

# Folkestone Academy

Academy Lane, Folkestone, CT19 5FP

**Inspection dates** 25–26 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The numbers of students gaining good GCSE grades in English and mathematics has been low in recent years.
- Too few students who enter the senior academy with above average standards gain the higher grades of A\*, A and B at GCSE.
- Too many students who take GCSEs early in Year 10 are satisfied with their grades and do not strive to improve them in Year 11.
- Students in the senior academy who are eligible for the pupil premium make less progress in mathematics than other students.
- Students in the senior academy do not receive consistently good feedback about their work. They do not routinely respond to it, and too many are unclear about exactly what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers' use of questioning varies. Some teachers miss opportunities to help students to understand through careful use of questioning.

### The school has the following strengths

- Achievement in the primary academy is good and is improving. All groups of pupils are well taught and make good and sometimes outstanding progress.
- Pupils make rapid progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Strong leadership and teaching means that children get off to a good start in the academy.
- The sixth form is good because students do very well in Level 3 BTEC courses. Students in the sixth form are well supported and the numbers that go to university are rising.
- The academy offers a very good range of exciting extension activities. Pupils and students value these opportunities and they add significantly to their enjoyment of their education.
- Good leadership has led to recent improvements in teaching and achievement across the academy.
- Behaviour has improved and is good in the senior academy and outstanding in the primary academy. Pupils and students feel safe and enjoy coming to the primary and secondary academies.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 37 lessons. They also made short visits to lessons during which pupils' work was evaluated.
- Discussions were held with pupils in the primary academy, students in the senior academy, senior and subject leaders and two members of the board of trustees.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents, including a summary of the academy's self-evaluation, the academy improvement plans, the academy's own achievement data, attendance information and policies aimed at keeping pupils safe.
- The views of 41 parents and carers were analysed through the Parent View website.
- The views expressed by 96 staff who returned a questionnaire were also considered.

## Inspection team

Christopher Moodie, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Roger Waddingham	Additional Inspector
Helen Booth	Additional Inspector
Claire Austin Macrae	Additional Inspector
Alison Footman	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The academy is much larger than the average-sized school.
- There are fewer pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds than in most schools of this size.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care or with a parent serving in the armed forces.
- The academy meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The academy does not make use of alternative provision off site for any of its students.
- The academy is currently housed in two buildings on separate sites. In September 2013 the primary academy is moving into new accommodation on the same site as the senior academy.

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

- Improve teaching to consistently good so that:
  - students in the senior academy are provided with marking and feedback about their work which shows them exactly what they need to do in order to improve
  - questioning is well used in all lessons to check and strengthen students' understanding.
- Raise achievement by the end of Year 11 so that:
  - more students gain good GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics
  - more-able students consistently gain the higher grades at GCSE level
  - the academy's examination policy enables all students to achieve the very best grade that they can.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students enter the senior academy with standards that are consistently well below average. By the end of Year 11, standards in English and mathematics remained well below average in 2012. This meant that these students did not make good progress.
- The proportion of students making and exceeding expected progress is average in English in the senior academy. The same proportion make expected progress in mathematics but fewer make more-than expected progress. This pattern has been maintained for the current Year 11.
- Year 10 students have completed their GCSE and BTEC courses early this year. Some students who have achieved a grade 'C' pass are reluctant to continue studying their subjects next year as they are keen to begin alternative courses. This means that many students will not achieve the grades that they are capable of.
- More-able students in the senior academy do not make as much progress as their national counterparts. The majority of pupils in the current Year 11 who were above average at the end of Key Stage 2 will leave the senior academy with grade C in GCSE English and mathematics. This is set to improve in the current Year 10, with many more students on course to gain the higher grades.
- Analysis of the senior academy's assessment data shows that the current Year 11 are on course to do better in English and mathematics at GCSE level, closer to average. This improving trend is set to continue in 2014.
- Children enter the primary academy with skills and knowledge that are below those expected. They make good progress throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. As a result Year 6 pupils in 2012 left with standards that were average in reading, writing and mathematics. The picture is improving, and the academy's own assessments indicate that pupils in the current Year 6 have made more progress in reading and mathematics, and their standards are above average.
- The primary academy's relentless focus on reading has raised standards in all year groups. As a result, pupils read well and are enthusiastic about reading. The outcomes of the Year 1 reading check, which assesses how well pupils understand phonics (letters and the sounds that they make), were well above average in 2012, and have continued to be so in 2013. The school's strategies for promoting reading have made a significant difference to attainment.
- Students enter the sixth form with qualifications that are below average. They make nationally expected progress in A level courses, but progress is weaker on AS courses. Progress on Level 3 BTEC courses is very strong, with all students successfully gaining useful qualifications.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is similar to all others in both the senior and primary academies. Additional support is well organised and teaching assistants provide a good quality of help and guidance.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium in 2012 were one year behind other pupils in mathematics in the primary academy. The gap in English was equivalent to two terms. The academy's own data shows that the attainment gap is narrowing quickly for the current Year 6 group of pupils.

- Students eligible for the pupil premium in 2012 were two years behind other pupils in both mathematics and English in the senior academy. The gap in English has narrowed very quickly in the current Year 11, but remains in mathematics. This is because additional support has been focused on developing reading and writing skills.
- Pupils in the primary academy are keen to learn in lessons, and this means that classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils try hard and show determination when faced with difficult tasks.
- In the senior academy, lessons are well structured and the great majority of students have positive attitudes to their learning. The academy's extension activities, which are a strength of the work that they do, are designed to identify and encourage the strengths and interests of individual students.

### **The quality of teaching** requires improvement

- Teaching in the senior academy has not enabled all students to reach their full potential since the last inspection. In particular, students have not been challenged to achieve the higher grades at GCSE.
- The quality of marking is too varied. A small number of teachers in the senior academy provide little marking beyond a tick and an occasional comment. In stark contrast with this, some teachers provide very regular and detailed marking which pupils diligently respond to, showing that they understand what they need to do to improve.
- Where teaching is not yet good, teachers do not make frequent checks on understanding through careful questioning. This allows students who are not making progress to drift through a lesson without learning well.
- Good leadership has improved teaching in the senior academy in the last year. The academy's own data show the positive impact of this, as more students achieve good GCSE grades in 2013. The same data show that this improving picture is on track to continue.
- Much of the teaching in the senior academy is now good, and some has improved further and is outstanding. Lessons follow a clear plan and work and tasks are set that suit the students' needs. Where teaching is less than good, academy leaders are supporting its improvement.
- Teaching in the primary academy is good, and is sometimes outstanding. Teachers provide challenging work that is well matched to the differing needs of the pupils. They make good use of questioning and this helps them to check on how well pupils understand their learning. Teachers work well alongside teaching assistants to support all pupils to learn well.
- Teaching across the academy provides opportunities for learning which is exciting, different and motivating. For example, during the inspection Year 5 pupils hosted a visit from pupils from Boulogne-sur-Mer. They were very excited about showing them around Folkestone harbour and were very much looking forward to making their own return visit to France soon.
- The senior academy provides similar memorable experiences. For example, catering skills are combined with opportunities to develop key communication skills for the students in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form who cook and serve in the academy's 24-seat restaurant. One diner, in the catering trade himself, labelled this as 'the best restaurant in Folkestone, I can't fault it'.

- For the primary academy, reading is a top priority, and every pupil reads to an adult each day. There is a range of interventions to support reading, including a computer based programme that targets individual pupils at the exact level of their need. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 can also enter the 'Hogwarts Academy' to improve their reading and writing. This approach has led to outstanding progress for many pupils.
- Promoting reading and speaking have been priorities for the senior academy. Regular reading during tutor times is a feature of each week for all students. This has been supported by some visionary projects such as the academy's own radio station which requires students to prepare and broadcast to the town of Folkestone. In addition, the school is promoting the skills of public speaking through formal debating.

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

- Behaviour across the academy is good. Both buildings are calm and welcoming. As one student in Key Stage 4 said, 'The academy is an environment for learning'. This ethos is shared by the overwhelming majority of students and pupils in the academy, who are very positive about their experiences.
- Attendance and punctuality have improved across the academy in recent years. Rates of attendance are currently average.
- The behaviour of pupils in the primary academy is outstanding. Teachers and support staff work hard to model very positive behaviours and celebrate good behaviour wherever they see it. As a result, pupils are very aware of what excellent behaviour looks like, and almost all of them strive to behave as well as they can. From an early age, pupils are keen to come to school. This is typified by one grandparent who said that her grand-daughter was very disappointed to find that she couldn't go to school during the half term holidays.
- A revised behaviour policy was introduced in the senior academy last year to raise standards of behaviour. This resulted in a rise in the rates of fixed-term exclusion but this has now reduced as students have a much clearer understanding of what the academy expects of them. The rates of fixed-term exclusion in the primary academy have decreased annually since the previous inspection, and are now average.
- Students in the senior academy say that disruption in lessons is rare, and many struggled to identify where this might happen. They are confident that staff will deal well with any problems that do arise.
- Students have a good understanding of the different types of bullying that they might encounter. This includes cyber-bullying and the dangers of the internet. They say that bullying is rare in the academy, but that when it has occurred it has been addressed well by teachers or support staff. The pastoral system in the senior academy, which is well organised and efficient, provides every student with access to support and guidance.
- The academy is an important part of its community, and there are many initiatives to enable pupils and students to get involved and contribute to life in Folkestone and beyond, including a variety of fund-raising events. For example a dance event, which brought together over 100 dancers from local schools and colleges, was organised by the academy and staged in Folkestone. There are also many sporting opportunities, and the Rugby Academy is currently raising funds for a tour to South Africa. Sport is of equal importance in the primary academy, and it is supported by a rich range of visits, residential trips and visitors.

**The leadership and management are good**

- Leaders across the academy have had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and achievement. This has resulted in the very strong progress in the primary academy, and the recent improvements in the senior academy.
- The two principals share a common vision for the academy's future, placing it at the centre of its community and providing high quality experiences for all young people in the area. The full extent of this vision has not yet been realised, but the clear signs of improvement across the academy are testimony to the impact that it has already had.
- School leaders at all levels have developed good systems for self evaluation. As a result, they are aware of the academy's strengths and where it needs to develop further. They are seeking out new ways to encourage teachers to accelerate learning.
- The move to the new building in September has required leaders to plan very carefully. Parents have been kept in touch with developments through high quality, weekly newsletters.
- The academy has sought the views of parents about a range of matters through a detailed questionnaire. The responses, like those of the parents who responded to Parent View, were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the academy's work.
- The academy is very well managed. The great majority of staff are supportive of the leadership and understand and value the academy's ethos. Staff work well together and this enhances the sense of community that the leaders have worked to create.
- The school curriculum is diverse, engaging and has been designed to meet the needs and interests of all of the pupils and students. There are good opportunities to develop an understanding of social, moral, cultural and spiritual issues. A good example of this can be seen where pupils in the primary academy regularly discuss issues of philosophy, and where students in the senior academy readily engage in debates about a range of moral dilemmas.
- The options that students have are wide and they are often very keen to begin them. The impact of this is that some students in Year 10 are at risk of not gaining the best examination grades that they are capable of if they do not continue to study their courses into Year 11.
- School leaders have created an environment in which all forms of discrimination are challenged. Students and staff are confident that the academy promotes the equality of opportunity well. This is typified by the pastoral system in the senior academy, and the excellent relationships that staff and pupils have in the primary academy.
- Leadership in the sixth form is good. Students receive guidance about a wide range of choice about courses, and their progress is well monitored.
- The academy has developed a clear and straightforward system to manage the performance of teachers through pay-related progression.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The board of trustees provides appropriate levels of challenge and support for the academy leaders. The vision that they share with the two principals is ambitious and wide ranging. Their determination to succeed has been supported by the appointment of well-qualified and

highly experienced members of the board.

- The minutes of meetings of the board of trustees show that progress for different groups is analysed. Standards and predictions for Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 are monitored.
- The board of trustees knows about the quality of teaching, the way teachers' performance is managed, how good teachers are rewarded and what the academy does to tackle any underperformance.
- The board of trustees takes effective steps to make sure that pupils and students are safe and that recruitment procedures are robust. Statutory responsibilities relating to safeguarding are met; all staff have been vetted and are trained appropriately to keep pupils and students safe and free from harm.
- Financial management is overseen by the board of trustees. Detailed accounts of the academy's spending are provided and action points are clearly recorded. The impact of the spending of additional funding received through the pupil premium has been evaluated.



## 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>	135195
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	402675

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–19
<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>	1821
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	245
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The Board of Trustees
<b>Chair</b>	Roger De Haan
<b>Principals</b>	Sean Heslop and Helen Tait
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 March 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01303 842400
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