

# The Voyager Academy

MountSteven Avenue, Walton, Peterborough, PE4 6HX

## Inspection dates

3–4 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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		Requires improvement	3
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

- There is not enough good and outstanding teaching. Work given to students is not always pitched at the right level. Occasionally, students are not actively involved in learning.
- Students do not always respond to teachers' marking in their next and subsequent work.
- Although achievement is improving significantly this year and examination results have risen substantially year by year, not enough students make better than expected progress in English and mathematics.
- The gaps in attainment between students eligible for free school meals and their peers, although narrowing, remain wide.
- Some students lack the self-discipline to show good behaviour outside lessons.
- Some students do not attend regularly enough. This means that they are missing valuable learning time.

### The school has the following strengths

- The Principal knows exactly what she wants to achieve. All leaders, including governors, are steering a strong trend of improvement determinedly.
- Leaders know about teaching strengths and weaknesses and are increasingly successful in using highly effective practice to improve teaching quickly.
- The sixth form is good. Students achieve well because of good teaching and leadership.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs and students who speak English as an additional language make good progress.
- Students are positive about learning and say that they feel safe in the academy. The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very positive.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 50 lessons, observing 48 teachers and some other adults. Eleven lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders. Inspectors watched students in the playground and around the academy, and sampled their work.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, other leaders, three members of the governing board, including the chair, and five groups of students.
- Inspectors took into account 60 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and surveys carried by the academy itself of parents' views.
- Inspectors looked at the academy's work and a range of documentation, including the academy's own analysis of its strengths and weaknesses and its improvement plan, and information about students' attainment and progress. They also looked at records relating to aspects of students' behaviour and safeguarding, and at teachers' planning.

## Inspection team

Dilip Kadodwala, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julia Morris

Additional Inspector

Kevin Harrison

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Bob Roberts

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Hermione Horn

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## Full report

### Information about this school

- The academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The academy opened in September 2011. It is sponsored by the Comberton Academy Trust. It has specialism in the arts and media.
- Around a half of students are from White British backgrounds. Other students come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds; the largest proportion is of Pakistani heritage. Just over a third of students speak English as an additional language and around 11% per cent are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding which is additional government funding (in this case, for students known to be eligible for free school meals and the very few who are in care of the local authority) is above the national average. There are no children from service families currently on the academy's roll.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is well above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is also well above average.
- Twenty four students in Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 attend provision off site for one or two days a week at the Peterborough Regional College. Nine students follow a vocational course with a local training provider.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

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

- Improve teaching so that it is always at least good and a greater proportion is outstanding by:
  - giving students work which is always set at the right level
  - providing students with more opportunities to work on their own and to think for themselves
  - making sure that students always respond to marking in subsequent pieces of work.
- Raise students' achievement further, particularly in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11 by:
  - improving attendance to at least the national average so that many more students benefit from the improvements being made in the academy
  - providing students with at least consistently good teaching in all lessons
  - closing the achievement gap between students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and others in the academy.
- Improve behaviour by making sure that students always act responsibly outside lessons.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- When students join the academy, most are working significantly below the nationally expected standards for their ages.
- Students' attainment is rising faster than nationally. A good proportion of students have already attained grades C and above in mathematics. Accurate, reliable tracking by leaders is predicting a similar rise in 2013 for five A\* to C passes at GCSE including English and mathematics.
- Despite these improvements, students' overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 remains below the national averages. For most students, this represents expected progress, given their low starting points. Not enough students make better than expected progress in English and mathematics.
- Students are entered early for GCSE examinations, but only when they are ready. If they do not achieve their expected grades they are given a further opportunity to achieve their goals. This has a beneficial impact on the overall students' performance.
- In 2012, the attainment in GCSE English and mathematics for students eligible for free school meals was well below that of other students in the academy but not as wide as the gap for similar students nationally. Careful use of the pupil premium funding, for example for one-to-one support and small group tuition, is narrowing but not closing the gap. Currently, eligible students are around one grade behind their classmates in English and three-quarters of a grade behind in mathematics.
- The academy similarly supports around 40 students through the Year 7 catch-up funding. These students read widely and are developing their literacy skills well.
- Inspectors saw evidence of good skills in writing, communication and mathematics across a range of subjects. For example, writing up investigations done in science.
- Applied and vocational subjects such as travel and tourism provide suitable learning programmes. Students who take them gain good results, which ensure that they have good opportunities to continue their education.
- Students who take a vocational course with a local training provider achieve well. Their attendance and safety are checked regularly. This is also the case for the students who are educated off site for part of the week. They attend regularly, are kept safe, enjoy their learning and make expected progress.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve well because they are provided with tailored support, mostly in class and, when appropriate, individually and in small groups outside of classes.
- The progress of students from minority ethnic groups, including those from Pakistani backgrounds, is checked carefully. Their achievement is similar to that of their classmates. Students who speak English as an additional language make good progress because they are settled into learning routines quickly. Trained staff support these students as required and resources are suitably adapted so that students catch up quickly.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Students make good progress from their starting points, particularly in applied A-level and vocational subjects. Students eligible for free school meals made good progress in 2012 and continue to do so this year.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has become better over the last year because of leaders' careful checks and well-considered training to lift teaching quality. But teaching is still uneven and not enough is good or outstanding to enable all students make consistently good or better progress in all subjects.
- In lessons that require improvement teachers do not demand enough from the students which

means they become passive and lose the motivation to take part in their learning. Teachers do not take enough account of students' range of abilities. Tasks are not set at the right level of difficulty, so that they are either too easy or too hard. Students have few opportunities to tackle work on their own or to find things out for themselves, so they do not develop their thinking skills.

- Teachers' marking is usually regular, with detailed information about how well students perform, how to improve work and what the next steps in learning are. This is clear in most subjects, but not in all. Teachers do not always insist that students respond to the marking by making sure that, in their next and subsequent pieces of work, they show that they have taken note of teachers' helpful comments.
- Where teaching is good, students are involved and made to work hard through interesting tasks. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson on improving descriptive writing, students were carefully grouped by the teacher, who knew their backgrounds and abilities, making sure that all had an equal chance to succeed in the lesson. They all had a go at speaking, listening and writing. The ideas they offered were developed further by the teacher's skilful questioning, resulting in students raising their ambitions.
- Teachers use a good range of resources, methods and subject expertise. This makes sure that students learn well. For example, in a Year 7 design and technology lesson on soldering, teaching was balanced. It allowed students to do a practical task safely, using the teacher's prompts to guide independent work. Because students understood what good soldering looks like, they were able to make comments about each other's work in a supportive way. In this lesson, as well as in several other lessons, students who speak English as an additional language were fully included in the learning through teacher interventions and support from adults.
- Adults are used purposefully for disabled students and those who have special educational needs so that they achieve well. Adults are mostly based in specific subject areas and are trained both to support and to encourage students to be independent.
- Inspectors also saw some outstanding teaching. For example, in a Year 7 English lesson, the teacher inspired students to be introduced to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* using drama to get them fully involved, using Jeremy Kyle as a character they recognised. It made learning fun and students developed their abilities to weigh up the strengths and weaknesses of different performances.
- Teachers know that they have to develop students' communication, numeracy and literacy skills in different subjects. There is a particularly strong drive to promote literacy skills in all subjects. Inspectors saw this being done well across a wide range of subjects. Attention is paid to key words specific to subjects and students are asked to read aloud regularly. Marking of work usually picks up punctuation and grammatical mistakes. Homework tasks extend learning gained in lessons.
- Typically, teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers use their subject knowledge well to plan activities which make demands of students. Teaching also provides opportunities for students to be independent thinkers and learners. For example, in a Year 12 physics lesson on momentum, an open-ended experiment allowed students to think more deeply by analysing results using their prior knowledge.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils

### requires improvement

- Most students have positive attitudes to learning and are punctual. This is less so when teaching is dull and does not capture students' interest. Some students do not behave well outside lessons, during lunchtimes and in between lessons. Of the total four per cent of views expressed on the online survey Parent View, a marked number of parents do not think that the academy makes sure that students are well behaved.
- Inspectors saw largely good behaviour in lessons. Students understand right from wrong and usually exercise self-discipline. The academy's records of behaviour show that the number of exclusions is reducing significantly.

- The academy is a harmonious community where students from a wide range of backgrounds get on well together. The academy's arts and media specialism is used to good effect to develop students' social and cultural understanding. Students readily participate in performances of dance and drama which are well attended by parents and members of the local community. In particular, the academy is rightly proud of its reaching out to the Roma community.
- Students say that they feel safe in the academy. Students who responded on Parent View largely agree. Students learn about bullying and are prepared to confront any which may occur.
- Students' behaviour in the sixth form is good. They have positive attitudes to learning and act as good role models for their younger peers.
- Attendance is improving but is just below the national average. Many more students are now attending because leaders and staff emphasise the link between good attendance and achievement. Despite this, some students still do not attend regularly.

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

- The Principal and other leaders, including governors, are highly ambitious for the academy. Their actions so far have ensured that students' achievement is no longer inadequate, especially in English and mathematics. Leaders have made sure that achievement and teaching in the sixth form are good. A strong trend of improvement in achievement across the academy indicates good capacity for further sustained improvement.
- Leaders' determined focus on improving teaching and behaviour are leading to strong improvements, but those secured so far need to be fixed firmly over a longer period of time before these key areas of the academy have full impact on achievement and can be judged to be good or better.
- Leaders accurately identify the academy's strengths and weaknesses. Senior and subject leaders regularly check on the quality of students' work and on the progress they are making. Leaders are single-minded and successful in tackling weaknesses that fall short of their high expectations.
- Teachers are set targets for improving their work. The targets are linked to students' achievement. Salary rises are dependent on how well responsibilities are carried out and how well students achieve. Teachers receive good advice on how they can improve their performance, supported by suitable training, for example, from advanced skilled teachers. Teachers and subject leaders also take part in nationally-accredited training from professional groups, so that there is continuous improvement.
- There are clear plans to tackle areas that need further improvement, including raising students' achievement and increasing the amount of good and better teaching.
- Leaders are deeply committed to providing equality of opportunity, whatever students' backgrounds and circumstances. There is no complacency or making excuses. Consequently, where there have been gaps in the progress of different groups of students, these have narrowed significantly through a variety of planned strategies, for example, teaching boys and girls separately.
- The range of subjects and courses is matched closely to students' needs. Students are offered a choice of courses of interest to them, including in the sixth form.
- The academy's arts and media specialism makes a very positive contribution to students' enjoyment and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The specialism helps to raise students' self-confidence and improve their communication skills. Students keenly participate in being mentors, raising funds for charities and helping to draw up the academy charter. Assemblies also play a good part in encouraging students to think about their beliefs and those of others. Students appreciate the use of a prayer room in the academy.
- Leaders, guided by the governing board, are successful in involving parents in the life of the academy. Their attendance is good at parents' evenings and at exhibitions, artistic and cultural events which are largely led by students. Although fewer make responses on Parent View, improvement on this is encouraged by leaders and governors. Responses to the academy's own

surveys at parents' evenings are positive about students' progress. All of the respondents on Parent View would recommend the academy to other parents.

- The Comberton Academy Trust is providing good support across the academy which has helped to improve teaching across a range of subjects.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- As an academy, governance is shared between the local governing board and the Comberton Academy Trust. As joint members of the Trust, governing board members check all aspects of the academy's work. Governors provide good support and challenge, using their educational experience and expertise well. Governors' understanding about students' performance is good and sharp questions are asked about teachers' performance. Governors understand the link between teachers' performance and any pay rises. Challenging targets are set for the Principal who welcomes board members' professional dialogue. Board members make sure that information about the pupil premium funding expenditure is available on the academy website for parents. Governors are keen to show that the funding is used to make a measurable difference to the achievement of students for whom it is intended. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements relating to safeguarding and child protection are met.

## 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>	137084
<b>Local authority</b>	Peterborough
<b>Inspection number</b>	399850

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>	11-18
<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>	1428
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	215
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Stephen Munday
<b>Principal</b>	Dr Yvonne Birch
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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