

Passmores Academy

Tracyes Road, Harlow, CM18 6JH

Inspection dates 17–18 October 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		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher’s leadership is excellent. He works successfully with other leaders and governors to raise standards and improve students’ progress.
- Leaders provide effective training to improve the quality of teaching.
- Students reach broadly average standards and make good progress. In English standards are above average and students make outstanding progress.
- Teaching is good overall, and in English it is outstanding.
- Students’ behaviour is good and their attitudes to work and learning are positive.
- Students say they enjoy being at the academy. They have good social skills that prepare them well for life when they leave to go to work or to further education.
- Students feel safe. They say that bullying is rare, but when it does happen, staff deal with it swiftly and effectively.
- Teachers provide students with outstanding academic help and guidance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally work is not challenging enough and student’s progress briefly slows down.
- Teachers’ marking does not always give detailed enough feedback to students on how well they are doing or clear guidance on how they should improve their work.
- All teachers do not make sure that students’ written work is presented in a neat enough way to help them when they refer back to it for revision purposes.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 46 teachers in 47 parts of lessons. Six of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders to determine how accurately they evaluate teaching.
- Meetings were held with staff, students, parents and governors. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the local education authority.
- Inspectors examined documents about the academy’s work, including information about the achievement of students, development planning and the academy’s own judgements on its strengths and weaknesses.
- Inspectors took account of the 99 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, and the academy’s own survey of parents’ views. It also considered the responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Edward Wheatley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gillian Walley	Additional Inspector
Michael Stanton	Additional Inspector
Edwin Powell	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school converted to an academy on 1 September 2011. When its predecessor school, Passmores School and Technology College, was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2008, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The academy is similar in size to most secondary schools.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below average, and none are at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. A small proportion of students are vulnerable because they have social or emotional difficulties.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the school premium is broadly average. This is additional funding for students looked after by the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and others.
- A small proportion of students are partly educated off site at the Construction Training Partnership, Avant Garde (hairdressing and beauty), Harlow College, Hub and Spoke and Paringdon Sports to provide them with opportunities to gain work-related qualifications.
- The academy is the lead academy in the Passmores Cooperative learning Community (PCLC), a multi academy trust set up between Passmores and two primary academies in Harlow which send their pupils to Passmores.
- The headteacher provides support for other schools in the region, and further afield, especially in the areas of leadership.
- The academy has experienced problems with staffing in recent years.
- The college 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 students' achievement and move good teaching to outstanding by making sure that teachers:
 - consistently provide work that is challenging for students of all abilities
 - always give clear guidance in their marking about how well students achieve, and what they need to do to improve their work
 - check that students' written work is well presented so that it is useful to them when they need it for revision purposes.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards are broadly average but vary between years and are part of a trend of steadily improving attainment by students. In the current Year 11, they are above average. Students make good progress from below average attainment on entry and their highly positive attitudes to learning contribute significantly to their good achievement.
- The proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics was close to average in 2013, which was lower than in 2012. The proportion of students achieving the highest A* to A grades is below average, but improving, and the progress made by these students from their starting points is good.
- GCSE results varied between subjects in 2013. They were best in English where they have been above average in recent years and students make outstanding progress. In mathematics standards were close to average, and have improved significantly in recent years, with students making good progress and some making excellent progress. In science standards were average, but have not improved as fast as in other subjects because of staffing changes. Nevertheless, students' progress in science is generally good and slowly improving. It is good in other subjects.
- Students read well. Those who struggle with reading have support to help them improve, and make good progress. Students' written work is usually detailed and accurate, although it not always as well presented and neat as it should be.
- Students have broadly average mathematical skills. They calculate competently and confidently. They use graphs and charts to illustrate their mathematical understanding well in science and other subjects. Standards in mathematics are rising as teachers carefully make sure students' particular learning needs are well met.
- Some students take their English, mathematics and some other GCSE examinations early, although the academy is reducing the numbers who do this rapidly. The great majority of those who took GCSE examinations early did well, and continued with extra subjects or more advance studies in the subjects they took. Those who are not so successful continue with the GCSE courses and take the examinations again at the end of Year 11. The academy's approach to early entry benefitted those students wishing to extend their studies or take other courses.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress. Teachers and support staff provide sensitive, challenging support so that these students quickly gain confidence in their own abilities to do well.
- Students who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Teachers and support assistants keep a close watch on how well they succeed and provide immediate help and guidance if they detect they need support.
- The small number of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable are well supported and make good progress, despite occasional interruptions to their education because of their particular social or emotional needs.
- Students supported by the pupil premium funding make good, and often faster progress than

other students. These students started in Year 7 about one term behind other students in English and by Year 11 are nearly three terms ahead. In mathematics, they started in Year 7 at approximately the same levels as other students and finished in Year 11 about one term ahead of other students. The academy makes effective use of its funding to provide support for individual and groups of students, books to help their reading and funds to make sure they can join in the same trips and activities as other students.

- Students entering Year 7 with below expected levels of attainment make good progress and catch up to the levels they should be at, because they are well supported. The Year 7 catch-up funding is used successfully, for example, to provide one-to-one tutoring to help students master the basic skills of linking sounds to letters to improve their reading.
- Students attending work-related courses away from the academy main site achieve good results in the examinations they take.

The quality of teaching is good

- In most lessons teaching is challenging. Teachers provide work based on accurate assessment of students' progress and what their specific learning needs are. Teachers provide extra activities that make sure the most able students are challenged to reach the highest standards they can. For example, teachers challenge students to look for sophisticated alternative vocabulary when they write. They provide carefully planned activities to support slower learning students so that they make good progress and gain confidence in their own skills.
- The pace of learning is usually fast. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge helps them provide activities that students find interesting, and which encourage them to want to learn more. In this way students' attitudes to learning are effectively promoted, and this contributes well to the quality of their learning.
- Teachers' questioning is usually searching and demanding. Teachers question students closely, and encourage them to give answers in detail, and to explain their understanding and knowledge clearly and fully. For example, in a Year 11 science lesson, the teacher encouraged students to use the names of gases in their explanation, rather than use the general term 'gas'. This is particularly valuable for those students about to take examinations.
- Teachers provide many opportunities for students to improve their English and mathematical skills. They encourage independent writing so that students express themselves well, and make sure they use tables, graphs and interpret numerical data wherever they can.
- Teachers ensure students work together regularly, to share resources, make decisions about their learning, and to evaluate their learning. In this way students develop respect and consideration for each other and their moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Teachers and classroom assistants work together well. Assistants are effective in the quality of support they provide for students whether they have learning difficulties, need extra support to help them make fast progress, or if they need emotional support. They make sure students have opportunities to work independently, and encourage them to explain their understanding and demonstrate new skills confidently.

- Teachers' marking of students' work is usually good. The best marking gives students a clear understanding of how well they are doing, how to improve their work and what the next steps in learning are. In many cases students are encouraged and helped to evaluate their own work, and this contributes to students making extra efforts to produce good quality work. Occasionally teachers do not give students enough information about how well they are doing or tell them how to improve their work.
- In a small number of lessons, work is not challenging enough and students' progress then slows briefly. Teachers do not always make sure that students present their work neatly enough for it to be readily used for revising at a later date.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' attitudes to work are good. They are keen to do well, they enjoy learning, and their attention to work is almost always good, only wandering in the less challenging lessons. They nearly always concentrate and are quick to ask for help if they do not understand.
- Students' behaviour is nearly always good because they have a good understanding of the academy's rules of behaviour. Around the buildings and grounds their behaviour is exemplary.
- Relationships between students and between students and adults are excellent. Students support and help each other and know that adults will help them if they need it. There is a high level of respect and trust between students and adults that contributes well to learning.
- Students take an active part in the wide range of sporting, music and artistic activities the academy provides. They support extra study classes the school provides out of school hours well. They are very aware of others less fortunate than themselves. For example, they provide support for the Lupus sufferers' association.
- Students' understanding of the different forms of bullying is good. They know about cyber-bullying and the dangers associated with it, and would go to adults for help immediately if they or other students were threatened in any way. They say that bullying is rare.
- Students know how to stay safe. In laboratories, workshops and art studios students move round safely, and use equipment carefully so that they do not injure themselves or others.
- Students' attendance is above average and has improved. Persistent absence has decreased significantly, and this is helped by the very good contacts the academy has with parents, and the value it has placed on good attendance as an important factor in helping students make good progress.
- A very small number of students have been excluded, and the numbers have not changed significantly over recent years. However, the academy uses this sanction as a last resort when student behaviour is totally unacceptable. The great majority of students, and their families, know what is unacceptable, and do not support this behaviour.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The principal gives an exceptionally strong direction for the academy to improve and his vision for the academy is accepted by all leaders and staff. Staff in all positions show determination to improve their own performance and to support students to do well.
- Leaders have eliminated inadequate teaching. They work tirelessly to improve teaching from good to outstanding, and the small amount of teaching that is not yet good to improve. There is a shared view of what outstanding teaching looks like, and all teachers aspire to that standard.
- Training for teachers is exceptionally good. Teachers know what their targets are and strive to reach them. They know that they must help students to achieve well, support the academy's priorities for improvement and take part in professional development themselves, before they can progress on salary scales.
- Training for leaders is very successful, and has led to the steady improvement in standards and teaching. However, it has also led to several of subject leaders gaining promotion and moving on in their careers to other schools. The academy works hard to fill posts that become vacant, and will not appoint unless sure of the candidates' suitability for the positions.
- All leaders have a very clear view of what the academy must do to improve further. Effective action has been taken to raise standards and to reduce persistent absence. A suitable leader for science has not yet been appointed, although the academy is actively seeking an appropriate candidate. In the meantime the academy has put temporary arrangements in place to sustain and improve students' progress where possible.
- The academy manages its curriculum well. Subjects and courses leading to qualifications are carefully planned to make sure students' needs are fully catered for. The academy checks on the quality of courses provided by other organisations to make sure students are receiving the best education available, and meet the academy's high standards. It provides excellent guidance for students to help them do well, and to make the right choices when they leave to go into employment or to further education.
- There is a wide range of drama, art, sports, competitions, and residential trips that promote students' wider interests. Students learn about different beliefs and traditions of people in modern Britain, and from around the world. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well.
- The academy has strong links with the local authority which plays a significant part in confirming the accuracy of the academy's self-evaluation, and in supporting the improvement in teaching. It has effective links with other schools and academies, and in particular with feeder academies which are part of the PCLC. Staff share training and support each other effectively.
- Parents are pleased with the academy. They consider they are well informed, and attend parent consultation events readily. The academy makes sure it contacts all parents to ensure they have opportunities to discuss their children's progress, and almost all parents take advantage of this. The school uses a wide range of methods to keep parents informed and involved. Parents spoken to during the inspection confirmed this.

■ The academy successfully promotes good progress by all students. It is effective in eliminating discrimination of all kinds. It promotes enjoyment in learning and its capacity for further improvement is strong.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is very well informed. It supports the headteacher and staff effectively. Governors know how well students achieve compared with students in other schools nationally, about the performance of different groups of students and of any differences in attainment between different subjects. They check how well the academy promotes further improvement in students' progress and challenge the headteacher over action taken to ensure standards rise. Governors manage how funds are spent well. They have a good understanding of the positive impact of pupil premium funding on the progress made by students.

Governors know about the quality of teaching. They check that leaders' monitor teachers' professional practice and make sure that increases in salaries are linked to teachers' performance management targets. Governors meet their responsibilities in ensuring safeguarding requirements are met, and that the academy checks staff are suitable for posts they are appointed to.

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	137445
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	425433

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1014
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Beashel
Headteacher	Vic Goddard
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2008
Telephone number	01279 770800
Fax number	01279 445515
Email address	passmores@passmoresacademy.com

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

