

Sarum Academy

Westwood Road, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP2 9HS

Inspection dates 27–28 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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

- Teaching is not yet consistently good enough to promote sustained good progress for all.
- The achievement of boys in English and mathematics is not as good as it should be despite recent improvements.
- In lessons where teaching requires improvement, pupils lose concentration and then their behaviour interrupts and slows learning.
- The governing body does not challenge the academy effectively about the progress made by different groups of pupils.
- In some lessons, teachers talk for too long and prevent pupils from sharing their ideas or discussing more difficult problems.
- Marking does not help pupils to recognise mistakes and how to correct them so that they can improve their understanding.
- The sixth form requires improvement. There is too much variation in pupils' achievement across sixth form subjects and between AS and A level.

The school has the following strengths

- The academy is well led and well placed to improve. The academy's leadership has a clear and determined approach to tackling weaknesses and underachievement.
- The academy tracks the pupils' achievements accurately and works well with pupils to ensure they meet their challenging targets.
- Staff performance is managed effectively. The governing body supports leaders well in dealing with weaker teaching.
- Attendance rates have risen sharply as a result of a determined and dogged approach to get poorly attending pupils into school.
- The curriculum meets pupils' needs well with a good balance of academic and work-related subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons, seven of which were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, one inspector undertook a learning walk, which comprised a number of short visits to lessons to see how well teaching meets the needs of lower ability pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Meetings were held with four groups of pupils, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for Salisbury Diocese and academy staff, including senior and middle leaders.
- By the end of the inspection visit, 11 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) had been collected and analysed. The academy’s analysis of its own parental surveys was also taken into account.
- Inspectors analysed 45 questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work, and looked at a number of documents, including the academy’s own data on pupils’ current progress, its self-evaluation, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, documents relating to safeguarding, and pupils’ work.

Inspection team

Karl Sampson, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Daniel Burton	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Pauline Robins	Her Majesty’s Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Sarum Academy opened in September 2010. It is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The academy's main sponsor is the Church of England Salisbury Diocese, working in partnership with Bath Spa University, Bryanston School and Wiltshire local authority. The academy has subject specialisms in mathematics and the arts.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and almost all speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional government funding for pupils in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and children from service families, is above that found nationally.
- The proportion of school action pupils (those who require extra help with their learning) is slightly below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Some pupils follow some of their courses with other educational providers or access individual work placements. Alternative provision used by Sarum Academy includes: Avon Valley College, Wiltshire College and Riverbourne Community Farm. The academy also works with the local Education Business Partnership.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement, including that in the sixth form, through teaching that is always good or better by ensuring that all teachers:
 - plan lessons that meet pupils' different learning needs, and adapt their teaching according to pupils' progress during the lesson
 - make sure that all lessons are demanding and well paced so that pupils are able to maintain good levels of concentration and behaviour throughout
 - improve pupils' literacy and mathematical skills and make sure pupils, particularly boys, improve the quality, quantity and presentation of their work
 - provide interesting and challenging lesson activities which enable pupils to discuss complex problems and explore intriguing questions
 - mark work to a consistently high standard, giving clear guidance on how to do better and developing a dialogue with pupils to help them understand how to improve.
- Speed up the progress made by boys in English and mathematics so that pupils reach or exceed the progress expected nationally in these subjects.
- Improve the impact of leaders at all levels by:
 - ensuring that planning for improvement and training focuses sharply on the progress of groups of pupils
 - undertaking an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement is too variable between subjects throughout the school. Progress in science has improved, but it requires improvement in English and mathematics. Boys do not make enough progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- When pupils join the academy, most of them are working below the level expected for their age. From these low starting points, their attainment has been rising faster than in other schools nationally over the past two years. The number of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C rose sharply during this period.
- There is a similar, though much slower, pattern of increase in the proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics, although this figure remains below the national average. The standards seen in lessons and pupils' books and the academy's latest analysis of current performance indicate that the overall trend of improvement is set to continue.
- The academy's policy on early entry for GCSE mathematics does not limit the potential of more able pupils. All pupils are entered early to raise their motivation and confidence and to increase their chance of success when they take the examination again in the summer.
- Disabled pupils and those identified with special educational needs typically make at least as much progress as other pupils. Strong leadership of this area over the past year means that pupils' progress is accelerating rapidly and securely, especially in Year 7 and Year 8.
- Strategies to improve pupils' literacy skills are well planned and are having a growing impact. Carefully targeted activities and extra help for lower attaining pupils are proving increasingly effective, for example in improving the accuracy and fluency of pupils' writing and reading. Year 7 catch-up premium funding has been well targeted to maintain the impact of this work.
- The gap between the attainment of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and those who are not, widened in 2012, as shown by average point scores. These pupils typically achieved one GCSE grade below other academy pupils in English and mathematics. However, the figures were adversely affected by a small number of pupils inherited from the predecessor school whose combination of unusually complex and demanding personal circumstances meant they found it difficult to access education. An analysis of attainment without these pupils included shows that any gaps in attainment were reduced.
- There is too much variation in achievement of pupils in the sixth form. Despite improvements at A level, pupils' performance at AS level was weak in 2012. Achievement in vocational courses was more consistent and pupils made good progress overall in their BTEC courses.
- Pupils who follow some of their courses with other education providers, for example to study countryside and the environment, typically gain from the experience. In many cases, their motivation and school attendance improve, and this helps them to achieve in other subjects.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently of the good quality needed to eradicate entrenched low achievement. There is very little outstanding teaching, although the proportion of good lessons has increased significantly in the past year.
- In the lessons that require improvement, teachers talk for too long. These lessons are often slow paced and teachers fail to check frequently how well the pupils are doing. Teachers do not adapt their planning during lessons to reflect individuals' different rates of progress. Consequently, learning slows and pupils can become bored and restless.
- Teaching is good when planning is based on a close understanding of pupils' starting points and learning needs, to ensure rapid progress for all.
- The most effective teachers know exactly where pupils are in their learning, understand when

they are ready to take the next steps and convey clearly how this can best be achieved. They are skilled in setting work at the right level so that pupils' progress is consistently good or better. For example, in a Year 10 history lesson, pupils enjoyed being challenged to think about the problems facing the Weimar government and the teacher skilfully supported them to justify their opinions. They delighted in working together and with the teacher and were totally engrossed throughout.

- Newly introduced techniques to support pupils' writing are used well in history and geography. Although they are improving, a number of pupils still struggle to present their work properly, using accurate spelling and punctuation. In particular, boys' writing is limited by their ability to construct an argument to show how much they know and have understood.
- Planned strategies to improve numeracy across the curriculum are very recent so it is too early for there to be a significant impact on pupils' progress in mathematics. Good support is provided from Bath Spa University through targeted teaching programmes to bolster the performance in mathematics of pupils in Year 9 and Year 11.
- Marking is inconsistent and not all teachers are using the agreed marking codes to support literacy. Most teachers offer positive comments and highlight what pupils need to do next. However, teachers do not follow up marking by insisting that pupils improve a specific aspect of their work, for example by re-doing a problem they found difficult or did not complete.
- Teaching in the sixth form requires improvement because it has not resulted in consistently good progress for pupils across the full range of qualifications. Sixth formers report that they receive good support from teachers, who provide extra help when needed. They also appreciate the good quality of relationships with staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- Despite significant improvement over the last year, further improving pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour and attendance, especially in Year 9, remains a priority.
- Teachers and pupils are unanimous in their view that behaviour is much improved. This view is supported by a big drop in exclusions and recorded incidents of poor behaviour, although these figures remain higher than those found in most schools.
- Attendance has risen sharply from well below the national average. Strong systems of support to re-engage pupils with learning are put in place if a pattern of absence or lateness occurs. The pastoral team has been particularly successful in improving attendance of pupils for whom it was previously very poor.
- Overall, pupils behave well around the school. Staff are visible around the site and this helps to maintain a calm and orderly atmosphere. Pupils and staff get on well together.
- Pupils were keen to share their views about different lessons with inspectors. They are critical of lessons that are uninteresting and where the teacher talks too much. In these cases, not all pupils give their full attention or behave in a way that supports learning.
- Pupils are aware of how to keep safe and secure, for example when using the internet. They report that bullying is effectively dealt with by staff. Where it does occur, pupils say that it is mostly related to minor disagreement and name-calling. An analysis of school records supports pupils' views. Most parents also feel that their children are kept safe and are well looked after.
- Teachers have increasingly high expectations with regard to pupils' behaviour, although not all teachers apply the academy's behaviour policies consistently. Some pupils felt that on occasion, some staff do not tackle pupils' use of unsuitable language, for example using the word 'gay' in an inappropriate way.
- The way in which staff support pupils who face problems or particular challenges is a strength. The academy can point to many cases where extensive care and support have helped pupils to overcome significant difficulties.
- Pupils in the sixth form play an important role in mentoring and supporting younger pupils with their reading.

The leadership and management **require improvement**

- The Principal is determined that all pupils will achieve regardless of their starting points, abilities or backgrounds. She has secured the support of governors, staff and parents in her drive for higher standards. From a low starting point, she has placed the academy in a good position to bring about the improvements required to become a good school.
- The Principal has put together an effective senior leadership team and introduced a rigorous performance management system. There are now clear expectations of the standard of teaching. Academy leaders have eradicated the weakest teaching but have not yet secured enough good or outstanding teaching.
- The systematic tracking of pupils' achievements is proving beneficial in informing leaders' plans to raise standards in all subjects and target those pupils in need of extra help. Lesson observation records, however, show inconsistency in the quality of written evaluations, particularly in terms of judging the progress made by different groups of pupils.
- The majority of staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire felt that academy leaders are doing all they can to improve teaching, but a few felt that more could be done to make better use of the strongest teachers to help others.
- Strategies to improve the consistency of teaching have proved effective, for example through the use of a common lesson planning format across the academy, an increased focus on strengthening pupils' literacy skills and improvements to the quality of teachers' questioning. However, these activities are not evaluated rigorously enough to judge the impact that they are having on the progress of different groups of pupils.
- Leaders and managers recognise that teachers' marking and pupils' presentation in books, including the detail and quality of boys' written work, are too variable. Strategies to raise teachers' and pupils' expectations about the quality and quantity of work expected have very recently been introduced but it is too soon to see a clear impact.
- The development of academic subjects, complemented by work-related courses, enables all pupils to achieve in ways appropriate to their individual strengths and interests. The extensive range of sporting, creative and academic activities makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The academy has developed good and productive partnerships with other schools, local businesses and education and care and health professionals to support pupils' learning and personal development. The academy's sponsors have been used well to support and improve teaching in English, mathematics and science.
- Leadership of the sixth form is now being strengthened through clearer systems of monitoring, evaluation and accountability. This is beginning to enable senior staff to evaluate the quality of all aspects of the sixth form, including teaching, more rigorously. Pupils now have better qualification choices to prepare them for the next steps of their education or employment.

The governance of the school:

- The governing body knows the strengths and weaknesses of the academy and fulfils its statutory duties with regard to safeguarding. Members support senior leaders' decisions in managing the performance of staff and dealing with weaker teaching. Governors recognise that achievement is not yet good enough and are passionate about driving improvement faster and more effectively. However, they are not asking enough searching questions of the academy's leaders about how well groups of pupils make progress in the main school and in the sixth form. For example, although governors know how the pupil premium is being used, they do not evaluate what difference it is making for disadvantaged pupils.

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	136183
Local authority	Non-maintained
Inspection number	399811

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Community
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	524
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon Chancellor Edward Probert
Principal	Ruth Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01722 323431
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