

# The Marlowe Academy

Stirling Way, Ramsgate, Kent, CT12 6NB

**Inspection dates** 10–11 July 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Although students' achievement is improving and no longer inadequate, it is not good enough to enable them to catch up with where they need to be when they leave.
- Teaching is not consistently good enough, particularly in Year 7 to 11, to ensure that students' needs are fully met and that they achieve well in all subjects.
- Staff have insufficient specialist expertise to ensure that students who are disabled or have special educational needs make the best possible progress.
- Academy development planning does not focus closely enough on the most important areas for improvement or show systematically how the impact will be measured.
- Subject leaders play too small a role in improving teaching.
- Leaders' feedback to staff after observations does not always refer back to agreed priorities for improvement so as to check progress.
- Governors do not monitor closely enough the impact of pupil premium spending (additional government funding) to identify what makes the greatest impact on pupils' achievement.

### The school has the following strengths

- The Principal and senior leadership team have the drive and determination, supported by the good morale among staff, to improve the academy further and ensure equality of opportunity for all students.
- The senior leadership team has tackled inadequate teaching rigorously.
- Staff provide good levels of care for students.
- Students behave well, feel safe and have good attitudes to study and ambition to do better, so the academy has a positive atmosphere for learning.
- The sixth form is good. Students achieve well and make a positive contribution to the academy's ethos by setting a good example in their approach to learning.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 23 lessons, all seen jointly with members of the senior leadership team. They visited the specialist support areas and talked with staff and students, and also visited activities taking place as part of an advice and guidance day for sixth-form students.
- Meetings were held with the Principal and other senior leaders, subject leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor. Four groups of students were met and a large number of students spoken to around the academy site.
- The inspectors observed the academy’s work, and looked at a range of documents including the tracking of students’ progress, records of leaders’ monitoring of teaching, development plans and records of care provided for students, improvement planning and checks made on staff about their suitability to work with children.
- There were too few responses to the online Parent View survey to be analysed.

## Inspection team

Stephen Long, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Anne Duffy

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Kevin Dyke

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.*

### Information about this school

- The Marlowe Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. Most students are of White British heritage and fewer than in most schools speak English as an additional language.
- An above-average proportion of students are disabled or have special educational needs and are supported at school action and school action plus, or have a statement of special educational needs. The academy has an on-site (AIM) centre in a separate building providing behavioural support for students, and two centres in the main building providing communications and learning support. The academy receives no additional funding for these and no off-site provision is used.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after by the local authority or from a family with a parent in the armed forces) is well above that found nationally.
- The academy does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy was placed in special measures at its previous inspection in November 2011. This was because it was failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the academy were not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement. Four subsequent monitoring inspections were led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.
- There have been significant changes in staffing since the academy's previous full inspection. The Principal joined at the start of this academic year.

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

- Improve teaching and achievement further by ensuring staff consistently:
  - share learning objectives with students, so they understand not just what to do in lessons but why they are doing it and how to improve to reach their targets
  - meet the full range of students' needs, in lessons and additional support sessions and in the specialist centres, by making full use of the information they have about the students to ensure work enables all to reach challenging long-term goals
  - check students' progress during lessons and adapt their teaching if learning is too slow.
- Ensure that staff have sufficient specialist knowledge to meet the full range of special educational needs and disabilities among students.
- Increase the impact of leaders and managers by:
  - sharpening the focus in all levels of development planning on the most important areas requiring improvement, and ensuring that every action has a measurable impact on students' achievement
  - ensuring all subject leaders are at the forefront of monitoring and improving teaching in their subject areas, and that feedback to teachers always reflects back to previous targets
  - improving governors' oversight of the impact of pupil premium spending, so as to focus resources on what is making the greatest difference.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils **requires improvement**

- Students' progress in lessons and over time is improving but is not good enough to overcome the below-average attainment on entry of many. Low levels of basic literacy are the key barrier to success, and the school is working hard to address this. Results in GCSE examinations are rising from a low base, helped by students' improving attendance.
- Achievement across different subjects is still too variable. Hearteningly it is improving in vital areas such as English and mathematics, alongside creative subjects like art and design or drama, but teaching is too patchy in other subjects to ensure good progress.
- In lessons students' progress is inconsistent. They do well when they have a clear understanding of the purpose of what they are doing, but too often complete activities without knowing how these contribute to reaching their targets. This particularly affects students in Years 7 to 11, but occasionally in the sixth form too where students' understanding is not always developed well enough to achieve the top grades.
- Students who are disabled, have special educational needs or speak English as an additional language do less well than others. They are catching up but are not consistently set challenging enough targets or work in mainstream lessons, additional support sessions, or in the centres, to achieve their full potential. For example, the extra sessions to develop students' reading skills are not always aimed at reaching challenging enough end-of-year goals.
- Year 7 'catch-up' funding and pupil premium spending are helping to improve the achievement of targeted students but not yet quickly enough, particularly in English. For example, the attainment of students supported by the pupil premium was on average a third of a grade behind their classmates in English in the 2012 Year 11 examinations, but over a grade behind similar pupils nationally. The gaps are narrowing this year, but the impact of such spending is not yet monitored closely enough to ensure it is being used as well as possible.
- Sixth-form students' achievement is good and has improved markedly this year with many more completing courses than in the past. The uplift in their progress, and their conviction that they can achieve well, provides the model for younger students to follow.

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

- Teachers have become more effective in sharing the objectives for learning with students, but still do not do this well enough in all lessons. In good lessons teachers make the features of good learning visible to students. For example, in a drama class the teacher helped students analyse examples of role play to pick out what to work on. This is not seen in enough lessons and teachers refer too little to how work will help students reach their targets.
- Teachers' ability to meet the wide range of students' needs is improving but is not good enough yet, because they do not always use the information about students' progress well enough. Some opportunities are missed to support students who have additional needs. For example, lesson plans note the presence of students who have speech and language delays and some who speak English as an additional language, but too often these groups are not sufficiently provided for and teachers and support staff are unsure about how to support them. Some work is too easy and this limits students' achievement.
- Provision for disabled students and those who have special educational needs has sensibly been

reviewed this term, and the centres are now more focused on ensuring students make good progress. But there is too little depth of expertise among staff about the range of students' needs to ensure they get the right support for learning in the centres and in mainstream lessons.

- Pupil premium funds are spent on support that is logically linked to students' needs, such as small group tuition and individual coaching for reading. These are bringing benefits, but the school knows too little about the impact of the different types of extra support to target its spending on what works best.
- Teachers' checks of students' progress during lessons are of mixed quality. There is some strong practice where teachers change the course of lessons because the pace of learning drops. However, this is not always so, and some teachers do not check students' understanding enough, or use questions which give pupils time to think and extend their speaking skills when responding.
- Teachers have access to a good range of information about students' targets, progress over time and additional learning needs. Academy leaders rightly identified this as a priority and now have a system which works. Early entry to examinations is not used as a strategy to raise attainment but results in controlled assessments that are monitored carefully to check students' progress.
- Sixth-form teaching has improved quickly this year and is good. Teachers' good knowledge of students' attainment and targets underpins well-focused teaching of the key areas on which they need to make progress. However, teachers do not all know enough about how to push students further to achieve the higher grades in AS- and A-level.
- Most students know their targets. Staff have made good progress this year in following agreed approaches to giving feedback via marking so that students are well supported in most subjects. Teachers now provide good opportunities for students to respond to marking.
- Information, advice and guidance to students about options and careers are good and have improved sharply since the last inspection, notably in the sixth form. Staff now work effectively to make sure these students, and younger ones, study the right things. Sixth-form students spoke appreciatively of the visits to universities, sometimes with their parents, careers advisor visits and excellent 'readiness for work' programme, recognised recently by the local authority.

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

- There is a positive atmosphere for learning in the academy. Relationships between students and with staff are good and most students arrive in lessons ready to learn; a major step forward.
- Lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. Staff instructions are heeded by students, who largely respond well to the academy's high expectations and good support for their social and moral development. Staff provide effective guidance for specific groups of students, such as those who have particular needs relating to autism, to overcome their anxieties about school life.
- Students feel safe and well looked after. They understand the dangers of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and say that any which occurs is dealt with by staff. The developing 'restorative justice' system is having a good impact, and students note that most incidents are resolved. Staff supervision levels are good in social areas. The academy's café area is a pleasant environment and the sixth-form area offers a good space in which these students can work and socialise.

- Sixth-form students set the tone for others, and do so well. They play an increasingly wide role in the academy, now stepping in to help lead the house system and organise events for students. They are well turned out for work and most are taking advantage of the 'aim high' ethos of the staff. They are a valuable feature of the academy.
- Effective work by staff to support students in behaving well has made a good impact on reducing numbers of exclusions and in-school incidents. The AIM centre staff make a positive impact on the students with whom they work. They have marked success in improving these students' attitudes to learning and attendance. The academy makes effective use of this facility, enabling students to be taught separately or alongside other students as appropriate.
- Students' attendance has increased steadily over the last year. It remains below average but staff are doing the right things to target their work at families where there are concerns. Staff work closely with external agencies such as social services and are tenacious in following up on welfare concerns. They enjoy considerable success when working with parents or carers of students requiring support, building positive relationships with them in most cases.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- Senior leaders know what has been achieved and what the next steps are to improve outcomes for students. Their development planning has been effective but has become too complex, so key areas are not clear enough, and targets not easily measurable. This is true for the overall academy plan, for subject plans and for areas such as how disabled students and those who have special educational needs are catered for.
- Subject leaders are becoming more involved in improving teaching in their areas, notably in English and mathematics, but overall their impact on teaching is too limited. This is crucial in improving things further, including in the sixth form where expert subject leadership is central to making sure teaching enables high grades to be achieved.
- Good management of staff performance has led to inadequate teaching being tackled, and leaders evaluate teachers' effectiveness against their impact on students' achievement. Senior leaders work hard to recruit good staff when filling vacancies, and growing partnership work with other schools is a welcome feature in enabling staff to learn from others. However, feedback to staff after lesson observations does not always refer back to agreed targets for teachers so as to check progress. And not enough emphasis is placed on improving staff expertise in supporting the large numbers of students who have sometimes complex special educational needs.
- Since her arrival the Principal and the senior team have worked with determination to move the academy forward and raise expectations. They are focusing on the right areas and seeing success, for example in better teaching, behaviour and the sixth form. Staff morale is good and they are an increasingly well-knit team.
- Leaders have improved the curriculum to focus more on areas such as students' basic literacy. 'Drop Everything and Read' sessions and use of computer software have brought improvement. But staff have rightly identified there is more to do to give students the basic skills they need, and wider spiritual and cultural development, if they are to thrive. They have well-developed plans for next year to provide better transition into secondary education in Year 7, taking literacy as the core theme, and for a wider range of academic qualifications and opportunities for personal and social development as students move up the school.
- Leaders are taking good steps to make links with the local community, recognising that this will

be essential in sustaining improvement. An increasingly involved parents' forum has been launched this year, alongside plans for innovative work such as the 'incredible edible' scheme where local people will grow food on the academy site.

- Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and child protection training has a high priority in the academy.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body works hard to support and challenge academy leaders, gathering a wide range of evidence. The governors have recently bolstered their expertise with new appointments, including an educational expert 'auditor' to support their analysis of leaders' reports about achievement and teaching. This has given them a good understanding of the work taking place to improve teaching. They check carefully that staff pay rises and promotions are linked to better performance in the classroom. Governors are involved in decisions about what additional pupil premium funding is spent on, but do not check carefully enough the impact of the different areas of spending in order to maximise effectiveness.

## 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>	128340
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	420438

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<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>	696
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	120
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Roger De Haan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Cassie Ellins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17–18 November 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01843 593326
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