

Oasis Academy Lord's Hill

Romsey Road, Southampton, SO16 8FA

Inspection dates 7–8 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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

- Students do not yet make consistently good progress. In particular, the pace of progress of students supported through the pupil premium funding is not fast enough to help them close the gap with other students.
- Occasionally, teaching is not challenging enough, and teachers' questioning is not searching enough.
- When teachers mark students' work, they do not always give students clear information about how well they are doing and how to improve their work, or make sure that they follow any guidance given.
- Teachers do not always check that students give accurate explanations in their writing that fully reflect their understanding.
- Teachers do not always make sure that students write neatly.
- Occasionally, senior leaders do not accurately evaluate the quality of teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- Students' progress is improving fast.
- The Principal works well with other leaders and the academy council to raise standards and improve students' progress.
- Much of the current teaching is good; the academy's training has been effective in improving teachers' skills.
- Students' behaviour is good and their attitudes to work and learning are positive.
- Students say they enjoy being at the academy. They feel safe and say that bullying is rare, and that, when it does occur, staff deal with it well.
- The quality of support and guidance for students, especially vulnerable students is very good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 28 teachers in 31 lessons. Twelve 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 members of the academy council (the governing body). The lead inspector also met a representative of the academy chain.
- Inspectors examined documents about the academy's work, including information about the achievement of students, development planning and the academy's own judgements of its strengths and weaknesses.
- Inspectors took account of 27 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, and the academy's own survey of parents' views. They also considered 57 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Edward Wheatley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Helen Diles

Additional Inspector

Susan Bullen

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than most secondary schools.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is broadly average, and a small number are at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is well above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also well 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 pupil premium is well above 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 very small number of students are partly educated off site. The academy runs the 'Down to Earth Farm' which some students who experience social and emotional difficulties attend for part of their education. A very small number of students attend Southampton College to gain work-related qualifications.
- The academy is part of the Oasis Community Learning group of academies. It has a specialism in the arts.
- The Principal provides training for other academies in the Oasis Community Learning group.
- In September 2012, the academy moved into the new buildings it now occupies.
- The academy 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 the quality of teaching and students' achievement by making sure that teachers:
 - provide work that is challenging and carefully prepared to meet the learning needs of all groups of students, especially those supported through the pupil premium funding
 - ask students searching questions to make sure they fully understand what they are learning
 - tell students when marking their work how well they achieve and what they need to do to improve their work, and make sure that students follow the advice given
 - check that students write in enough detail to fully reflect their understanding of what they have learned
 - check that students write neatly.
- Ensure that all leaders consistently evaluate the quality of teaching accurately.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- The progress made by students requires improvement. While many students now make good progress, a significant minority of students have not made sufficient progress that is being sustained over time. There is a clear upward trend in the progress made by students in mathematics and science, but in English, where improvements have been recent, good progress has not been sustained for long enough.
- In particular, students supported by the pupil premium funding are not yet making consistently good progress, and the gap between them and other students has not closed enough. Despite some improvement, there are variations in their progress in English and mathematics from year to year. Nevertheless, their progress is improving, and while the gap between them and other students has not closed enough, it is not as wide as it has been in the past. Funds are spent wisely on providing small-group and individual support for students and making sure they take part in the wide range of activities the academy offers. This is starting to have a positive impact.
- Standards are rising, although they were below average at the end of Year 11 in 2013. They are currently close to average.
- Examination results have risen in recent years. Attainment on entry is significantly below average and, for students who took their GCSE examinations in 2013, was exceptionally low. For many of these students this represents good progress. However, for others good progress is not consistent, and has not been sustained for long enough.
- In 2013, GCSE results were best in mathematics and they have improved in recent years. Many students made good progress. Results in English have been behind those in mathematics in recent years, but are catching up, with many students making good progress. Science results dipped in 2013 from the above average results in 2012 because of staff changes, but are rising again, and students generally make good progress. Students' progress is currently good in other subjects and is improving.
- Students' positive attitudes to learning make a significant contribution to their improving achievement.
- Most students read well. Those who find reading difficult receive support to help them link sounds to letters, and this helps them to make good progress. Students speak well, express themselves clearly and have a good vocabulary. However, this command of language is not reflected in their writing. Students do not always express their understanding well enough in writing, which is sometimes untidy and hard to read.
- Standards in mathematics are rising. Students' mathematical skills are broadly average. Most students calculate competently, produce different kinds of graphs and learn how to interpret numerical information they collect in science experiments and in other subjects.
- The academy's approach to entering students early for some of their examinations has been beneficial for those wishing to gain extra qualifications. Some students take their English, mathematics and other GCSE examinations early. The majority do well, and then go on to take more advanced courses. Students who are not so successful continue with the GCSE courses and take the examinations again at the end of Year 11. However, in the light of the government's stance on early entry, the academy is reducing significantly the number of students entered

early.

- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers and support staff provide good support that enables these students to work independently and with confidence.
- The very small number of more-able students make good progress.
- Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable make good progress. Teachers and support staff carefully check how well they learn and work with other students. Sometimes, they provide them with opportunities to work alone, often at the Down to Earth Farm. At other times, they provide support in lessons or with other students so that they gain confidence in their own ability to do well.
- Students who speak English as an additional language make good progress. They learn readily with other students, and staff check that their learning is successful and provide them with good support when they need it.
- Students entering Year 7 with below expected levels of attainment, especially in reading and writing, catch up to the levels they should be at. The Year 7 catch-up funding is used effectively to provide reading materials, one-to-one teaching to improve reading and writing skills, and to make sure students have the mathematical skills they need to work with other students.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- While teaching is currently often good it has not been sustained over a long enough period of time to ensure all students consistently make good progress. Improved teaching is evident in English, but it is recent and, in both English and mathematics, some students supported through pupil premium funding have not made enough progress. In a small proportion of lessons, work is not challenging enough, or matched to all students' learning needs and then progress is slow.
- Recently introduced changes to teachers' marking are not yet fully embedded. The best marking makes sure students know how well they achieve, what they need to do to improve their work, and teachers make sure that students follow the guidance given to help them improve. However, this is not always the case. Marking sometimes gives too little information about how well students make progress and how they could improve their work. When guidance is given, it is not always followed by students. Students do not always learn from their mistakes.
- Teachers' questioning is occasionally not searching enough so students do not fully explain their understanding. Where questioning is searching students readily attempt explanations and join in discussions, even when they are not fully sure they understand. In these lessons students improve their understanding, boost their self-esteem, and develop confidence in their ability to learn. This is helped by consistently good relationships between teachers and students.
- Teachers do not always make sure that students write in enough detail to fully explain their understanding of what they have been learning. Sometimes students' handwriting is untidy and difficult to read, and this is not consistently corrected by teachers. Nevertheless, many teachers provide opportunities for students to improve their English and mathematical skills. They encourage independent writing and discussion, in which students use correct terminology.
- Teaching is improving and currently includes strong features that promote good learning. Teachers often provide challenging work based on accurate assessment of students' progress

and learning needs. They frequently tailor work well to the different learning needs of students in their lessons, so that students of all abilities make good progress. For example, in a science lesson in Year 10, the most-able students were expected to be able to explain how they deal with experimental results that were not quite the ones expected.

- The majority of lessons include a wide range of activities that engage students' interest and encourage their concentration. Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to plan interesting learning activities. This contributes effectively to students' enthusiasm for learning.
- Teachers use a wide range of materials to enliven learning. Worksheets are often challenging, and students are expected to read them and extract important information to help their learning, which they often do well.
- Lessons include many opportunities for students to work independently and in small groups, where they collaborate and support each other in their learning. This makes a good contribution to students' moral, social and cultural development.
- Classroom assistants and teachers work effectively together. Classroom assistants are usually well informed about the subject matter taught. They question and support students they work with well, and encourage them to make decisions for themselves. This helps students to practise newly learned skills and become independent learners.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students have positive attitudes to work and go to lessons ready to learn. They are keen to do well. They nearly always concentrate on their learning, and their attention wanders only on those occasions when learning is not challenging.
- Students' attendance is above average and has improved significantly since 2012. Persistent absence has reduced considerably because the academy has close links with families and follows up absences rigorously. Students say that academy is much more enjoyable now that they are in the new buildings.
- Their behaviour has improved significantly. It is good, and there have been no exclusions in the current academy year, after a period in which they were well above average. Students have a good understanding of the academy's expectations of their behaviour, and respond well because they respect staff. Around the buildings and grounds students' behaviour is excellent.
- Students take an active part in the wide range of out-of-school activities. Some they join for fun, and others to help their learning. All activities are well supported. The academy's arts specialism is important in providing a wide range of activities that help students express and present themselves well publicly. For example, students take part in drama, music, photography, puppet making and the Oasis Youth Theatre.
- Relationships among students and between students and adults are extremely good. Students and adults respect each other, and this contributes well to learning.
- Students behave safely around the academy. They know how to stay safe in workshops, studios and laboratories. They use equipment carefully and with respect for each other.
- They have a very good understanding of the different forms of bullying. They support each other if it is necessary, and also say that they would be confident going to any member of staff if they

needed help.

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal has a very clear view on how the academy needs to improve. His vision is shared with, and supported by, all leaders and staff. Staff are determined to improve their own performance as teachers or leaders, so that students' achievement continues to improve.
- The academy accurately identifies areas for improvement. It has dealt well with inadequate achievement in English by strengthening leadership and supporting staff in improving the quality of teaching. As a result, students' progress has accelerated but this improvement is recent and has not been sustained over a long enough period of time to enable them to make consistently good progress.
- Leaders have almost entirely eliminated inadequate teaching, and provide considerable support to help teachers improve their skills. There is a clearly shared view of what outstanding teaching looks like, and teachers aspire to this standard. However, while most senior leaders evaluate teaching accurately, there are occasional inconsistencies when the evaluation is too generous.
- Nevertheless, training for teachers is good. Teachers work closely together to identify their own training needs and to share effective teaching skills. Teachers know what their targets are and that progression on the salary scale is dependent on them meeting them, especially targets associated with students' progress.
- Training for leaders is good overall, and where subject leadership has not been effective in raising standards in the past, for example, in English, action has successfully been taken to improve leadership. Leaders are supported effectively within the academy, through links with other schools, and with good-quality training by representatives of the Oasis Community Learning.
- The academy manages its curriculum well. It provides a good range of subjects leading to GCSE and non-vocational qualifications. It has established effective flexible approaches to deal with small year groups. For example, due to low numbers in the year group, students are taught art and photography together in the same class to ensure that the academy maintains a broad curriculum. The art and photography teachers work closely together to provide expertise to support students' learning.
- The academy checks that the quality of provision for the small number of students taught elsewhere is good, and that students benefit from that provision.
- Support and guidance for vulnerable students and their families are very good and help promote students' improved attendance, participation in learning and good progress.
- A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, including arts, drama, sports and residential trips, enrich students' experiences and promote wide interests. The academy provides very good guidance for students' further education and training. Students' knowledge and understanding of the values and beliefs of different people in Britain and around the world are promoted well, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The academy's survey of parental views supports the positive views of parents completing the Parent View online questionnaire. Parents spoken to are pleased with how well their children do at the academy, and the quality of help and support that both students and parents receive.

- The academy successfully promotes good progress now, and enjoyment of education by all students. Its efforts to improve achievement are working well, but have not yet resulted in good achievement for all students. It deals with all forms of discrimination well, and its capacity for further improvement is strong.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The academy council is very well informed and supports the Principal and staff effectively. Members know how well different groups of students perform compared with each other, and how students achieve compared with students nationally. They know about differences in attainment between subjects and what the academy is doing to ensure attainment improves. The academy council checks on standards and challenges the Principal on how he promotes further improvements in attainment. It manages how funds are spent well and has a good understanding of the impact of pupil premium funds on the progress made by students.
- Members of the academy council know about the quality of teaching, and check that leaders monitor teachers' professional competencies. They check that advances in salaries are linked to the progress that students make, and to teachers' development of teaching and leadership skills. They meet their responsibilities in ensuring safeguarding requirements are met, and that the academy checks the suitability of newly appointed staff.

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	135628
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	406613

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	528
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Goodall
Headteacher	Ian Golding
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2010
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