

# Strood Academy

Carnation Road, Strood, ME2 2SX

**Inspection dates** 26–27 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
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 good school.

- This is a thriving and rapidly improving academy. The Principal and his senior team are ambitious with a strong moral purpose. They are rightly proud of the improvements they have made to the academy and they are passionate about ensuring that all students are cared for and achieve well from good teaching.
- Students' results are improving. Progress from their starting points currently compares favourably with that of students in similar schools.
- The sixth form is good. A varied range of subjects and courses enables students to make good progress and be well prepared for the next stage in their education. Numbers of students applying for university courses are increasing.
- Teaching is typically good. Teachers benefit from high-quality training and valuable feedback about their work.
- Behaviour is good and improving. Students are polite and proud to be part of the academy. The academy is a welcoming, safe and friendly place.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress and catch up with their peers. Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium are supported exceptionally well and achieve good results.
- The academy is forging strong links with the local community and is making a positive contribution to raising aspirations for students and parents.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A minority of teaching requires improvement. In some lessons, work is not at the right level to challenge all students.
- Some students do not make enough progress in mathematics.
- Students do not have enough opportunity to develop better skills in speaking and writing across all subjects.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons, including 14 jointly observed with senior leaders. They also made some short visits to lessons.
- Inspectors observed registration time, assembly, break times and lunchtimes. They looked at students' work and listened to students reading.
- They also visited the academy's alternative provision at a local youth centre and made a visit to the academy's annual sports day at a local athletics stadium.
- Inspectors met with the Principal, head of school, senior and middle leaders and groups of teachers.
- They met with the Chair of the Governing Body and a governor.
- Inspectors took into account 52 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 78 responses to the paper-based staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors checked the academy's records of students' attainment and progress, previous and current figures for attendance and exclusion, behaviour logs, safeguarding and child protection records.
- They also evaluated the ways in which the academy checks the quality of teaching.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the academy's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

## Inspection team

Janet Pearce, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jane Ladner	Additional Inspector
Tomris Ibrahim	Additional Inspector
Edwin Powell	Additional Inspector
Louise Lee	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Strood Academy opened in 2009 as a co-educational 11–18 school, following the closure of Chapter Girls' School and Temple Boys' School. In September 2012 the academy moved into new purpose-built premises.
- Strood Academy is larger than the average secondary school. The academy is oversubscribed for the September 2013 intake.
- The academy is sponsored by the University for the Creative Arts and Medway Council.
- The academy serves the local area, although some students in the area attend selective grammar schools.
- Most students are White British with a small proportion of students of Indian British origin. A small number of students speak English as an additional language.
- Around a quarter of the students are disabled or have special educational needs. The proportion of students supported at school action is above average, as is the proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority is above average. These students are supported through additional pupil premium funding.
- The academy meets the current government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A few students attend the academy's alternative provision programme called Springboard.

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

- Make all teaching good or outstanding by:
  - ensuring that in all lessons work is at the right level for everyone and that all students, including the more-able, those disabled and those who have special educational needs, are fully challenged
  - making sure that students are always given opportunities to act on the advice and written feedback of their teachers
  - insisting that key principles of improving students' reading and writing are applied consistently.
- Secure consistently good or better progress in mathematics for every student by:
  - ensuring that teachers consistently apply the same high standards when planning lessons and marking work
  - providing exciting and inspiring activities and resources that will interest and challenge students.
- Improve students' speaking and writing skills across all subject areas by giving students more opportunities to practise their spoken English skills and to develop fluent extended answers.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the academy with starting points that are well below the national average. They go on to achieve GCSE results that are below the national average, but these are improving and catching up to national standards. Students' average points scores, based on all their GCSE results, have risen rapidly over the last three years and continue to be on an upward trend.
- Since the academy opened in 2009 the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE grades at A\* to C including English and mathematics has more than doubled. There was a dip in results in 2012; mathematics results in particular were disappointing. Swift action was taken and gaps in students' understanding have been closed. The academy is on track to improve overall results this year.
- The academy's records of current progress show that students in all years from all ethnic groups are making expected levels of progress that compare favourably with those of students in similar schools. Years 7 and 8 in particular are catching up well and achieving more than the expected levels of progress. The academy's challenging target that students will make four levels of progress is having a significantly positive impact on teachers' expectations and students' results
- The large numbers of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium make good progress. Their average points scores, based on their GCSE results in English and mathematics, show that these students are catching up with other students both in the academy and nationally.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs also achieve well and make as much progress as other students in the school.
- Students who attend alternative provision off-site make good progress in those courses, and also in English and mathematics.
- Students join the sixth form with below-average GCSE results. The academy checks their progress early and ensures they are on the right course for their abilities. Students' results for vocational and A-level courses are improving and they make good progress.
- The academy enters more-able students early for GCSE mathematics, but if they do not achieve their targets they retake the examination in Year 11. Arrangements are helpful to more-able students. All students are given the opportunity to retake mathematics if they can improve their grade and they also continue their mathematics studies in order to ensure that they are well prepared for the next step in their education. However, not all students make consistently good progress in this subject.
- Students read fluently and accurately. They enjoy reading for pleasure and make the most of opportunities provided to help them with their reading.
- Students are not always confident or fluent in discussion and when answering questions in lessons.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is good and is improving quickly as a result of highly effective monitoring from

academy leaders, helpful training for teachers and rigorous management of performance.

- At the heart of the most successful lessons is the excellent relationship that students have with their teachers. Students want to do well; their teachers are dedicated and generous with their time. Students feel secure because their teachers have established orderly routines and made their high expectations clear.
- In the best lessons, students are given opportunities to work together collaboratively. They are used to evaluating and assessing their own and each other's work. They have a good understanding of their current levels or grades and they generally know what they need to do to improve and get to the next level. Students appreciate how much their lessons have improved since the academy opened and since the previous inspection.
- The academy provides highly effective programmes to help students catch up with their reading and writing. Strong English teaching and reading programmes have ensured that students feel confident when reading aloud or having to work independently, but these programmes are not always applied equally well in all subjects. The library is at the centre of the academy and reading is promoted widely.
- Teaching assistants are used effectively to encourage students to work independently and support learning. The academy has invested strongly in developing the skills and expertise of teaching assistants and they are given challenging performance management targets.
- Since the previous inspection, the academy has done much to improve marking and the quality of teachers' feedback. Teachers mark students' work regularly, set challenging targets and provide useful feedback. However, students are not given enough opportunity to act on their teachers' advice. Some students do not take pride in the neat presentation and organisation of their work.
- A minority of teaching does not take enough account of students' abilities. In a few lessons, the work is not at the right level for all students in the class and the resources provided are not helpful.
- Some teaching in mathematics misses opportunities to interest students and deepen their understanding. The academy has already taken some effective action to address this through a highly successful 'carousel' programme. Students receive specific help in areas they find difficult in order to move on to the next stage in their learning.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to develop as confident, articulate speakers, using spoken language to explore ideas and prepare for writing tasks.

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

- The academy is rightly proud of the way students are cared for and known as individuals. Relationships between staff and students are warm, respectful and create a welcoming atmosphere. The structure of discrete colleges within the academy has been extremely effective in helping to create a sense of community.
- Students told inspectors that behaviour had improved greatly since the previous inspection. They said: 'Even though there are a number of rules, it has helped the stability of the academy.' Students are proud of their surroundings and conduct themselves in a calm and orderly manner.

- Students have many opportunities to be involved in enrichment activities to enhance their personal development and leadership skills. During the inspection, over 600 students participated in sports day, demonstrating outstanding behaviour and teamwork. Students not participating actively in sports worked extremely well together in mixed age-and-ability groups, gaining new knowledge and practising a variety of reading, writing and practical skills.
- Good attendance is a high priority for the academy and has improved since the previous inspection. Overall attendance is, currently, above average and students who follow alternative courses off-site have also improved their attendance.
- Students are aware of the different types of bullying. The academy takes bullying extremely seriously and investigates every reported incident. Students feel confident that the academy deals effectively with bullying or any other concerns they have.
- Students feel very well supported and safe in the academy. They enjoy being in the new building and take care of the environment.
- Students behave well in lessons when the teaching is good. Any misbehaviour is dealt with effectively. The academy has introduced very successful approaches to dealing with disruptive or inappropriate behaviour, including the 'exit room'. This has had a very positive impact on behaviour, punctuality and reduced the number of fixed term exclusions.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- A strong sense of purpose and drive for improvement are at the heart of this academy. The Principal and his senior team lead by example: they are highly visible, energetic and determined. Their commitment to students has been a powerful influence on all other staff. Morale is high and staff share the senior team's ambition for further improvement.
- Ambition and determination are supported by excellent systems to track students' progress and check the quality of teaching. Academy leaders expect nothing less than good or better teaching and they take immediate action if teaching is less than good. A wide range of training and professional development is provided for all staff, including opportunities to study for a master's degree in education.
- Teachers have challenging targets to improve results for their students and they are not rewarded with pay increases if their students do not do well.
- If students do not make enough progress, quick action is taken to identify what they need to do to improve and they are given extra help to catch up. The range and quality of extra support from teachers and teaching assistants contribute greatly to the academy's success.
- The academy benefits from strong support from the sponsor, the University for the Creative Arts.
- Academy leaders have made good decisions about the range of subjects and courses offered at GCSE and in the sixth form. Students are able to choose from a wide selection of academic and vocational courses that prepare them well for the next steps in their education.

- Students who study alternative courses off-site attend well and make good progress. Their progress and attendance are monitored closely and as a result, they are successful. Arrangements for the health and safety of these students meet all statutory requirements.
- The academy's use of the pupil premium funding and the Year 7 catch-up premium has resulted in better progress and improved self-confidence for eligible students. Extra lessons, specialist staff, a summer school, tablet computers and school visits to raise aspirations have all contributed to the success of these students. The academy's system of matching support to the needs of the students and then checking and evaluating their progress is exemplary.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are catered for extremely well. The academy provides a specific teaching group for those students who find working in the main school difficult. Students are supported and helped to catch up so that they can join regular classes and be successful.
- Safeguarding and child protection meet all statutory requirements. All academy staff demonstrate an impressive commitment to the safety and well-being of students.
- The local authority has not been involved in helping the academy to improve over time. Medway Council is a co-sponsor of the academy and is represented on the governing body. The local authority is effective when supporting the academy in its work with families and raising aspirations for students whose circumstances make them vulnerable, but has not been influential in improving the quality of teaching or increasing rates of progress. The Principal, governors and academy leaders are not confident that the local authority has sufficient resources to improve or challenge any aspects of the academy. Academy leaders have driven all improvements to the academy themselves, through alternative networks.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body shares the Principal's ambition to improve the academy and raise aspirations for the community. Governors have a good knowledge of the priorities for improvement and the rates of students' progress. They work professionally and openly with academy leaders, posing constructively challenging questions. Governors have a range of skills and backgrounds, including education, and many have useful knowledge of the local community. They are well informed about the work of the academy because of the thorough, detailed and honest reports from the Principal and his team. Governors are fully involved in the Principal's decisions about teachers' pay progression and know what the quality of teaching is. They ensure that the management of staff performance is effective. They ensure that the financial management of the academy is secure and that additional funding, such as the pupil premium, is used effectively to improve results for those students eligible for extra help.

## 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>	135964
<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	422246

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>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<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>	1365
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	218
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mark Hunt
<b>Principal</b>	Richard Hart
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 March 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 717121
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