

Ormiston Rivers Academy

Southminster Road, Burnham-on-Crouch, CM0 8QB

Inspection dates

9–10 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- Students make good progress based on their below-average starting points and progress continues to accelerate as they move through the academy and into the sixth form.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve well.
- The small proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium makes good progress, and achieve as well as all students.
- Students' achievement and well-being are at the heart of everything the academy stands for. The academy expects all students to be good and outstanding learners.
- Most teaching is good and some is outstanding.
- Students behave well in lessons and around the academy. They feel safe, and the academy's good partnerships with other agencies make sure that students make positive gains in their learning.
- The Principal, supported by her leadership team and an effective governing body, have a clear vision for the future of the academy. They are ably supported by the academy staff, and monitor students' achievement and the quality of teaching closely. Consequently, this is an academy that continues to improve.
- The sixth form is good. Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good, and is securing improved outcomes for students.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small proportion of teaching still requires improvement because it does not always match the needs of all students fully.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to read widely enough beyond the classroom.
- A small proportion of teaching in mathematics is less effective than it might be because basic numeracy skills have not yet been developed well enough for students to complete the tasks set.
- Some teachers' marking does not tell students clearly enough how they can improve, and students do not respond routinely to teachers' marking.
- As a new academy, it is too early to measure the impact of some of the initiatives in place.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors saw 33 parts of lessons taught by 31 teachers, in some cases accompanied by members of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors visited a number of lessons for a short period accompanied by senior members of staff.
- Meetings took place with the Principal, Vice Principal and Assistant Principals, heads of subject areas and achievement co-ordinators, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the academy’s self-evaluation document, information on students’ current progress, policies and records on the quality of teaching. They also examined the academy’s central record of recruitment checks on staff.
- Inspectors observed teaching in Years 7 to 10, and in Year 12, as Years 11 and 13 were not in school. However, they analysed the academy’s data for the current Years 11 and 13 in depth.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers, 67 of whom responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also took into account the views of staff by considering 29 responses to the staff questionnaire. Two supportive letters were received from parents and carers of students at the academy.

Inspection team

John Daniell, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Andrew Lyons

Additional Inspector

Jane Ladner

Additional Inspector

Simon Hughes

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ormiston Rivers Academy works in close partnership with the Ormiston Trust family of academies. The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It is the only secondary provider in Burnham-on-Crouch.
- Ormiston Rivers Academy converted to become an academy school in September 2011. When its predecessor school, St Peter's High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and for students known to be eligible for free school meals, is below the national average.
- There are more boys on roll than girls. The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs and are supported through school action is above the national average. An above-average proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs attend the academy.
- There are very few students from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language.
- Students who require intensive support in numeracy and literacy join the 'Wings' groups for as long as support is required.
- A small number of students in Years 8 and 11 attend full-time off-site provision at the Children's Support Service Centre in Heybridge. Other students in Year 10 have work experience placements at a local garage for two days per week and attend Essex Youth Build for two days per week.
- The academy meets the government's floor standards which set the minimum levels expected for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching and raise standards by:
 - providing challenge and support to the small number of teachers whose practice in the classroom is not yet consistently effective
 - using the most effective teachers to share outstanding practice so that all may become as good as the best
 - ensuring that teachers' planning always meets the needs of all groups of students at all ability levels
 - making sure that all teachers' marking is as good as the very best so that all students know exactly what they have to do to improve their work and that they respond to comments made by their teachers
 - planning the use of literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects and creating more opportunities for students to read more widely beyond the classroom.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students achieve well over time. From their below-average starting points, they make good progress. Since the academy's opening almost two years ago, students have made up on previously lost ground, and progress across all year groups has become more rapid.
- The majority of parents and carers rightly believe that their children are making good progress. The academy places an emphasis on learning and progress for all, which means that every student is targeted by teaching in the classroom, and extra support beyond the classroom, if required.
- Current and reliable assessment data based on refined systems, which track students' progress throughout the year indicate a sharp rise in attainment for students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE to bring them closely in line with the 2012 national average. Indeed, inspectors witnessed mostly good and better progress in lessons and across a wide range of subjects. This more rapid progress is also reflected from inspectors' scrutiny of students' books.
- Students' achievement is stronger in English than in mathematics but their performance in both subjects is strengthening. In 2012 the attainment of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium in English was around half a grade lower than their peers at GCSE level. In mathematics this was a grade lower than their classmates. Evidence gathered during this inspection shows that these students are making better progress than previously, and that the gap between these two groups is narrowing.
- The development of students' literacy and numeracy skills has a high profile in the academy. The academy has made effective use of the Year 7 catch-up premium (extra funding to support those pupils who did not achieve level 4 in reading and/or mathematics at Key Stage 2) by targeting eligible students with intensive support. These students' reading and mathematical skills have improved significantly.
- Students targeted through the 'Wings' groups make good gains in their reading. While the development of literacy features in most teachers' planning, the promotion of reading beyond the classroom is under-developed. Students' mathematical skills are improving and are developed across a range of subjects. Leaders acknowledge the need to strengthen basic numeracy skills further for students to make the most progress in mathematics.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress in the academy, particularly those who are supported at school action plus. This is due to the skilfully targeted support which is under constant review and amended when necessary.
- In 2012 girls made better progress than boys in English and boys made better progress than girls in mathematics. Information presented to inspectors indicates an improving trend where the gap between boys' and girls' attainment has narrowed. The very few students from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as others in the academy.
- Students who attend off site provision benefit from this facility, and the academy receives regular reports on their progress, attitudes and attendance. They develop the necessary skills which prepare them well for the next stage in their lives.

- The academy no longer operates an early-entry policy for GCSE.
- Students who enter the sixth form make good progress based on their low starting points and levels of attainment continue to rise, particularly for students gaining the top grades in Advanced Supplementary and Advanced Level courses.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Students mostly experience good teaching in the academy and, a small proportion is outstanding. Equally, a small proportion still requires improvement.
- Good teaching is characterised by a fast pace, good subject knowledge and effective questioning which tests students' understanding of what they are being taught. These teachers make good use of information available on students' prior attainment, and of what they are capable of achieving. They use this information well to plan lessons which match all students' capabilities.
- In an effective Year 8 religious education lesson, where students learned about the Five Pillars of Islam, they were motivated to achieve well because the teacher had matched the tasks to their capabilities. The teacher's high expectations made sure that all students were both supported and challenged to achieve.
- Additional adults in the classroom, including teaching assistants, are used well to support students' learning. These colleagues play a key role in making sure the gaps in attainment between disabled students and those who have special needs and others in the academy have narrowed significantly.
- A small proportion of teaching does not yet meet the needs of all students fully. These teachers do not make smart enough use of the information on students' progress when planning their lessons, and students are sometimes expected to do similar work.
- Improvements in teaching over time are securing more rapid progress, including for potentially higher-attaining students. However, these students have not always made as much progress as they could because not all teaching has been consistently challenging in the past. Senior leaders have identified this matter and are now tackling it head on.
- The academy's marking policy is generally applied well. Teachers make work regularly and most provide in-depth comments which aim to support students in moving up to the next level of attainment. There are ample opportunities for students to assess their own work and that of others. In a few cases marking is less helpful, and procedures for students to respond to teachers' comments are not yet established.
- Teachers often make reference to aspects of literacy and numeracy in lessons, but coverage of these skills varies between subjects. They provide some opportunities for students to read in the classroom, but opportunities for reading beyond the classroom are more limited. Very few students borrow books from the Learning Resource Centre.
- Students who are at risk of underachieving and who require additional support benefit from good teaching in the academy's 'Wings' groups which specifically target literacy and numeracy skills. The academy can point to some striking examples of how students' low reading ages have increased significantly over time.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good and some is outstanding. Teaching is well-matched to students' capabilities and encourages independent learning and the effective use of research

skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students typically behave well in lessons and when moving around the academy. They speak positively about their academy and wear their uniform with pride.
- There are few incidents of bullying and this is confirmed by students. The few incidents that do occur are dealt with well and good use is made of students who have been trained as Anti-bullying Ambassadors to resolve conflict.
- Students told inspectors they feel safe in the academy and they are taught well how to manage potentially dangerous situations. They are fully aware of the risks associated with social networking sites and cyber bullying. Discrimination is not tolerated.
- Classroom behaviour is generally managed well and the number of incidents which occur in lessons has reduced significantly. Sanctions for poor behaviour are clearly understood by students and displayed in every classroom. Poor behaviour is rare and when it does occur, takes the form of background chatter.
- The proportion of fixed-term exclusions has reduced due to the impact of the internal exclusion facility which is well managed and serves to encourage students to reflect on their actions. There have been no permanent exclusions this academic year.
- Students are offered a range of responsibilities which develop their leadership qualities and enhance their self-esteem. A large proportion of those who met with inspectors were eagerly awaiting the outcome of their applications to be prefects at the time of the inspection.
- Attendance has improved and is above the national average. Staff work well with families who are more reluctant to engage with the academy and support them in getting their children into school. Students whose attendance gives cause for concern are tracked closely and discussed at weekly meetings.
- Students who are at risk of underachieving or who have challenging personal circumstances are supported well. Case studies examined and interviews conducted with these students show that they are happy in school, feel safe and are well looked after.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well both in lessons and through an extensive range of enrichment activities, including clubs, sporting events and performances.
- The promotion of equal opportunities has a high profile in the academy, and leaders monitor the performance of different groups of students well to ensure gaps in attainment between them are narrowing.

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal and her senior leadership team have high aspirations for themselves and for every member of the school community. They strive continually to drive up standards in the academy. Consequently, they have earned the support and respect of colleagues, students and their parents and carers.

- Senior leaders are tackling the key issues which have acted as a barrier to raising standards in the past. Their systems for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the work of the academy are established, and they use this information well to shape the future of the academy.
- Heads of subject areas and achievement co-ordinators share this commitment to raising standards for all, and have a clear overview of the areas they manage. They look through students' books, observe teaching and monitor students' attitudes towards learning. They are held to account effectively and provided with up-to-date training when required.
- Systems in place for tracking students' levels of attainment and the progress are strong, and used well to identify which students are at risk of underachieving.
- The academy's self-evaluation document is accurate and inspectors agreed with all of the judgements made. The document is used well as a tool for school improvement, in addition to the Academy Improvement Plan, which highlights the key priorities for the future.
- Pupil-premium funding has been used well to improve outcomes for those students who are eligible. The fund is used to provide one-to-one support, learning mentors, financial support for students to participate in school excursions, to improve attendance and to provide lunchtime and break time activities for students in the 'Wings' groups.
- Teaching is managed well and inspectors agreed with senior leaders' judgement of teaching when they visited lessons together. It is clear that the quality of teaching in the academy has improved since opening, and leaders are working hard to minimise the small proportion of weaker teaching experienced by some students. There is scope to increase the use of the very best teachers to model outstanding practice. The academy works particularly well with teachers who are new to the profession. The high quality training for all staff is a positive feature of the academy.
- The academy offers a broad range of subjects and qualifications to meet the needs of all students. The decision to cover Key Stage 3 over a two-year period allows greater flexibility in Key Stage 4 for essential skills to become fully developed and for knowledge to be deepened before students sit their examinations.
- The Principal has worked well with the governing body to establish high expectations in relation to rewarding effective teaching with progression up the pay scale. The management of teachers' performance is closely linked to academy improvement priorities and the setting of challenging targets.
- Leaders work well with parents and carers, particularly those who are less reluctant to engage with the school. Regular and informative newsletters to parents and carers keep them informed of major events and celebrate the academy's successes and students' gains in their learning.
- Leaders of the sixth form have a good understanding of the needs of individual students. They make good use of information of students' performance and have raised students' aspirations so that they now believe they can be successful at some of the best universities.
- The Ormiston Trust provides both valuable support and guidance though an annual review which triggers improvement, as well as the regular challenge, support and guidance from a highly effective educational advisor. In addition, the local authority has maintained an on-going and productive relationship with the academy since its opening in September 2011. It monitors

the academy's performance with rigour and has worked with leaders and managers to produce robust systems for evaluating the impact of actions taken so far. The academy has supported teachers in the development of their classroom practice through links with a school in Braintree. Teachers in the mathematics department have particularly benefited from this support.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Members of the governing body have an astute awareness of the challenges facing the academy. Discussions with governors during the inspection demonstrated a good understanding of how far the academy has come, and what still needs to be tackled. They spoke convincingly about the performance of different groups of students and the impact of pupil-premium funding on students' outcomes. Governors visit the school regularly, often with a specific focus, and raise issues arising out of these visits at their next meeting. They provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge to academy leaders. They receive regular reports on the quality of teaching and the management of teachers' performance, which informs decisions as to whether or not they progress up the pay scale. They know what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance. Governors make sure that safeguarding arrangements are in place, and that statutory requirements 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

Unique reference number	137152
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	399868

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	790
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Nye
Principal	Joan Costello
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01621 782377
Fax number	01621 785445
Email address	info@ormistonriversacademy.co.uk

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