

Bexleyheath Academy

Woolwich Road, Bexleyheath, DA6 7DA

Inspection dates

18–19 September 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.

- 'The Principal is inspirational.' 'We are in a phase of strong, meaningful and planned leadership.' Such feedback from parents, carers and staff highlights the Principal's outstanding ability to engage and encourage. With skilled senior leaders, he is raising expectations and improving achievement.
- Most students enter with low attainment and make good progress, particularly those in need of additional support. Well-evidenced checks on current learning indicate that last year's improvement is being maintained. Government targets are met.
- The range of subjects on offer reflects national trends, extends students' options and supports their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. Good use is made of local colleges and employers.
- The sixth form is good. Students are successfully guided onto academic and vocational courses they enjoy and succeed in and that lead reliably to further education, training or employment.
- Systematic monitoring, well-directed training and effective teacher recruitment are extending and embedding good teaching, as students' progress shows.
- Governors provide expert challenge and support, closely monitoring the impact of leadership, teaching and use of government funding (Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium).
- Students are keen and respond happily to challenge. They treat adults and each other considerately, untroubled by differences of culture or lifestyle. They, rightly, feel safe.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teaching is not consistently good; on occasion, 'teaching to the test' and lack of pace limit independent and lively learning.
- The most able students are not fully challenged when opportunities for extended and higher-level learning are missed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 52 lessons, looked at students’ books and discussed work with students in each key stage and across a range of subjects.
- Inspectors gathered comments from students from each key stage about their experience of teaching and learning at the academy, their opportunities to influence decisions, their aspirations and their attitudes to their own progress and development.
- They discussed training and the quality and impact of teaching with teachers and academy leaders. These discussions also considered the range and impact of support for disabled students, those needing additional help, those from minority groups and those eligible for the pupil premium.
- Inspectors reviewed documents relating to governance, academy improvement, organisation of subjects, monitoring of students’ attainment and progress, reviewing of strengths and areas for improvement in teaching, and use of the pupil premium funding.
- The lead inspector met with governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and vice-chair, and the sponsors’ Regional Director of Education. The main focus of discussion was the quality of long-term planning, and how governors and the sponsors monitor leadership and teaching to check that the academy is providing a good education for all its students.
- Inspectors took account of 72 responses entered on Parent View, and the lead inspector met a group of parents and carers.
- Inspectors also reviewed 60 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Patricia Metham HMI, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Jones	Additional Inspector
Christopher Allen	Additional Inspector
Evelyn Riley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is larger than most secondary schools and has a substantial sixth form. Its sponsors are the Academies Enterprise Trust and the London Academies Enterprise Trust. It has non-selective entry in an area with grammar schools.
- More than a third of students are known to be eligible for additional government funding, including the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding. This is above the national average.
- While the academy is a culturally and ethnically diverse community, only one in every eight students has English as an acquired language.
- The proportion on the school action programme is higher than average but a smaller than average proportion has a statement of special educational needs or requires additional professional support.
- The academy's sixth form curriculum is extended through partnerships with employers – AkzoNobel(Outward Bound), Greater London Authority, Transport for London and Jones Language la Salle – and with local colleges. Two-year internship programmes with Pearson Home Office Computing are available to sixth formers.
- Vocational courses are available to students in Years 10 and 11, including hairdressing and construction.

Inspectors were aware during the inspection that a serious incident which occurred at the setting since the previous inspection is under investigation by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the incident were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspection judgements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is consistently good or better by:
 - sharing best practice across subjects
 - ensuring that all lessons are well paced, maintaining students' interest and active participation
 - extending and reinforcing ways in which teachers develop their students' skills and knowledge and create opportunities for independent learning
 - ensuring that a focus on preparing for national examinations does not narrow the range and style of teaching and limit students' enjoyment.
- Improve the experience and achievement of the most able students by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have confidence in students' ability to be analytical, inventive and sophisticated in their approach to ideas and problem-solving, and develop the approaches needed to challenge and support the most able
 - ensure that opportunities are not missed to use students' responses as the launch pad for independent and imaginative enquiry and for links with varied sources of knowledge and expertise.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- National information shows the academy's success in improving its students' progress and raising attainment to be significantly better than average. Input by subject consultants and external review of students' current standards and progress support the academy's confidence that overall improvement is being maintained.
- Most students enter the academy with attainment significantly below the national average and make good progress. Provisional GCSE results for 2013 show a substantial improvement over the previous year, with 61% rather than 51% gaining five or more subjects at A* to C, including English and mathematics. While results for all groups showed improvement, the greatest step up came for those with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language. The academy does not enter students early for GCSE examinations. The 2012 attainment gap between boys and girls at GCSE closed in 2013.
- Results for those eligible for the pupil premium were also markedly better in 2013 than in 2012, with nearly 50% rather than 45% achieving five or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, but the difference was not as great as for other groups. The academy has reviewed and revised its support for pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up students. Two senior leaders are shaping and systematically monitoring targeted support that includes individual tuition, small-group teaching, academic mentoring for the most able and carefully managed liaison with parents and carers. Evidence of current progress suggests that the achievement gap is closing.
- As the academy's leaders acknowledge, the most able students in each key stage are not yet being consistently challenged although there are examples of good practice. The proportion of high grades at both GCSE and A level is still relatively small but there was improvement in 2013, with the proportion tripling in GCSE mathematics and doubling in English.
- Attainment and progress in the sixth form are also improving. While still lower than the national average, provisional results show an increased proportion gaining A* to B grades at A level in 2013. Boys outperformed girls in gaining the higher grades but the improved overall A* to E grade figures show no gender gap. Students identified as having special educational needs made better progress than their contemporaries, reflecting both the appropriateness of the courses they chose and the quality of targeted support they received.
- Achievement in vocational courses is good or better, including courses with significant input by employers and local colleges. Students' success in progressing to higher education (over two thirds), training or employment supports the academy's confidence that overall achievement in the sixth form is good.

The quality of teaching is good

- Students and their parents and carers spoke enthusiastically about improvements in teaching since the academy was established. A mother commented, 'Teaching standards, what is expected, have gone through the roof!' Most responses on Parent View also expressed confidence in the quality and impact of teaching – confidence largely justified by students' improved attainment and progress. Strengths observed during the inspection included: secure subject knowledge; a positive working relationship with students; a culture of mutual support, developed well during group activities and students' review of each other's work; constructive targeting of individual students to ensure that no-one was left behind; clear explanation of what was to be learnt; and questioning that sharpened students' focus on key points and revealed areas needing further attention. Much of the marking seen was clear and helpful.
- In the best sixth form teaching observed, students were encouraged to take responsibility for aspects of their own and others' learning, through independent reading and preparation and

presentation of arguments and explanations. The relationship between teacher and students was constructively collaborative and the level of student engagement was high.

- Where teaching seen was less effective: expectations were not high enough for the most able; group work tended to be dominated by one or two assertive students; pace was not well matched to students' rate of work and ability to maintain concentration; and monitoring of students' progress during lessons was not well used to adapt planned activities to meet students' different needs and capabilities more effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Parents and carers, staff and students expressed few concerns about behaviour. Students, including the youngest, feel safe in and out of lessons, and all understand and support the recently revised system of sanctions and rewards. They know what is expected. They also know that the Principal will very promptly be 'on their case' if they do not meet those expectations. They value the academy's celebration of consistently good attendance, smart appearance, and courteous and responsible behaviour. Being an 'honours student' is seen as a personal achievement available to all. Students are keen to do well.
- Sixth formers make a positive contribution as school leaders and role models and in the support they give as reading buddies to younger students. Across the academy, students feel that their voice is listened to: 'You can make a change.'
- Across all key stages, students are clear about what constitutes bullying, including cyber bullying and aggressive attitudes to individuals' beliefs, ethnic and cultural background, lifestyle or sexuality. They rightly see the academy's very mixed community as a strength and report that prompt and effective action is taken to deal with incidents of prejudiced or hurtful behaviour.
- In lessons where the pace is slow or activities are not well matched to students' abilities and way of working, there is sometimes low-level disruption. Mostly this involves chatter and loss of focus; it is not aggressive. Students below the sixth form do not often take responsibility for their own learning, so their level of engagement is directly related to the effectiveness of teaching.
- Attendance has improved significantly since the academy was established. At the time of the inspection it showed a 10% increase and was above the 2012/13 national average. The rate of fixed-term exclusions has fallen. The attendance and behaviour of students working off site or in alternative units but still registered with the academy are carefully monitored and well supported.

The leadership and management are good

- Strongly supported by the sponsors and governors, the Principal has fostered positive attitudes to achievement, raised the self-esteem of staff and students and demonstrated through his own approach to all aspects of academy life that everyone deserves respect and friendly but not uncritical encouragement. While very conscious of his personal responsibility and impact as Principal, he is successfully building teams of senior and middle leaders and managers to focus on clearly identified aspects of teaching and learning, curriculum development and pastoral care. His senior leadership team is extremely effective and energetic. Senior leaders understand their responsibilities and accountability, and are currently developing the skills and capacity of teams they now lead, including subject, year and pastoral leaders. They, like the Principal, are justifiably proud of recent improvements and rightly conscious that much remains to be done.
- Management of teaching and learning is brisk, sharply focused and effective. Having overcome the initial challenge to raise morale and expectations, senior leaders are monitoring the performance of departments and of individual staff systematically, and are developing carefully targeted programmes for one-to-one coaching as well as whole-staff training to increase the

proportion of teaching that is consistently good or better. Improved student progress is evidence that this approach is productive.

- The curriculum is in a transition phase, with the development of three distinct pathways through the re-established three-year Key Stage 3 and preparation both of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form for changes signalled by the government. Overall, it successfully balances academic and vocational options to meet all needs and aspirations. The extended curriculum provides a wide range of team and individual sports and performance opportunities, as well as booster classes and revision sessions for students needing extra support. Partnerships with local colleges and employers usefully extend students' choices and prepare for progression to higher or further education, training or employment.
- Procedures to ensure students' safety and well-being are thorough and regularly reviewed. They include training in child protection issues for all staff. Liaison with external agencies, such as the police, social and welfare services and health professionals, is extensive and drawn on whenever appropriate.
- The academy's fostering of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The strength of this community was tested and reinforced by the unrelated deaths of two Year 11 students during the past academic year. A group of mothers, including the mother of one of the students who died, highlighted the exceptional sensitivity and imagination shown by the Principal in leading the academy's response to what might well have been a derailing combination of events. Students, these mothers explained, were 'given the opportunity to be what they needed to be. The school became a family.' Out of this has grown space and opportunity for reflection, heightened awareness of the questions that underpin spiritual development and an appreciation of moral and social values. More routinely, curriculum topics, collaborative approaches to learning, opportunities to take on responsibilities, and a wide range of arts and performance activities steadily support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

■ The governance of the school

- The sponsors' regional Director of Education and the academy's governors bring a formidable range of relevant experience and expertise to their role as critical friends. They share an ambitious long-term plan for the academy's continuing development to become a centre of excellence for teaching and learning, able to support others. Their strategic vision is firmly founded on a detailed and practical approach to teaching, curriculum development and financial management.
 - Governors are very well informed about the impact of teaching on students' learning and monitor the relationship between salary and effectiveness very closely, with precise targets being set and reviewed where further improvement is called for. They are able to analyse and evaluate information about students' attainment and progress and make this a key point in their review of departments' planning, teaching and results. Comparisons across the academy group and local authority schools and colleges are well grounded and provide helpful benchmarks against which governors measure Bexleyheath Academy's performance.
 - Governors are also rigorous in their monitoring of progress made by students eligible for additional government funding, which ensures that it remains a priority.
 - They meet their statutory responsibilities and ensure that they undertake relevant training to keep abreast of changes nationally. They are well informed about key issues such as child protection, National Curriculum requirements and financial management.
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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	137138
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	399838

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,682
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	300
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Spicknell
Principal	Carl Wakefield
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Telephone number	020 8303 5696
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Email address	cwakefield@bexleyheathacademy.org

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