

# The Sir Robert Woodard Academy

Upper Boundstone Lane, Sompting, BN15 9QZ

## Inspection dates

1–2 October 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		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- While GCSE results have greatly improved from a very low base in 2011, students' progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 has been no better than average. It was particularly weak in mathematics in 2012.
- Although the proportion of good or better teaching has improved since the last inspection, teaching across the academy remains too variable in quality. Not all teachers check on how well students are learning in lessons and adjust their plans accordingly.
- Lessons sometimes consist of the same tasks or activities for all. When this occurs, some students make insufficient progress.
- Not all marking identifies for students what they need to work on to improve.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Despite an upturn in standards at A and AS levels, leaders' advice and guidance on course selection has not been helpful, resulting in a higher than average drop-out rate.

### The school has the following strengths

- The principal provides strong, effective leadership. He sets high expectations of everyone and has quickly gained the respect of staff and students alike.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning. They are proud to attend the academy and feel very safe.
- The vice-principals, new members of the leadership team and most subject leaders promote improvement in teaching and achievement very effectively.
- Progress is improving for disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and for students eligible for additional government funding.
- Governors and sponsors have a clear understanding of the strengths in teaching and what is yet to be achieved. They provide strong challenge and support to the academy's leaders.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 24 lessons taught by 24 teachers. Of these, three were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. A number of shorter visits were also made to lessons.
- Inspectors also conducted a joint in-depth scrutiny of students' work, alongside a member of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with students, academy staff, including senior staff, the Chair of the Academy Council (the local Advisory Body) and a council member, the Chief Officer of the Academy Trust, and one of the trustees.
- Inspectors took account of the 34 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including students' books, the improvement plans, current assessment information and the academy's evaluation of how well it is doing.

## Inspection team

Lesley Farmer, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jalil Shaikh

Additional Inspector

Susan Cox

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 Sir Robert Woodard Academy is a slightly larger than average-sized secondary school.
- The academy opened in 2009, replacing a locally maintained predecessor school.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, students known to be eligible for free school meals and others, is slightly below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action, action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The academy makes use of off-site provision at Northbrook College for a very small proportion of its Year 10 and 11 students.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Since the inspection that placed the academy in special measures, there have been significant changes of staffing at middle and senior levels. The principal was appointed in March 2013.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that attainment and progress are at least good in all subjects, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that teachers:
  - match tasks and activities consistently well to students' starting points and learning needs
  - regularly check students' learning in lessons and adjust their plans accordingly
  - provide specific feedback in their marking about what needs to improve and how to do it.
- Improve the quality of advice and guidance provided for students contemplating further study into the sixth form, so that the drop-out rate decreases and retention rates are in line with the national average.
- Increase the range of opportunities for subject leaders to learn from existing best practice within the academy in diagnosing what needs to improve when they observe teaching.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- From slightly below average starting points, students have typically made inadequate progress in the past, achieving low standards over the two year period from 2011 to 2012. However, the current picture is more favourable. As a result of judicious, targeted support and strong leadership, in 2013, academy students secured GCSE results that were very close to the national average.
- Despite students' positive attitudes to learning, achievement in lessons is variable. Across all year groups there is evidence of good and sometimes outstanding achievement. However, changes in staffing and a legacy of temporarily filled vacancies in the past have created inconsistencies in teaching and led to gaps in students' knowledge. Leaders have identified this issue and are addressing it.
- Academy leaders have pursued a deliberate policy of early entry for mathematics. The strategy has helped secure improvements in GCSE standards and it is appreciated by students. The rationale behind it is to help build students' confidence in the subject. They know and fully accept that they are not permitted to drop the subject if they fail to achieve their target grades.
- Students known to be eligible for free school meals and others eligible for the pupil premium achieve less well than their classmates. In 2012, eligible students' GCSE results were, on average, one grade lower than those of their peers in both English and mathematics. However, effective additional support for these students has narrowed this gap in the 2013 GCSE results.
- A range of effective strategies supports the development of students' literacy skills, which for some are very low on entry to the academy. Year 7 'catch-up' funding is used effectively to target and support identified students in the last year of their primary school and their first year at the academy through additional literacy sessions.
- Students who attend alternative courses away from the academy site at Northbrook College achieve well in their vocational courses and progress well in their academy studies. Their progress and attendance are carefully checked and any necessary action is taken if they fall behind.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs have typically made poor progress in the past. However, in 2013, their progress in English and mathematics was better than in 2012. New leadership of this aspect of the academy's work has led to a more accurate identification of students' needs and focused training for additional adults that work to support them.
- Students' achievement in the sixth form has improved since 2011. Standards in A and AS level have gone up. However, not enough students achieve three good grades at A level, and retention rates on courses remain below the national average. This is because the advice and guidance offered to students has been superficial.

### The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching has significantly improved since the last inspection, when achievement was inadequate and too much of the teaching was weak. However, it still requires improvement because there is too much variability across certain subjects and year groups, and not all teachers capitalise fully

on students' keenness to learn and do well.

- As in the rest of the school, the quality of teaching in the sixth form is variable. Leaders have recently introduced new systems to set targets, track students' progress and to support teachers with their lesson planning. However, it is too soon for the impact of these initiatives to show.
- The academy has developed systems to ensure that challenging targets are set for students and to support teachers in tracking students' progress. Despite this, not all teachers make effective use of this information in lessons to check progress or move students' learning forward.
- Students' work is marked regularly and the academy marking policy is in evidence across all subjects. Some of this marking is of high quality and details precisely what skills have been developed and what needs further improvement. This is not universally the case. Less effective marking leaves students unclear about what they need to do to improve their work.
- In the lessons where teaching is most effective, teachers ask probing questions or plan interesting activities that capture students' imagination and move them forward in their learning. However, sometimes the same task or activity is required of all students within a group, with no variation in the types of activity or the time allowed for tasks to be completed. In these circumstances, students become bored and their progress slackens. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils.
- Support provided by additional adults sometimes results in good teamwork, supporting better learning for those that need extra help. Although this is an improving picture, it is not yet consistent across the academy.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium receive effective additional support that is tailored to their needs, such as extra tuition and free breakfasts. This has helped secure improvements in the recent GCSE results but, in lessons, teachers do not focus sufficiently on these students' specific learning needs.
- In an English lesson where teaching was excellent, students were asked to work in pairs to mime their interpretation of characters' motivations in a text. After working out their mimes, they were required to act them out for others in the class to interpret and evaluate. All students progressed well during this process, which both motivated and inspired them to reflect. Final analyses evidenced thoughtful answers which the teacher ably probed through targeted questioning of individual students, enabling them to develop their thinking still further.

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

- Students are keen to learn and cooperative in lessons. They behave well and take great pride in the academy. They conduct themselves in an orderly manner, are polite and have good relationships with academy staff.
- Students say they feel safe in the academy and are supported well. They told inspectors that bullying is rare and that teachers act swiftly to deal with it if it occurs. This concurs with academy records, which attest to a significant drop in the number of incidents in 2013, as compared with 2012.
- In lessons and around the site, behaviour is calm. Expectations of behaviour are high and clearly understood by all. There have been no exclusions since the appointment of the new principal. His impact has been noted by students, who have welcomed the introduction of rewards and

unequivocal consequences for misbehaviour.

- Students recognise the merit of the newly introduced grouping system, which places older students alongside younger ones during mentor time, with opportunities for students to support one another. A sixth form student commented, 'I confess I didn't like it at first, but now I help a Year 7 student by listening to her read in the mornings. This makes me feel useful rather than wasting time in the mornings chatting with my friends.'
- The behaviour of the small number of students who attend the off-site provision is good.
- The academy has set up good systems to support students who have difficulty managing their behaviour. Effective links with external services and academy-based support have helped to improve this term on the previously below-average attendance rates.
- Inspectors witnessed no disruptive behaviour, but they did observe some drifting away from the task or a reluctance to participate energetically when the teaching was less than good.

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

- The principal has already gained the respect and commitment of the student and staff community, through his steadfast approach and a proven track record in headship of another academy within the trust. He is determined to build on the improvements already secured to move the academy rapidly to good. Students attest to his uncompromising stance on standards, and staff are firmly behind him.
- Leaders, including members of the academy council and trustees, share a realistic view of the strengths and weaknesses in the academy's performance. They have brought about rapid improvements since the academy's previous inspection, especially in overall achievement and behaviour.
- Senior leaders have set up excellent information systems to enable leaders at all levels to monitor students' achievement and make connections between their behaviour, attendance and the quality of the teaching they receive. Routine and effective use of these systems has been instrumental in securing improvements in each of these areas.
- The academy offers a good range of academic and vocational courses, which are increasingly well matched to the abilities and needs of its students. Opportunities such as trips abroad and scheduled enrichment, such as Italian cookery or Yoga on Wednesday afternoons, provide well for the development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In particular, the programme offered through the performing arts is a strength of the academy.
- Equality of opportunity is at the heart of what trustees, council members and staff set out to achieve. Discrimination is not tolerated. This is particularly evident in the principal's approach to exclusion and his insistence on securing a full complement of permanent staff so that students' experience of learning is not jeopardised by frequent changes of teachers.
- Systems for managing teachers' performance are thorough and agreed with governors. Since the principal's appointment, several staff members have been refused progression through the pay scale because their teaching is not consistently good. Teachers whose performance is weak are either helped to improve or leave.
- Academy staff members at all levels are able to benefit from training opportunities that are

provided from within the trust. This approach is helping to ensure that, as leadership vacancies arise, there will be good-quality prospective candidates from within the academy to step up into more challenging roles.

- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching regularly. Joint observations and scrutiny of students' work conducted with inspectors affirm the accuracy of their judgements. There is good evidence too that their targeted support and coaching has helped teachers to improve their practice. However, not all subject leaders have sharp enough skills in this key role.
- Leaders do not give students helpful enough advice and guidance over their choice of courses in the sixth form. As a result, too many students make inappropriate choices and drop out partway through their courses.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet all statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Council members and trustees are ambitious for the academy and have an open and frank relationship with the principal and his team. They recognise that their systems to check standards and teaching lacked rigour in the past. However, they have taken swift and effective remedial action; reporting systems through the academy council to the trustees are now extremely robust. High-quality training is now routinely provided via the chief officer of the trust. Governors know about the quality of teaching within the academy and are fully informed of teachers' performance management. They support the principal's decisions about awarding or withholding pay awards, and back the necessary actions to improve teaching, including through disciplinary and dismissal proceedings. They know how well the academy is performing compared with other schools nationally, and they know how the pupil premium funding is used and its impact. They are also clear about what still needs to be improved.

## 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>	135744
<b>Local authority</b>	West Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	423705

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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<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>	1033
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	108
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The Woodard Academies Trust
<b>Chair</b>	Jan Richardson
<b>Principal</b>	Peter Midwinter
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 November 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01903 767434
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