

Retford Oaks Academy

Babworth Road, Retford, DN22 7NJ

Inspection dates 25 – 26 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Despite improvements, not enough students make better than expected progress in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is good overall but not all students are fully challenged in lessons and students are not consistently provided with the advice they need to improve their work.
- The sixth form requires improvement. The progress made by some students is slowed because the courses they are studying are unsuitable for them.
- Students' literacy and numeracy skills are not developed consistently across all subjects and this hinders their progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, well supported by the Diverse Academies Learning Partnership and academy staff, are bringing about rapid improvement.
- Leaders and governors have a good understanding of how the academy has progressed and what it needs to do to improve further.
- There has been a strong drive to improve the quality of teaching, which now has many positive features. This demonstrates the capacity to improve.
- Staff establish positive relationships with students, which contributes towards their good attitudes to learning.
- Students attend regularly and behave well around the academy. They are safe, well-looked after and bullying is rare.
- Effective support systems are in place. These are particularly effective for vulnerable students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 35 lessons, of which four were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, groups of students, members of the governing body and representatives of the academy sponsor.
- Inspectors reviewed school documentation, performance data, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and they looked at samples of students' work. The school's central record of checks on staff was also scrutinised.
- Inspectors took into account the responses of 35 parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also considered the views of staff, including those expressed in 49 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Nigel Boyd, Lead inspector	Seconded Inspector
Beverley Mabey	Additional Inspector
Alan Lee	Additional Inspector
Renee Robinson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Retford Oaks Academy converted to become an academy on 1 April 2012. It is sponsored by the Diverse Academies Learning Partnership. When its predecessor school, known as Retford Oaks High School, was last inspected by Ofsted in March 2011, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Nearly all students are of White British heritage. Very few students are from ethnic minorities and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for children in care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children from service families) is close to the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Post-16 education is provided off-site at the Retford Post-16 Centre, jointly managed by Retford Oaks Academy, the Elizabethan High School, St Giles School and North Nottinghamshire College.
- A small number of students attend off-site provision for part of their learning. This is organised through North Nottinghamshire College.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further and so raise achievement by:
 - ensuring that teachers take more account of the different ability levels in their classes when planning and teaching lessons
 - increasing opportunities for students to develop and apply their literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects
 - improving the consistency of marking so that all students are clear about what they need to do to improve their work and providing opportunities for students to respond to the advice and guidance they are given by their teachers.
- Improve achievement in the sixth form by ensuring that a greater proportion of students are able to succeed on the courses they choose to study.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring monitoring activities undertaken by middle leaders are suitably rigorous and lead to the identified areas for development being fully addressed.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students enter Year 7 with attainment below that expected for their age. Although the proportion of students gaining five GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, was below average in 2012, measures of overall progress show that students made similar progress to those in other schools.
- Progress in mathematics was slower than in English in 2012. The proportion of students making expected progress in English was in line with the national average. In both subjects the proportion of students making better than expected progress was below average.
- Data provided by the academy, supported by the confirmed early-entry GCSE results of the current Year 11 and other inspection evidence, suggests that the current students are making more rapid progress than those from last year. The evidence clearly indicates that results are on track to be higher in the 2013 GCSE examinations than those achieved by students in 2012. This is a direct result of better teaching and improved attitudes to learning.
- The academy's own accurate achievement data also indicates that students are on track to make close to expected progress in both English and mathematics in the 2013 examinations. However, not enough students are on track to make better than expected progress.
- Boys attained less well and made slower progress than girls in 2012. However, as a result of actions taken by the academy, current tracking data suggests that this gap is closing.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers because of effective targeted support and a range of programmes that are accelerating their progress.
- In 2012, students known to be eligible for the pupil premium attained GCSE grades in English and mathematics that were below those of other students. The gap in attainment was equivalent to approximately half a GCSE grade in English and nearly two thirds of a GCSE grade in mathematics. These gaps are lower than seen nationally because the pupil premium funds are used wisely. The academy's data suggests that the range of strategies and interventions are closing the gap in the performance of students in mathematics, but not yet in English.
- The academy supports a number of students through the Year 7 catch-up funding, which is additional funding to support the attainment of students that join the academy with below the expected level in English and mathematics. The academy uses this funding to provide one-to-one tuition and to fund a reading catch-up programme. Students who are eligible for this support are making progress similar to their peers.
- The academy enters some students for GCSE mathematics early, but then continues to teach them mathematics if they do not reach their target grade. This strategy has been effective in raising attainment in mathematics.
- Students' literacy and numeracy skills are not developed systematically across all subjects and still require improvement. The policies to promote literacy and numeracy across the curriculum are at the early stage of implementation and, particularly in the case of numeracy, are not yet having the required impact in all subjects.

- The small number of students studying vocational subjects at the local college achieve well in their chosen courses. Provision for the students who go off site is carefully monitored to assure its quality and safety.
- Only small numbers of students continue their studies in the sixth form and their attainment in 2012 was lower than the national average. More recent evidence shows that, while some students are making expected and good progress, others are having difficulty coping with the demands of their courses as they are not best suited to their needs. Therefore, achievement in the sixth-form requires improvement.

The quality of teaching is good

- A large majority of teaching in the academy is now good or better, which is reflected in the improving progress students are making. Staff have responded positively to the challenge from senior leaders to improve the quality and consistency of their teaching.
 - Typically, lessons are well planned, teachers have high expectations and they prepare a wide variety of good quality learning resources. In these lessons teachers are very effective at capturing students' interest and engagement.
 - The best lessons are well structured to ensure that students have time working independently or collaboratively to reinforce their learning and develop their problem solving skills. Teachers set clear objectives for learning in each lesson, and these are often linked to GCSE grades or National Curriculum assessment levels.
 - Lessons are characterised by positive and supportive relationships between staff and students. Where teaching assistants are present in lessons, they mostly offer effective and well-targeted support.
 - In some less effective lessons teachers do not take account of the range of abilities in the class so that students, particularly those of higher ability, are not fully challenged. In a few lessons teachers do not target questions appropriately around the class to ensure the full engagement of all students in class discussions. In these lessons, the responses to class-directed questions are dominated by a small number of students while others are not sufficiently encouraged to contribute.
 - The quality of marking is inconsistent. Although there is a significant amount of high quality marking in some subjects, students are not always provided with the feedback they need to improve their work. Where helpful comments are provided, teachers do not always ensure their comments are acted upon by the students.
 - Teaching in the sixth form requires improvement to be good, reflected in students' average rather than good achievement.
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The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The academy is a harmonious environment with a positive and caring ethos. Attendance is good and students arrive at the academy punctually, ready to learn.
- Students are well-mannered and conduct themselves appropriately both in the classroom and around the site at social times. Behaviour seen in lessons during the inspection was good and students demonstrated positive attitudes to learning. A minority of parents who responded to the on-line survey expressed the opinion that this is not always the case, but no evidence was found on inspection to support this view.
- Most students have a high regard for their own safety and that of others in the academy. Good relationships prevail between students. Students report that bullying is rare and that staff deal with any incidents effectively. Students are helped by the academy to have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, how to guard against it and what to do if it happens.
- Academy records show an improving picture of behaviour over time. Rates of exclusion are below the national average. Students value the academy's behaviour and reward system and note its impact in promoting positive attitudes.
- Students say that any problems that occur are resolved quickly. High quality support is available from the Personalised Learning Team, which helps students to feel secure, particularly those deemed more vulnerable.
- Students readily participate in activities in and out of class. They have opportunities for their views to be heard and they take on leadership responsibilities enthusiastically.

The leadership and management are good

- In a short time, senior leaders and governors have successfully achieved creditable improvements in achievement, teaching and behaviour. Although achievement is not yet good, current improvements suggest that the building blocks are now firmly in place for students to make further improvements in their attainment and progress in the future.
 - These improvements have been very well supported by officers of from the Diverse Academies Learning Partnership, who bring considerable expertise and effective advice into the academy leadership team.
 - Staff are highly positive about the direction the academy is taking and the support and professional development they receive. Therefore, the vision for the academy is widely shared.
 - Leaders at all levels know what is working well and what is needed to improve further. Appropriate plans are in place to ensure the academy takes the next steps to improve achievement to good. Therefore, leaders demonstrate a good capacity for improvement.
 - Teaching is monitored regularly and supportively, and action put in place to develop teachers'
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practice in areas of weakness. Monitoring information is used in teachers' performance management is carefully monitored and there is evidence that leaders reward only the most effective staff and hold to account those who are underperforming.

- Subject leaders are increasingly taking greater responsibility for the evaluation process. However, some monitoring and evaluation activities are not sufficiently rigorous and do not lead to identified areas for development being addressed. For example, weaknesses in marking, identified by subject leaders through checking students' books, have not been fully resolved.
 - The curriculum offers a broad choice of courses at Key Stage 4, enabling students to choose options to suit their interests and aspirations. Students benefit from a range of after school activities and events. There is a comprehensive programme of visits and visitors to widen students' horizons. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall but planned opportunities to develop these areas in lessons are not always fully exploited.
 - Arrangements for safeguarding and child protection meet statutory requirements.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly experienced and ask searching questions, so are well-informed about the performance of the academy and have a good understanding of its strengths and areas requiring improvement. Governors manage resources well and regular training has strengthened their capacity to execute their duties effectively. They regularly visit the academy and call leaders to account for the effectiveness of their work. This has given them a better understanding of what happens at the academy. For example, governors are aware of the impact of pupil premium funding and the links between performance management and staff progression along the pay scale.
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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	137117
Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	408819

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	725
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	77
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ron Henderson
Headteacher	David Gibson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01777 861618
Fax number	01777 861620
Email address	office@retfordoaks-ac.org.uk

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