

# St Peter's School

St Peter's Road, Huntingdon, PE29 7DD

**Inspection dates** 29–30 January 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	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		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

- Teaching needs to improve. In too many lessons, students do not make sufficient progress because teachers do not demand enough of them.
- Students do not achieve well enough in mathematics. Although standards are rising, too few students make the progress expected.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Given their starting points, too many sixth form students do not achieve the grades that they should, particularly in Year 12.
- Senior leaders and managers have too positive a view of the academy's effectiveness and have not, therefore, moved quickly enough to bring about improvement.
- The governing body has not held the headteacher and senior leaders to account because it does not recognise the academy's weaknesses. Governors are ill-informed about students' progress and achievement.
- The academy has not taken advantage of its informal partnership arrangements to strengthen key aspects of its provision.

### The school has the following strengths

- Overall standards have risen impressively.
- The academy has successfully improved aspects of teaching and raised standards, particularly in English where achievement is good.
- Half of the teaching is good or outstanding.
- Students behave well and, in general, have positive attitudes to learning. The academy consequently enjoys a calm and friendly climate where students and adults clearly get on well.
- The academy's excellent support ensures that students feel safe and well cared for from the moment they start their transition to secondary school.

## Information about this inspection

- This two-day inspection was carried out with half a day's notice.
- Inspectors observed 48 lessons, taught by 48 different teachers, a few of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- A range of documentation was analysed, including that relating to safeguarding, students' progress, attendance, exclusions, behaviour, self-evaluation and systems for managing teachers' performance and improving teaching and learning.
- Inspectors took account of the online Parent View survey, for which there were 27 returns. They also analysed parental responses gathered by the academy.
- Inspectors took account of 74 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, nominated staff, several groups of students and three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.

## Inspection team

Paul Brooker, Lead inspector

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## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Peter's School opened as an academy on 1 September 2011. The conversion to academy status took place alongside the six other local secondary schools which have traditionally worked together in partnership as the Huntingdonshire Secondary Education Partnership (HSEP).
- When the predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2009, it was judged to be satisfactory overall.
- The academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- A large majority of students are White British and speak English as their first language. A few students speak English as an additional language, including an increasing minority of new arrivals from the European Union.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (the additional funding provided by the government to support particular groups of students, including those eligible for free school meals) is above average.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is above the national figure, as are the proportions supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- A small number of students attend alternative provision (education provided by other schools or colleges): 21 students from Years 9 to 11 attend the academy's own 'Inspire' provision; five Year 11 students attend the Alternative Curriculum Education Centre (ACE) in Peterborough on a part-time basis, and two are at the County School, the pupil referral unit in Huntingdon.
- The academy makes early GCSE entries in both mathematics and English.
- The academy meets government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

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

- Strengthen teaching, particularly in mathematics, so that students make better progress in their learning and achieve well, by:
  - using assessment information to set suitably challenging targets for every student
  - planning work that is demanding both in terms of the level of difficulty and the amount of work that teachers expect from all students
  - improving the quality and impact of teachers' marking
  - replicating the features of the best teaching.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how to improve the impact and effectiveness of the governing body. The academy should also ensure that governors:
  - have accurate and up-to-date information about the performance and progress of students at each key stage and in key subjects, including for particular groups
  - are provided with suitable support and training in handling assessment information and performance data so they can ask the right questions and hold the academy to account.
- Provide more focused and effective leadership by:
  - analysing more critically the academy's performance in key areas
  - strengthening the use of assessment data in school self-evaluation and development planning, with ambitious but realistic targets for improvement.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Good qualifications in a wide range of subjects enable the vast majority of Year 11 students to progress into employment, training and further education, and give sixth-form students the chance to get to university if they so wish. However, students' rates of progress are below average in mathematics and below the levels expected in the sixth form because of underachievement in Year 12. All Year 11 students in alternative provision successfully gained some qualifications in 2012 and completed courses in literacy and numeracy.
- Results in English are on a rising trend and, in 2012, exceeded national figures in terms of students' progress. Results in mathematics, on the other hand, were below the national figures in 2012, both for the proportion of A\*-C grades and in the proportion of students making the three levels expected progress from Key Stage 2.
- Inspection evidence confirms that students of all abilities make good progress in English, including in reading, and that standards are rising. The quality of learning seen in English lessons was consistently good, with a strong focus on literacy development. This is reinforced in some other subjects, such as music, but teachers generally do not do enough to improve students' writing. Evidence from academy assessment data and lesson observations indicates that progress is starting to accelerate in mathematics, but that results in 2013 will still lag behind national figures.
- The academy has a policy of early GCSE entry for the most able students in English in Year 10 and for all students for mathematics in November of Year 11. This approach has proved effective in enabling students to achieve the highest possible grades because they have the opportunity to re-sit the examinations at the end of Year 11.
- Sixth form students make reasonable progress in Year 13, but progress in Year 12 is generally at or below the levels expected. This pattern is borne out by lesson observations on this inspection. The quality of learning observed in sixth form lessons often required improvement because the pace of lessons was generally steady rather than rapid, and teachers had too few strategies to promote students' independence.
- The academy has achieved some success in 'closing the gap' for students who, nationally, perform less well. For example, students known to be eligible for free school meals, disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve a higher average points score than seen nationally. However, like their peers, apart from English they perform less well in key GCSE subjects, and in mathematics in particular.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good or outstanding. The academy has an overly positive view of the quality of teaching which, given that half of staff are on the upper pay scale, should be much stronger. In half of all lessons observed during the inspection, the pace of learning was too uneven for teaching to be judged good, including in the sixth form.
- In their planning, teachers do not make good enough use of student information, both generally and specifically. Too often lessons were pitched at a level that did not extend the learning of the students, because the planned work was not hard enough, either for the most able, or in some cases for the least able students in the group. This mismatch was evident in several lessons, but

particularly in mathematics.

- The academy can point to recent improvements in teaching which have been brought about through whole-school training and support for individual teachers. A good example is English, where teaching has been transformed and is now consistently good.
- Much of the day-to-day teaching is good. Teachers create a pleasant working environment in their lessons by nurturing positive attitudes to learning and encouraging students to participate, even when they lack confidence. For example, teachers use their interactive whiteboards well to structure the work for each lesson, to recap on prior learning and explain new ideas. Most teachers use questioning to involve students and build their understanding.
- The best teaching is outstanding because teachers capitalise on their positive relationships and match work perfectly to the ability of students in the group. For example, Year 11 students using sound engineering technology to edit their music production made excellent progress because the work was so carefully prepared and expertly managed. Central to the students' rapid progress was the way that they evaluated one another's work so they could modify their own and make improvements. Teaching also skilfully developed students' literacy skills and promoted their wider cultural development by extending their knowledge and interest in world music.
- Teachers' encouragement is reinforced by the positive tone of their marking, with regular comments such as 'well done'. Some marking, notably in English, is very effective because it highlights strengths and provides detailed guidance on how to improve. Too often, however, teachers' correction and marking are neither regular enough nor specific enough to have an impact on students' learning and progress. In some cases students cannot read or understand what teachers have written.
- In general, the individual needs of students are accurately assessed, so that the academy can provide suitable intervention and support. Sometimes, however, this is not the case, for example when students at an early stage of learning English are assessed as being academically weak.
- Out of class support is often highly effective, as shown by the accelerated progress of some groups. However, this does not extend to their mainstream lessons when specific support is not provided for individuals with particular needs, such as students with a hearing impairment, dyslexia or at an early stage of learning English. In some cases these needs could have been better met if support from the teaching assistant had been guided by the teacher, or if the lesson had been better prepared, for example, with key words or writing frames, or simply with careful seating plans or a bilingual dictionary.

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

- Parents, staff and students agree that behaviour is good. The academy successfully maintains a positive climate, built on good relationships and high quality support and guidance. St Peter's is consequently a friendly, calm, and well-ordered school.
- Transition arrangements are particularly strong. Year 7 students settle well, as do students who arrive at times other than the start of Year 7. High quality guidance and support encourage students to conform to the academy's high expectations.
- In lessons, students settle quickly and sustain their concentration well. Behaviour in most lessons was good or outstanding, and none of the lessons observed during the inspection was disrupted by inappropriate behaviour. Students say that this is typical. One strong feature is the

way that students readily work together and support one another. This was particularly the case in sixth-form lessons when students were working in pairs or small groups, for example, when solving trigonometric equations needed additional explanation!

- Central to the academy's positive climate is the way that students with challenging behaviour are managed and supported. Carefully tailored programmes are provided at the 'Inspire' centre, or alternatively, at the ACE provision in Peterborough or at the County School. These separate courses are carefully monitored to check that students attend well and feel safe, and ensure that students complete their education and have clear routes into training and employment after school.
- Students say that they like coming to school, but their attitudes to learning reflect the mixed quality of teaching. For example, some are quick to say that lessons are boring, while others enthuse about their teachers and subjects. Attendance is improving year-on-year, and is broadly in line with the national figure. Students are punctual to school and to lessons.
- Students are aware of different forms of bullying and say that incidents of bullying are rare. The academy is careful to record and address specific aspects of bullying, such as racism linked with new arrivals from Eastern Europe, cyber-bullying and the use of homophobic language. Students say that their own awareness of bullying is raised through assemblies and the work done in personal development lessons, and that this awareness helps them to feel safe.
- Students develop the personal qualities that prepare them well for adult life. They show courtesy and respect for one another, and take pride in their academy and their own achievements. Sixth form students are particularly positive about the academy and take very seriously their responsibilities as senior members of the school community.
- The academy's successful 'zero tolerance' of poor behaviour is balanced well by its support and intervention for students who struggle to cope. Levels of exclusion are low, and reflect the academy's highly inclusive ethos and the effective use of alternative provision to engage students.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- Senior leaders and managers are right to highlight particular successes, some of which are soundly based on the foundations of the predecessor school. Notable amongst these are the academy's settled and positive climate, and the fact that standards are rising in particular areas. However, the academy's self-evaluation places too much emphasis on these improvements, and does not focus sharply enough on student progress and achievement. Whereas the academy judges that achievement is good, inspectors judge that it requires improvement.
- Leadership and management, including governance and leadership in the sixth form, require improvement. Senior leaders have not acted quickly enough to raise achievement, and the governing body does not provide enough challenge in this respect. The academy's impressive performance in terms of average points scores at Key Stage 4 and rising standards at A level masks the fact that students do not make enough progress in key areas.
- The academy has a very clear and helpful teaching and learning policy which sets out unequivocally what is expected of a 'good lesson'. Senior and middle leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and can point to examples of how it has been strengthened by their guidance and support. The academy's system of staff appraisal is based on regular observations of teaching and, importantly, on assessments of students' progress in each class. Despite all of this,

inspection evidence indicates that the academy's assessments of teaching tend to be over-generous.

- Good middle leaders have, in some areas, significantly strengthened teaching, accelerated progress and produced a rise in standards, most obviously in English. Elsewhere, however, the drive to improve teaching and raise standards has been slower, including in the sixth form where teaching requires improvement. New leadership in mathematics is beginning to build a team of teachers who are working together effectively, the impact of which can already be seen in the improved results in this year's early entry GCSE mathematics.
- Surveys undertaken by the academy indicate that parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about its provision. A few responses on Parent View highlighted concerns about the quality of teaching, but most were largely positive. The academy works hard to engage all parents, including those that find this difficult, and the 'Inspire' centre is central to this success.
- The curriculum provides suitable balance to broadly meet the needs and aspirations of the students, and ensure equality of opportunity for all. It promotes students' positive behaviour and engagement and encourages them to succeed. However, this report highlights aspects of curriculum provision that need to improve. Short-term planning, drawn from schemes of work, is not sharp enough, particularly in regard to meeting students' individual needs, and too little attention is paid to developing students' literacy skills in lessons other than English.
- The academy's clear expectations help to positively promote the students' moral and social development. Opportunities for spiritual and cultural development also feature in the everyday curriculum, including guidance in assemblies and tutor time, and the academy provides a broad range of enrichment experiences that widen students' aspirations and promote their personal development.
- The additional government funding provided through the pupil premium has been allocated to secure the engagement and achievement of targeted students. Most is used to support the 'Inspire' provision which, last year, ensured that all its Year 11 students progressed into further education, employment or training from its programme. In addition, funds are sensibly allocated to ensure that students have equal access to the wider enrichment opportunities offered by the academy, for example trips, residential visits and additional music tuition.
- The governance of the school:
  - Governors are highly supportive and make regular visits so that they can keep up-to-date with developments and ask the right questions about the academy. They understand their responsibilities for safeguarding, they know about the quality of teaching, and, broadly, about the impact pupil premium funding and performance management and salary. However, their hard work and support do not extend as far as to challenge the academy's leadership because the governing body does not have an accurate view of students' progress and achievement. Governors are content that standards are rising, but are not clear about underachievement and do not have a strategy to address it. This shortcoming is due, in large part, to the failure of senior leaders to provide unequivocal information about the academy's performance. However, given that Academy Trust is responsible for the academy's performance and improvement, they need to have a much better understanding of each one. Although the academy is part of an informal partnership, there is little evidence that collaboration between academies has made an impact on the students' achievement at St Peter's.

## 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>	137248
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	402752

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1131
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	149
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mick Taylor
<b>Headteacher</b>	Val Ford
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	N/A
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