changes have occurred in the governing body. For example, a new Chair of Governors and Vice-Chair have been appointed. Their support for the headteacher has included the creation of better systems to improve the performance of teachers. Governors are also playing a more valuable role in supporting the work of the headteacher in raising standards. Governors are ensuring, for example, that a very clear link now exists between teachers' pay progression and performance. The governing body now ensure higher expectations exist throughout the school.

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	135651
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	406617

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	650
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Chudleigh
Headteacher	Trenica King
Date of previous school inspection	2 March 2011
Telephone number	01376 515756
Fax number	01376 502194
Email address	contactus@newrickstonesacademy.org

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