

# Chelmer Valley High School

Court Road, Broomfield, Chelmsford, CM1 7ER

**Inspection dates** 14–15 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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 headteacher's leadership is good. He provides clear direction for the academy's work to raise standards and improve students' progress.
- He is well supported by all in leadership positions and by the governing body. The academy is improving.
- Leaders provide effective training to improve the quality of teaching.
- The sixth form is good. Students make rapid progress because teaching is good, and the programme of work they study suits them and is effectively planned.
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- Students make good progress and reach above average levels of attainment.
- Students behave well and have positive attitudes to their learning.
- Students say they enjoy being at the academy. They have good social skills and are well prepared for life when they leave the academy.
- They feel safe in school. They say that bullying is rare, and that if it did happen, it would be dealt with swiftly and effectively.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Work is occasionally too slow or not fully challenging for some students.
- Teachers do not always tell students how well they are doing, what they need to do to improve their work or check that students follow the guidance they are given.
- Teachers do not always probe students' understanding with tough enough questions, or provide opportunities for students to improve their understanding by discussing what they learn.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 43 teachers in 44 parts of lessons. Five of these observations were shared 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 a representative of the local 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 119 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
Jacqueline Pentlow	Additional Inspector
Brenda Watson	Additional Inspector
Terence Cook	Additional Inspector
Susan Cox	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The academy is larger than 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 below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is broadly average. This is additional government funding for certain groups of students, including students looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- A small number of students are partly educated offsite at Chelmsford College, Braintree College or Thriftwood Special School.
- Chelmer Valley High School converted to an academy on 1 August 2011. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- Before it changed to an academy, the school was federated with a local school that was due for closure. On its closure, most of the students came to Chelmer Valley High, many into the Year 11 group of students who took their GCSE examinations in 2013.
- The headteacher provides support for other schools in the authority, particularly in the areas of leadership.
- The academy has a specialism in engineering.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and students' achievement by making sure:
  - learning is fast and activities are always matched to the learning needs of students
  - teachers consistently tell students how well they achieve and how to improve their progress, and make sure they follow guidance given
  - teachers question students in depth about their understanding and provide opportunities for students to discuss new learning so that they have a good grasp of what they learn.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Most students make good progress from broadly average attainment on entry. Students' positive attitudes to learning, in both the sixth form and main academy, make a significant contribution to their achievement.
- The results of GCSE examinations were above average in 2012, but fell in 2013, with the percentage of students obtaining five or more GCSE grades A\* to C including English and mathematics being broadly average. This year group had a significant minority of students who had experienced disruption to their education as they moved from a closing school to this academy. Although they made broadly average progress after they moved to the academy, they did not fully catch up on past underperformance and their lower GCSE grades are reflected in the overall 2013 GCSE results.
- Students currently in the academy are making good progress, and have returned to above average levels of attainment. Past slower progress made by boys has reduced significantly.
- Students read well. They write well and use a wide range of terminology related to the subjects they study accurately. They explain their knowledge and understanding clearly in all subjects.
- Students have above average mathematical skills, and they make good progress in consolidating their mathematical skills in most subjects. They handle numerical information well and can extract and explain information from graphs and tables accurately.
- The academy's approach to taking GCSE courses has been helpful to students. A small number of students have taken examinations early and then gone on to further courses when they have been successful. Those who were not successful continued with the GCSE courses they were on to improve their grades. The academy has discontinued the practice in response to the government's guidance.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Teachers and learning assistants provide good quality support that enables students to learn independently, to work cooperatively with other students, and to gain confidence in their ability to do well.
- Students who speak English as an additional language make good progress. They are well supported by other students who make sure they are part of the groups they work in. Staff provide effective guidance to help these students when they need it.
- The small number of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable are sympathetically and well supported. Other students include them and support them well so that they make good progress.
- Students arriving in Year 7 with lower than expected English and mathematics skills make good progress and soon rejoin their year group. They are well supported by extra reading materials, mathematics equipment and one-to-one support to accelerate their learning.
- Those students in Years 10 and 11 who attend local colleges for work-related courses make good progress. They gain good results in the examinations they take and are well prepared for work or further studies when they leave school.

- Students supported by the pupil premium funding make good progress. Funding is used well to provide extra resources to aid students' learning, one-to-one support, and to pay for activities that ensure they have the same opportunities as other students. These students entered Year 7 about six terms behind in English and five terms in mathematics. By the time they left, the gap had shrunk and they were between a third and a half a GCSE grade behind in both English and mathematics. The percentage of these students obtaining five or more GCSE grade A\* to E grades is increasing at a faster pace than GCSE results of other students, allowing for the anomaly of the 2013 results. In the current Year 11, many of these students are in classes for high ability students and achieve well, maintaining improvements made in 2012.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress and are successful. After a dip in the 2013 results, attainment on AS- and A-level courses is rising in both Year 12 and Year 13, and is above average. The guidance given to students on choosing courses suitable for their needs and based on their success at GCSE has improved. In lessons, students' learning is good and most are working towards good grades at both AS- and A-level. The small number of students following applied A- and AS-level courses are making good progress.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- In most lessons work is challenging, and based on teachers' accurate assessment of students' progress. Work is usually demanding and carefully planned to stretch the most able and to support those students who learn more slowly.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use well to provide interesting work and a wide range of learning activities. As a result, students' learning is good.
- In most lessons teachers provide opportunities for students to work together. This encourages students to discuss their learning, which helps them explain their understanding and knowledge well. Working in small groups also encourages good working relationships and promotes students' moral, social and cultural development well.
- Teachers make regular reference to GCSE courses requirements and give clear guidance on how to answer GCSE questions, and this prepares students well for the examinations they will be taking.
- Teachers provide many opportunities for students to strengthen their English, mathematics and computer skills. Students are expected to write and talk about their knowledge and understanding, which they do well. Students also practice their mathematical skills and use computers regularly to promote learning in other subjects.
- Teachers and learning assistants work together well to provide good support for students with learning difficulties, including those with emotional or social problems. Their support is sensitive and challenging, and they successfully help students to learn well and to work with other students or independently.
- In most lessons teachers question students well, prompting them to give clear answers and to explain their knowledge or ideas accurately. However, occasionally questioning does not probe students' understanding well enough and teachers do not give students enough opportunities to discuss their work explain themselves accurately in order to clarify their understanding.
- Teachers' marking of students' work is usually good, and gives clear guidance of how well

students achieve, and what they need to do to improve their work. Occasionally, guidance is not clear enough, and when teachers give guidance students do not always follow it.

- Nevertheless, most students know what their challenging examination targets are.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, and mostly provide challenging work that helps students make fast progress. The quality of guidance they give students is usually good or excellent, and students welcome and appreciate it. Teachers provide extra tuition and support for students.
- However, throughout the school there are occasional lessons in which the pace of teaching is slow or not always matched to students' learning needs. For example work is occasionally too easy for some. In these lessons students' progress briefly slows down.

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

- The behaviour and attitudes of students are good. Students are keen to do well, and their concentration and effort in lessons slips only when teaching is not challenging enough.
- Relationships between students and between students and adults are very good, and this means that students feel secure in asking questions when they do not understand, and in attempting to explain their ideas when they are not sure if their understanding is accurate. They know that teachers will give up their time to help them, and appreciate the help they receive.
- Students are polite, friendly and helpful. They support each other, and go out of their way to help others less fortunate than themselves. For example, they raise funds for Children in Need, and for the victims of the recent typhoon in the Philippines.
- Students have a very good understanding of the different forms of bullying and say that they rarely happen. They would take action to help anyone they felt was being bullied, and would readily ask adults for help if they needed to.
- Students take part in a wide range of music, drama, art and sports activities. The level of participation is high and contributes extremely well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Students behave safely in lessons and around the buildings, especially in the narrow corridors. They respect each other as they move round in lessons and move between classrooms during the day.
- Attendance is above average and has improved considerably recently. Persistent absence has reduced and the academy works closely with families to impress on them the importance of good attendance on helping students to make good progress.
- The high rate of exclusion has reduced significantly, as new students have learned to behave properly and to observe the academy's high expectations of behaviour.
- Sixth form students have good attitudes to learning. Their willingness to work hard and to support each other in learning is impressive. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of setting a good example to younger students. Their attendance is high.

**The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher provides a clear direction for the academy's efforts to improve. Priorities are clearly defined, and are shared and agreed between all leaders and other staff.
- Senior leaders have dealt well with the integration of students from the school that closed down.
- The academy has good strategies to check its own effectiveness and to make changes to help drive up students' achievement. After the dip in GCSE results in 2013, it conducted a detailed evaluation of its teaching, and especially of the support systems it uses to help individual and small groups of students. As a result it introduced some changes that improved the quality of support for students with special educational needs.
- Leaders provide intensive and effective support where they identify the need for improvements to teaching. They have an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses, and all leaders are involved in checking on teaching and providing guidance to help teaching improve.
- Training and support for teachers is good, and teachers are keen to improve their classroom skills. Teachers know what their targets are to help them improve their practice, and that promotion on the salary scales depends on them achieving their targets, especially those related to students' progress.
- Subject leaders are effective in checking on the quality of teaching. Their skills in observing and evaluating teaching are being well supported by training from the local authority. They are strongly focused on improving students' achievement, and work effectively to deal with underachievement when it occurs. They have been particularly successful in helping boys' achievement improve so that it has caught up with that of girls.
- The leadership of the sixth form is good. Leadership has improved and the quality of support for students has improved so that courses are more closely matched to their abilities and needs than they were in the past.
- The curriculum is well organised. It is tailored to the mainly academic requirements of students, but has good links with local colleges that provide a wide range of work-related courses should students want them. Students are well prepared for their future, with almost all going on to further education, training or employment.
- The academy checks the quality and effectiveness of the courses students attend at other establishments well.
- The range of residential trips and other visits and activities to enhance students' learning is wide and rich. For example students participate in the Shakespeare Schools Festival, visit New York, visit CERN in Switzerland, and will soon be able to use the academy's observatory. The curriculum promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- Science, technology and mathematics activities are well promoted through the academy's engineering status. This helps students successfully discover possibilities in education and careers for the future.
- The very large majority of parents who gave their views are pleased with the academy. They feel well informed and supported, and are confident that their children make good progress. Senior leaders respond well to parental concerns.

- The academy has acted effectively to improve achievement and teaching, and to raise attendance levels. It is effective in eliminating all forms of discrimination and promoting students' enjoyment of learning. The capacity for further improvement is strong.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is well informed and supports the headteacher and staff well. Governors receive a wide range of information from senior leaders and subject leaders, which they use well to ask demanding questions about how well different groups of students achieve. They know how well students achieve compared with students nationally. They are well informed about the progress made by students supported through pupil premium funds and about the effectiveness of the academy's efforts to improve their progress further. They know about the quality of teaching and how leaders monitor teachers' professional skills. They make sure that salary increases are linked to teachers' performance management targets.
- Governors meet their responsibilities to ensure national safeguarding requirements are met, and that staff are checked thoroughly before taking up their appointments.



## 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>	137260
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	429606

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<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>	1185
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	181
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Gill Sturman
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Franklin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	N/A
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