

Bishop of Rochester Academy

Magpie Hall Road, Chatham, Kent, ME4 5JB

Inspection dates 27–28 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

- Although achievement overall is rapidly improving, this is not true for students eligible for free school meals and those who need extra help with their work, whose progress is too slow.
- Teachers' use of students' assessment information to plan and guide their lessons is inconsistent, resulting in not enough teaching that is good or outstanding.
- Despite regular marking across all subjects, not all of it helps students know what they need to improve.
- Sometimes, teachers fail to monitor students' progress effectively in lessons, resulting in too much time being spent on one task. When this happens, students become bored or distracted and their learning suffers.
- Subject and pastoral leaders are not fully exploiting the excellent information systems available to them to pick up and intervene effectively when weak teaching affects students' attendance, behaviour and achievement.
- Teachers' application of strategies to improve students' literacy skills is too variable across subjects and year groups.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting principal is an excellent role model. She sets extremely high expectations of everyone and is widely respected by staff and students alike.
- Governors and sponsors have a clear understanding of the strengths in teaching and what still needs to be achieved. They provide good challenge and support for the acting principal and other leaders.
- Systems to support teachers and call them to account for the quality of their teaching are thorough. As a result, achievement and teaching have improved from a very low base.
- Students are generally polite and well behaved. They are very positive about their 'new school' and are proud to belong here.
- The sixth form is good. It is rapidly expanding the courses on offer.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 33 lessons taught by 32 teachers; of these, four were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. A number of shorter visits were also made to lessons.
- Meetings were held with students, school staff, including senior staff, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and representatives from the academy sponsors.
- There were no responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), but inspectors took account of the 234 responses to a very recent parent questionnaire that the academy’s leaders had conducted.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including students’ books, the improvement plans, current assessment information and the school’s evaluation of how well it is doing.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school’s view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Lesley Farmer, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Roger Garrett	Additional Inspector
George Richard Rayner	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Jones	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Bishop of Rochester Academy is an average-sized secondary school, set within a selective context.
- The academy opened for the first time in 2010. Prior to this, there were two predecessor schools which amalgamated to form one single institution.
- There have been three principals since the opening of the academy in 2010. The founding principal left at the end of the first year. An interim executive principal assumed temporary leadership from April 2011 to April 2012. A substantive postholder, who took up post in April 2012, left the academy in May 2013.
- The acting principal was appointed five weeks before the inspection from her substantive position as vice-principal.
- At the time of the inspection, staff and all students with the exception of Year 10 were in their fifth week in the new buildings. Year 10 was being taught on the original 'West' campus. This year group is scheduled to move across in July 2013.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children looked after by the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families, is above the national average.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportions of disabled students or those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action or action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are above average.
- A very small proportion of Year 10 and 11 students attend alternative courses with the Medway Education Business partnership.
- The school 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?

- Increase the proportion of good teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information effectively to plan work which both matches students' needs and challenges them all at an individual level, especially those eligible for free school meals
 - developing teachers' skills to check progress in lessons and adjust their plans so as to maintain students' motivation and engage them fully in their learning
 - strengthening the marking policy further so that teachers are required to mark students' work more consistently, providing helpful comments on how to improve and time in lessons to act on the advice given
 - developing teachers' skills to promote positive attitudes to learning in students at all times.
- Improve achievement for all students by:
 - strengthening the ongoing work to secure better rates of attendance for all students, particularly those eligible for free school meals or in need of extra help with their learning
 - making reading and writing a key priority in all lessons across all subjects.
- Strengthen the capacity of subject and pastoral leaders by:
 - developing their ability both to analyse why teaching requires improvement when it does and

to communicate this effectively to teachers concerned, so that they in turn know precisely what they need to do in order to improve their teaching

- requiring them to routinely monitor and analyse students' assessment and other academy performance information in order to identify links between achievement, teaching, attendance and behaviour, so that follow-up action with individual students and/or teachers is both timely and fully effective.
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Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In 2011, from starting points significantly below average, students made inadequate progress, gaining GCSE results which were far below average. However, the current picture is very different. As a direct result of leaders' decisive actions to improve teaching, and support for those lagging behind, results improved significantly in 2012. Current students' progress is better still, particularly in English and mathematics, and across all year groups.
- Achievement in lessons is variable. It is consistently better in sixth form lessons. In other year groups, there is much evidence of good achievement, but it is less consistent because the quality of teaching varies across and within subjects.
- Academy leaders took a conscious decision to enter students early for mathematics and English for the first time in 2011. The rationale behind this was to build students' confidence in both subjects. This strategy has served students well, with significant improvements in progress from starting points secured in both subjects.
- Students eligible for free school meals and others eligible for pupil premium funding achieve less well than non-eligible students. In 2012, the gap in achievement in English and mathematics between eligible and non-eligible students increased, with those eligible achieving on average a GCSE grade lower than those of non-eligible students in both subjects. However, inspection evidence points to a narrowing of this gap in 2013 and beyond.
- The achievement of students who speak English as an additional language is better than that of their peers within the school. This is because leaders have ensured that they are effectively supported to secure good proficiency in English.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are making better gains in their learning as a result of stronger leadership and more-effective additional support in lessons. However, there remains some variability in the support provided by additional adults in lessons, of which leaders are aware.
- A range of effective strategies support the development of literacy skills which are very low on entry to the academy. Specific programmes are showing some good outcomes, for example in raising the reading ages on entry of a significant proportion of students in Year 7. However, the whole-school strategy is not yet making enough impact on students' writing and reading.
- Students who attend off-site provision are carefully monitored and achieve well. This is because the courses offered are carefully selected to meet their needs well.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has greatly improved from a very low base in 2011, when achievement was significantly below the national average and too much teaching was inadequate. However, it still requires improvement because inconsistency remains, particularly in the ways in which teachers plan and execute their lessons.
- Teachers invariably know students well and are able to identify those in their classes with particular difficulties or who are vulnerable to underachieve. In the best lessons, these students' needs are well met; teachers provide additional help or activities to support them, they monitor their learning effectively and their progress is good. However, this positive picture is not consistent across the academy.
- Not all teachers ask probing enough questions or plan interesting activities that will inspire or motivate students.
- Students' work is regularly marked and the academy marking policy is in evidence across all subjects. However, the quality of feedback on how or what to improve is very variable. Moreover, not all teachers provide time in their lessons for students to act upon their advice.
- Some teachers do not check on students' progress enough in lessons. Where this is the case, the

pace of learning slows and students become inattentive.

- Teaching in the sixth form is more consistent and effective. Teachers have good subject knowledge, marking is thorough and students feel well supported.
- Support provided by additional adults sometimes results in good teamwork that supports better progress for students who need extra help. However, this approach is not yet consistent across the academy.
- Leaders have used the pupil premium funding to pay for a range of additional support including Year 7 literacy catch-up and one-to-one tuition. These strategies are set to continue next year. There are many instances where this has increased attendance and improved behaviour and achievement. However, not enough has been done to evaluate the impact of the strategies on students eligible for free school meals or to see if these students are benefiting from top-quality support and teaching.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- Behaviour and safety have improved considerably since the opening of the academy. However, behaviour is not yet good because rates of attendance for some students, especially those eligible for free school meals, are below average. Equally, exclusion rates, though significantly reduced, are still high.
- Students say they feel safe in the academy and are supported well. The recent academy survey of parents' and carers' views suggests that their parents and carers agree. They fully appreciate the new building and take great pride in it. One student said it had 'changed his life'. Others expressed disbelief that such a well-equipped facility could be for them.
- In lessons and around the site, behaviour is calm. Students are polite and keen to learn, and arrive punctually to lessons. This has not always been the case.
- All students assert that behaviour has significantly improved since the academy's first year. They attribute this to leadership in which they trust, better teaching, clear rules and non-negotiable sanctions that teachers now carry out. Students welcome this approach and feel that lessons are now far more conducive to good learning.
- The chaplain is a source of inspiration for all students. His promotion of self-belief and self-respect challenges students to reflect on themselves, other faiths and cultures, and reminds them of the values that hold true for everyone.
- The academy has good systems to support students who have difficulty managing their behaviour. Effective links with external services, and school-based support offered in 'Love to Learn', have resulted in many students re-engaging with education.
- Incidents of bullying have reduced. They are now logged, monitored and analysed. In the first year of the academy, this was not the case. All students point to improvements in this area. Their awareness of the types of bullying that can occur is strong and they are now fully confident that if an incident arises it will be dealt with effectively.
- The behaviour of the small number of students who attend the off-site provision is good.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Senior leaders and governors share a realistic view of the strengths and weaknesses in the academy's performance. They have brought about rapid improvements from a low base since the academy's first monitoring visit, especially in overall achievement and behaviour. However, leadership and management are not yet good because improvements to teaching are not yet underpinned by proven leadership at subject or pastoral level.
- The acting principal has already gained the respect and commitment of the student and staff community through her track-record as vice-principal. As acting principal, she is determined to build on the improvements already secured, so that no ground will be lost. Students attest to her

uncompromising, but fair, approach and staff are firmly behind her.

- With the move from two sites onto one, senior leaders and governors have restructured, resulting in many staff leaving their posts at the end of the summer. Consequently, several leaders are either new in post, or new to their responsibilities for which they will, in future, be held to account. It is therefore too soon to judge the impact of some of these leaders.
 - Senior leaders have set up excellent information systems to enable subject and pastoral leaders to monitor students' achievement and make connections between their behaviour, attendance and the quality of the teaching they receive. However, not all middle leaders are using these to maximum effect.
 - Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching routinely. Joint observations conducted with inspectors affirm their judgements. There is good evidence too that their targeted support and coaching has helped teachers improve their practice. However, subject leaders' skills to diagnose how teaching needs to improve within their departments are less well developed.
 - The academy offers a good and expanding range of academic and vocational courses which are increasingly well matched to the abilities and needs of its students. Other opportunities such as Saturday school and trips abroad provide well for the development of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Some courses, such as Latin, have only been introduced in September 2012 and have met with great interest and enthusiasm from students.
 - Equality of opportunity is at the heart of what leaders and teachers set out to achieve. Discrimination is not tolerated. This was exemplified in an excellent Year 9 religious studies lesson, in which the teacher skilfully exposed students to some of their own prejudices while giving them an opportunity to reflect and reconsider in the light of a well-chosen video extract of an interview with a Second World War asylum seeker who had survived the holocaust.
 - Systems for managing teachers' performance are thorough and fully sanctioned by governors. No teachers progress through the pay scale unless their students achieve well. Teachers whose performance is weak are either helped to improve or leave.
 - As a sponsor, the local authority is represented on the governing body. A local authority school improvement adviser works directly with the governors and the acting principal to monitor progress and offer necessary challenge. While helpful, this input has served mainly to affirm actions already agreed at a senior level. Leaders do not source improvement services from the local authority but instead draw upon programmes provided by one of the other sponsors, Christ Church Canterbury University, and other national providers. This is because they consider local comparisons used widely by the local authority to be insufficiently challenging. Instead, they prefer to use national comparisons against which to measure their success.
 - Safeguarding arrangements meet all statutory requirements.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are ambitious for the academy and have an open and candid relationship with the acting principal and her team. They are fully informed of teachers' performance management and support the acting principal's decisions about awarding or withholding pay awards. They have also backed the necessary actions to improve teaching, including disciplinary and dismissal proceedings. They know how the academy is performing compared to other schools nationally and what still needs to be improved, including the impact of pupil premium funding. They have undergone training in data interpretation and take their accountabilities for securing further improvements very seriously.
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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	136108
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	399804

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Voluntary aided
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	965
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	94
Appropriate authority	The proprietor
Chair	Brigita Amey
Principal	Kuljit Rahelu
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01634 303005
Email address	office@boracademy.org

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