

Abbey College, Ramsey

Abbey Road, Ramsey, PE26 1DG

Inspection dates 27–28 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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

- Achievement requires improvement because students' progress over time in English and mathematics has not been quick enough, nor have standards been high enough.
- Teaching has not been consistently good enough across all subjects to promote rapid academic progress throughout the academy for current students.
- In the past, teachers have not set work that is consistently matched well to students' needs.
- Strategies to promote independent learning, especially amongst higher attaining students, are not high enough to ensure they make consistently good progress.
- Feedback does not give students enough information about how to improve.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Though the programmes that students follow cover what they should, and progress is improving, progress is not consistently good across all subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Improvements in teaching and learning are leading to better progress and attainment. Gaps are closing quickly for many students.
- The headteacher, with the effective support of the leadership team and governing body, has successfully tackled previous weaknesses in teaching and is inspiring pupils and staff to further raise standards.
- Teachers and other adults create a positive climate around the school. Behaviour and relationships are good and students conduct themselves in a calm and purposeful manner.
- Students enjoy lessons and feel safe in the college.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 39 lessons, including several joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors visited tutor group sessions and scrutinised students' work.
- They observed behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, senior and middle leaders, other school staff and several members of the governing body.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of school documents, including self–evaluation summaries and development plans, behaviour records, safeguarding records and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 130 parents and carers who responded to the online Parent View survey. They also considered the more detailed information from recent surveys of parents and carers carried out by the school. Inspectors considered the views expressed in 63 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Ian Jones, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jalil Shaikh	Additional Inspector
David Davies	Additional Inspector
Helen Booth	Additional Inspector
Paul O'Shea	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Abbey College is a larger-than-average secondary school.
- The college converted to become an academy on 1 September 2011. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The proportion of students for whom the academy receives the pupil premium (additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those with a parent in the armed services and the very few looked after by the local authority) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The academy meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students by the end of Year 11.
- A very small number of students are taught in alternative provision away from the academy site at The County School (run by Cambridgeshire County Council) and ACE (alternative provision based in Peterborough).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on strengths in teaching and thus raise achievement to good by:
 - ensuring that students receive high quality and constructive feedback so that they can identify the next steps to take in order to make improvements
 - broadening the opportunities to promote independent learning, especially amongst higher attaining students.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students enter the academy with attainment typical for their age. In 2012 not enough students attained five or more grade A* to C including these subjects. Not enough students made the progress expected of them from their starting points. Although improving, progress is not consistently good across different year groups.
- In 2013 progress improved, representing a significant increase on the previous year, although some variation remained. Evidence gathered during the inspection, observations of teaching and learning, scrutiny of work and discussions with students show that progress is continuing to accelerate across many subjects. The proportion of students making and exceeding the progress expected has improved this year.
- Progress data for the current Year 11 students indicate that they are on track to reach standards attained above the 2013 levels, and achieve better than the 2013 cohort.
- The academy has stopped entering students early for mathematics and English examinations. Leaders are aware that this depressed the achievement of higher attaining students. Some of these students achieved grade C in these GCSEs rather than the higher ones.
- Achievement in English literature, religious education, statistics, history, geography, modern foreign languages and a range of work-related subjects is good and contributes well to the overall attainment of students.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is also improving rapidly due to targeted support provided by many teachers. A recently introduced initiative to provide additional literacy and numeracy support during tutor time is effective in supporting learning.
- The school is making good use of pupil premium funding to ensure that eligible students receive the support they need. The three-quarter GCSE grade gap in English and mathematics between these students and their classmates in 2012 has narrowed to two-thirds in 2013.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement. Although current improvements in teaching have led to a rapid improvement in achievement, too many students have not made good progress over the last two years. Despite this, a suitable proportion of students enter further education across a range of institutions and courses.
- Additional funding for those Years 7 and 8 students who need help to catch up with their peers is appropriately spent. Small-group work and one-to-one helps ensure some of the more vulnerable learners make good progress.
- The very small number of students who attend alternative provision achieve well on courses suited to their needs.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has not been consistently good enough over time to make sure current students are making good progress in most subjects. However, the proportion of good teaching is rising because school leaders make regular checks on lessons and act swiftly on concerns, thus

promoting best practice.

- In the past teaching has not consistently provided activities which meet all students' needs, although this has improved significantly over the last year. However a few lessons lack suitable pace, and more able students are not challenged to think for themselves or persevere with their learning independently. In the best lessons, teachers give students opportunities to think creatively about their work or reflect in depth about the topic under consideration.
- Marking is too variable. In the best examples, teachers identify what students need to do to improve their work, give them time to reflect on the feedback given and provide opportunities to respond to the advice given. However, approaches to marking are inconsistent across subjects and within teams, and sometimes students are not clear about the next steps they should take.
- Where teaching is best, planning is effective and teachers display good subject knowledge and an enthusiasm for their subject. For example in a Year 10 history lesson (about an attempt to assassinate Hitler) students made good progress because the teacher stimulated students' thinking and reflection through the use of good-quality resources and careful questioning.
- The majority of classrooms are notable for their calm and purposeful atmosphere. Most students are polite, hard-working and are usually good listeners. Teachers nurture good and respectful relationships with the students. Teaching assistants are usually well briefed and this helps them play a significant role in supporting learning.
- Teaching in the sixth form requires improvement. Although currently improving, teaching has not been consistently good enough to result in securely good progress across the subjects.
- A small number of students receive appropriate alternative provision at The County School (run by Cambridgeshire County Council) and ACE (alternative provision based in Peterborough).

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students have positive attitudes to learning and feel proud to attend the academy, as reflected in their above average attendance. They are encouraged to work hard and develop high expectations for what they can achieve. When given independent work, students respond with enthusiasm.
- Students conduct themselves around the academy's extensive premises with maturity and courtesy. Attitudes to learning are usually of a high standard. They are considerate of each other and respect the opinions of others even if different from their own.
- Behaviour management policies are clear and consistently applied. Senior staff effectively monitor behaviour and this has a positive impact on learning. High quality counselling and mentoring has a positive impact on a very small proportion of students who need additional support in managing their behaviour.
- Students receive excellent pastoral support and guidance. As a result, the number of students who are excluded is below average and is still reducing. Students say that they feel safe at school and appreciate how staff take care of them.
- Very few students express any concerns about bullying and say that, when it does happen, it is usually followed up and dealt with effectively. Students are informed about the different types of bullying including cyber, homophobic and trans-gender. There are few concerns about behaviour

expressed by expressed by staff, parents and carers.

- Sixth form students make a good contribution to the atmosphere in the college, and fulfil various roles with enthusiasm, for example as subject ambassadors and academy councillors.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders and governors, is successfully raising the aspirations of students and the expectations of staff. This is resulting in improving achievement and teaching, and in the good behaviour and safety of students.
- Teaching is improving strongly across the academy and has been strengthened by accurate monitoring, effective performance management, training and coaching.
- Arrangements for teachers' performance management have been recently reviewed, which has strengthened the link between pay progression and students' progress.
- Senior and middle leaders have developed effective skills in self-evaluation, with a particular strength in lesson observation and teachers' planning. This is helping to improve the quality of teaching.
- Self-evaluation rightly identifies priorities for the academy improvement plan. It is supported by a monitoring system which makes sure students' progress and attainment are checked on a regular and frequent basis. This system of checks is relatively new however, and the past arrangements did not allow for a good enough focus on varying rates of progress.
- The curriculum engages students and provides well for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Opportunities to discuss values and concepts are frequent and help students develop a clear moral code.
- The sixth form is managed well. Students' progress is checked effectively and they receive good advice about the courses to take and the choices available for the future.
- The academy works well with parents and carers. Most of the parents who responded to Parent View would recommend the academy to others.
- The academy receives relevant support from various consultants including developing effective improvements in learning in English and mathematics.
- Arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly committed to the academy's success. The governing body uses information about the school's performance well to compare its effectiveness with other schools and identify where it could improve. Governors know how good teaching is. The governing body fully understands the operation of performance management in the school and closely monitors how well teachers' salary progression is tied to their impact on students' achievement. Governors have a firm grasp on the school's finances, including the effective allocation of pupil premium funding to close the gap in attainment between students that are supported by it and those who are not. Governors take part regularly in training so that they keep abreast of developments and hold the school to account for its effectiveness.

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	137377
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	429977

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1262
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Madeleine Jackson
Headteacher	Wayne Birks
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01487 812352
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