

Felixstowe Academy

Maidstone Campus, Maidstone Road, Felixstowe, IP11 9EF

Inspection dates 12–13 June 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

- In its first year as an academy, the standards students have achieved are low. A significant proportion of students did not achieve what was expected of them in 2012.
- The monitoring of students' learning and progress has been ineffective. This and some poor teaching has led to some groups of students underachieving.
- There is not enough good teaching. Some is inadequate. Expectations of students are too low. The slow pace of some lessons and activities that fail to interest of challenge students of different abilities prevents some of them from achieving well.
- Some subjects are not well led and their leaders are not held fully accountable.
- Some teachers do not set challenging tasks or check students' work in lessons, so some complete a minimal amount or present it poorly.
- Despite new procedures to reduce student absence, overall attendance remains low.
- Time provided for daily tutorials is not used well enough to promote positive attitudes towards learning or monitor students' progress.
- The merging of two schools into one, changes in leadership and poor communication with the local community has led to a difficult start and restricted the rate of improvement.
- Senior leadership is new; procedures to manage the academy's performance in all key stages including the sixth form are not firmly embedded.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders and governors are securing rapid improvements. They are demonstrating that they have the capacity to develop better quality teaching and raise achievement.
- Improved monitoring and intensive, extra provision for older students, including those in the sixth form, are enabling them to catch up on work missed and prepare them for examinations this year.
- The performance of teachers is now being managed much more effectively and this is leading to improvement.
- Pupils behave well around school, are respectful, polite and wear their uniforms with pride. They feel safe in the academy and say that behaviour has improved a lot this year.
- Results in most work-related courses are good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 47 lessons, of which eleven were carried out jointly with senior staff. In addition, inspectors made short visits to tutorial sessions.
- Meetings were held with the Principal and the Executive Principal, senior and middle leaders, three members of the governing board, four groups of students and a group of three parents.
- Prior to the inspection, there were 19 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). During the inspection, inspectors took account of a further 86 responses. Staff questionnaires were not distributed.
- The inspection team observed the school's work, scrutinised the school's data about students' achievement, examined records relating to behaviour and attendance, looked at documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the school's work, and scrutinised students' books in lessons.

Inspection team

John Mitcheson, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mina Drever	Additional Inspector
Clive Allen	Additional Inspector
Alan Jarvis	Additional Inspector
David Webster	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Felixstowe Academy opened in September 2011 following the amalgamation of Orwell High and Deben High schools. Since opening, some students and teachers have travelled between two sites for lessons. New buildings are due for completion in April 2014. At this stage, all students will transfer onto a single site.
- The overall effectiveness of both predecessor schools was satisfactory when they were last inspected by Ofsted. Deben High was inspected in March 2009 and Orwell High in October 2009.
- The headteacher of one of the predecessor schools was made substantive Principal of the academy in March 2013. An Executive Principal employed by the academy sponsor provides additional leadership capacity two days each week.
- The academy is sponsored by The Academies Enterprise Trust.
- Most students are White British. Very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of students eligible for the pupil premium (extra government funding to support particular groups of students) is below average.
- The proportion of students that are disabled or have special educational needs is above average. The percentage of these students supported at school action, school action plus or have a statement of special educational need is higher than the national average.
- The academy has 'The House', its own off-site inclusion base for vulnerable pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that none is inadequate and most of it is consistently good or better by:
 - raising teacher's expectations of what students are capable of achieving
 - planning learning that is sufficiently challenging, interesting and regularly inspires students to work hard
 - ensuring that all lessons are well-paced and time is used well to maximise students' learning
 - using the information teachers have on students' prior achievement to plan learning matched to their different abilities
 - ensuring that teachers make regular checks in lessons of the quantity of work completed by all students and that the quality of presentation shows that they take pride in their work.
- Raise achievement in all key stages, including the sixth form, by:
 - improving attendance to at least the national average so that many more students benefit from the improvements being made in the academy
 - embedding newly introduced procedures to monitor how well all individual students are progressing to eliminate the variation in the achievement of some groups, especially those who are disabled or have special educational needs and those eligible for pupil premium funding
 - making much better use of daily tutorials to provide students with time to catch up and complete homework and to enable tutors to monitor their progress and welfare more closely
 - providing students with consistently good teaching in all lessons.

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers, including the governing board by:
 - ensuring that new procedures to manage the academy’s performance become firmly embedded and lead to further sustained improvement
 - making all middle leaders fully accountable for securing rapid and sustained improvements in all subjects and all year groups, including the sixth form
 - raising awareness in the local community of the academy’s ambitions to provide the very best opportunities for young people in Felixstowe and how they intend to give all students the knowledge and skills they need for the next stage of their education, training or employment
 - programming regular meetings with students, parents and carers and other key stakeholders to galvanise their full support and consider their views on what else needs to be done to enable the academy to meet its aim of become outstanding by 2015.
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Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students in Years 10 and 11 joined the academy from their predecessor schools with skills in reading, writing and mathematics that were similar to national averages. The prior attainment of younger students in Key Stage 3 is below that found nationally.
- GCSE results achieved in 2012 were low. Students achieved better in mathematics than in English. The percentage attaining five or more C grades including English and mathematics was significantly below the national average. Far fewer students eligible for pupil premium funding achieved five or more C grades compared with other students in the academy. Students supported at school action and school action plus attained significantly less well than other students. The progress made by Year 11 students in English and in mathematics was much lower than expected. Results in most work-related courses were good because these courses matched the needs of those students who chose to study them.
- Decisive action has been taken to tackle this under-performance. Added rigour to the management of teachers' performance and increased accountability of leaders and managers has refocused staff on the need for immediate improvement. Systematic procedures to monitor students' progress in all year groups are enabling leaders and managers to gauge whether individual students are on track to meet the expectations of them. Regular assessments are helping to identify those who need more help to catch up, and which older students need intensive support and revision to make sure that they are suitably prepared for examinations this year.
- As a result of these actions, achievement is rising. Information gained from regular testing and checks of how well students are doing shows that many more of them are on track to attain five or more C grades this year, and that the percentage of students making expected progress in English and in mathematics is much closer to national averages. Senior leaders have engaged consultants and leaders from other partner academies to validate this data and they are confident that their predictions this year will be met. Most students are entered early for GCSE mathematics early in Year 11 but are expected to re-sit the following year to improve their grades. Alternative arrangements are made for a small minority of students to be educated at a nearby pupil referral unit and in the academy's own support unit. Senior leaders check that they remain engaged in education and pursue suitable awards in English and mathematics.
- In lessons observed by inspectors, the achievement of students varied considerably, depending on the quality of teaching they received. At times they made rapid progress and attained high standards, but this is inconsistent. Not all students were pushed hard enough to produce good quality work or were not challenged to extend their understanding. Some students were passive in lessons, often because tasks were too easy for them or they were not inspired to engage fully in learning.
- Most students in the sixth form continue with their studies into Year 13. Standards achieved in a range of Advanced level courses are better in Year 12 than in Year 13 but are broadly average overall. The small proportion of students choosing to study Level 3 vocational awards achieve above average standards. Students say that added rigour to target setting and the monitoring of their work is helping them to make better progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Systematic monitoring of lessons and regular scrutiny of students' work and performance data is providing senior leaders with a clearer view of where the strengths and weaknesses in teaching lie. The academy's most recent data indicates that teaching is improving. It has been judged good or better in the majority of lessons seen and senior leaders feel that most of the inadequate teaching has been addressed. Inspectors observed good teaching in a large number of lessons but mostly it required improvement. They also found very little outstanding teaching and despite decisive action to tackle it, some teaching is still inadequate.
- Overall, teachers' expectations of what students are capable of achieving are too low. Not all of them use the information they have about students' prior attainment to plan lessons well enough. In some lessons all students do the same tasks which are often far too easy and fail to stretch the most able. Some teaching is too dull and fails to inspire students to work hard to achieve their very best. Teachers do not make regular checks of students' learning in lessons, so some of them complete a minimal amount of work and take little care to present their work neatly. The quality of marking varies considerably. Not all teachers plan lessons that maintain the pace of learning or retain students' interest throughout the full 90 minutes allocated.
- Professional development for all teachers and further training tailored to the specific needs of staff has led to a higher proportion of good teaching. Where it is good teachers have the competence and confidence to set stimulating, challenging work. They insist that students apply themselves to tasks, and contribute during group work and teachers' questioning. They make learning interesting and enjoyable. For example, in a science lesson the teacher planned a range of different tasks including small group-work, practical investigations and time to postulate ideas and evaluate findings that motivated students to learn. In another lesson, students were shown how to research, find out for themselves and think creatively about topics that were quite new to them. This inspired them to work cooperatively and produce high quality work to share with their peers.
- Daily tutorial time is not used well enough to have a meaningful impact on students' learning. Younger students appreciate these opportunities to mix socially but older students consider them of little value. In tutorials seen by inspectors, tasks were superficial and too simplistic. Little was done to promote positive attitudes and behaviours for learning, or take time to review students' targets and their personal welfare. Students told inspectors that they feel that they get enough homework, but some parents who contacted inspectors would like them to receive homework more often.
- Observations of lessons in the sixth form showed mostly good teaching. Teachers' good subject knowledge was used well to plan suitable learning tasks. They managed small groups well, stimulating discussion and enabling students to work independently. Teachers ensure that students behave well and work diligently.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Two thirds of parents and carers who responded to the online survey (Parent View) disagreed that the school makes sure that its pupils are well behaved. However, inspectors found that, around school and in most lessons, students were respectful and courteous. Most of them behave themselves in lessons and develop positive relations with staff and their peers. When teaching is good they enthuse and respond well, but at times they disengage and show casual attitudes towards learning. Minor misdemeanours, such as chewing gum or using mobile phones in lessons, are not always tackled by teachers. A lack of challenge in lessons leads to some students becoming passive learners, and at times when they lose interest they misbehave. When

they finish work quickly and are not challenged further, they relax and chat with others.

- Students say that they feel safe and free from all forms of bullying. They respond positively to the rewards for good behaviour but older students feel that the sanctions for minor misdemeanours are too harsh. No students have been excluded permanently from the academy. The number of short-term exclusions has fallen to below the national average.
- Extensive pastoral care across both academy sites ensures that students are closely monitored and that they know who to approach if they have any concerns. Improved procedures to tackle persistent absence, including pursuing parents and carers to get their child into school more regularly, is leading to some improvement. However, overall attendance remains below the national average. Senior leaders acknowledge that more needs to be done to improve this.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The merging of two schools into one academy and students having to travel between two different sites for lessons is being managed effectively. However, staff and students are rightly eager to move to a single site. These difficulties, recent changes in senior leadership and a lack of regular engagement with the local community have all contributed to a difficult start for the academy. Managing these difficulties has restricted the capacity of senior leaders to secure rapid and sustained improvements in its first year. New appointments, particularly the substantive Principal, are providing greater stability for the academy and further capacity to make improvements.
- The Principal's evaluation is largely accurate. He knows the academy well and recognises most of its strengths and weaknesses. He has the full backing of the governing board and the vast majority of staff. Senior leaders are showing they have the capacity to lead major improvements to the academy but they need more time to demonstrate their full impact in securing its long-term success. Development plans rightly prioritise raising attendance and improving the quality of teaching so that most of it is consistently good. Daily tutorials are programmed to promote aspects of students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education, but senior leaders acknowledge that this is undermined when time is not used well and sessions are not planned effectively.
- Responsibilities to manage the performance of middle leaders, particularly some subject leaders and the head of the sixth form, are not firmly embedded. They are not being held to account for their role in making a significant contribution to the academy's drive to raise achievement. Improved procedures to monitor how well individual students are progressing and to eliminate the variation in the achievement of some groups of students are new and are working, but they are not firmly embedded.
- Additional funding provided through the pupil premium is being used effectively to give students extra provision to accelerate their progress in English and mathematics, provide them with mentoring and additional support, and provide basic equipment to help them learn. Average point scores data shows that gaps between their achievement and that of other students are closing this year. A newly appointed senior leader has taken full responsibility for students who are disabled or have special educational needs. She is ensuring that students are more closely monitored than they have been in the past and this is enabling them to make improved progress.
- Support provided by the sponsor, particularly by the Executive Principal, in instigating new

procedures to strengthen assessment and the monitoring of teachers' performance has contributed directly to tackling some of the major weaknesses that led to the academy's under-performance in its first year. The sponsor has been much less effective in winning the hearts and minds of the local community. There are some tensions in the local community that have not been fully resolved through regular dialogue. Senior leaders recognise that much more needs to be done to gain their full support to ensure that the academy fulfils its aim of providing all students with an outstanding education by 2015.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The members of the governing board are experienced, knowledgeable and wholly committed to making the academy a success. They understand their roles and responsibilities in supporting teachers, leaders and managers in their quest to deliver planned improvements. Training has given them a wider understanding of how to use data to hold senior leaders to account about the academy's performance. They recognise the heightened role they must play in challenging them further to raise the aspirations of students and parents and carers, and raise the expectations of all teachers. Governors have not implemented a coherent strategy to engage fully with all parents and carers, and foster strong links with local community partners. They make sure that policies are kept up to date and that students are kept safe but are not checking the single central register often enough. Nevertheless, arrangements for safeguarding are managed effectively and meet 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	137321
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	399871

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	11-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1499
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Robinson
Principal	Andrew Salter
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01394 282628
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Email address	asalter@felixstoweacademy.org

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