

Clacton Coastal Academy

Pathfields Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, CO15 3JL

Inspection dates 4–5 December 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		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Although teaching is improving, this is not happening fast enough to close gaps in students' skills and understanding. The quality of teaching still varies, and too often requires improvement.
- As a result, not all students are making enough progress to reach standards in line with their abilities.
- From very low starting points, the proportion of Year 11 students who gain five GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics, although improving, remains too low.
- In Years 7 to 11, students' weak literacy skills undermine their work in all subjects.
- Teachers do not always make good use of students' natural curiosity when planning work. In many lessons, students find it hard to concentrate because the activities do not capture their interest as well as they could.
- Teachers do not always use the information gathered on students' progress and attainment to adapt work in lessons in line with their ability levels. As a result it is sometimes too hard or too easy.
- The effectiveness of marking varies too much, so students do not always know how they can improve their work.

The school has the following strengths

- Governors and leaders are working well with staff to gradually improve the academy. Students' overall progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 rose impressively in 2013.
- Strong support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs enables them to achieve well.
- Most students are punctual to school and to lessons. They feel safe in school.
- The sixth form is good. Students join with below-average attainment and make good progress, particularly on work-related courses. More students are staying on into the sixth form, and they increasingly go on to university.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 46 lessons or parts of lessons, seven of which were seen together with the academy’s senior leaders.
- Inspectors examined information on students’ progress. They considered books in lessons, and a sample brought to the inspectors’ base. They spoke with students at break and lunchtime and held discussions with students from all key stages.
- Inspectors held discussions with the Principal and senior staff, including staff responsible for subjects and for the individual care of students. They attended a meeting about the academy’s support for vulnerable students. They met with two governors, and the regional director of the trust sponsoring the academy.
- Inspectors took account of 35 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and 81 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- They looked at key documents, including the academy’s self-evaluation and progress data, minutes of meetings, information about safeguarding, performance management documents and records of behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

David Lewis, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Joanna Jones	Additional Inspector
Jane Ladner	Additional Inspector
John Ubsdell	Additional Inspector
Nicola Edwards	Additional Inspector
Sandra Teacher	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Clacton Coastal Academy is larger than the average secondary school.
- The academy is sponsored by the Academies Enterprise Trust.
- The academy has specialisms in media (arts specialism) and English (humanities specialism).
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is well above the national average. This is funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after by the local authority, or have a parent serving in the armed forces.
- Most students are White British.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. Some of these students attend the Inner College, which provides specialist individual support for a wide range of profound social, behavioural and learning difficulties.
- About 20 students are educated off-site at the Colchester Institute.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so it is consistently at least good, by:
 - providing demanding work in lessons that challenges the most able students but is not too hard for the least able
 - using probing questioning in all lessons to monitor students' progress, and adapting learning when necessary to ensure that all groups of students make good progress
 - making good use of assessment to modify the course of lessons in the light of students' responses, so they become absorbed by what they are doing, produce work at a good rate, and understand the joy of success
 - giving consistently helpful advice in marking, and making sure it is followed up by each student to improve their work.
- Improve achievement further by:
 - improving students' literacy skills as soon as they come to the academy, encouraging them to read more, and helping them to communicate more effectively in speaking and listening
 - helping students to make themselves clear in their writing
 - creating a sense of interest and curiosity in students, so they become engrossed in their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by ensuring that:
 - evaluations of teaching are firmly based on published national requirements so that teaching continues to improve
 - policies, for example on behaviour management, are consistently applied across the academy to help improve students' attitudes to learning and behaviour.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students enter Year 7 with standards that are very low in comparison to their peers. Standards in Year 11 are rising slowly, but still too far below average. Students' progress is clearly improving, but not yet enough to overcome limitations in their key skills and enable them to reach the standards they are capable of.
- Standards in GCSE examinations in English and mathematics have risen, although they are still below average. In 2013, students' achievement across GCSE subjects was very variable. Standards in media, an academy specialism, were ahead of those attained in many other subjects.
- The proportion of students who make nationally expected progress is rising. However, the progress of the most able students sometimes lags behind that of other groups, particularly in English.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to other students from Year 7 to Year 11, and sometimes it is more rapid. This generally enables them to achieve national qualifications by Year 11.
- Students with particular, profound special educational needs, who attend the Inner College, make good progress. Their progress is meticulously monitored and they are often able to return to mainstream classes after a period of intense and effective support in the College.
- Very few students are entered for GCSE early, and then only for specific academic or personal reasons. The academy's approach to early entry is well considered in each case and helpful to the students involved.
- Students who are eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium are very carefully supported throughout the academy. However, although progress increased for all students in 2013, the gap in attainment between eligible Year 11 students and other students remained almost constant at about a quarter of a GCSE grade in English and mathematics. Those eligible for the pupil premium are now generally making better progress and attaining standards closer to those reached by other students.
- Students are given good support through the Year 7 'catch-up' funding, but their weak literacy skills are a particular barrier to learning and progress is understandably slow. They often struggle to communicate in grammatically correct English, especially in writing.
- The academy accepts students of wide-ranging ability into the sixth form to study a mixture of academic and work-related subjects. Those following AS courses start with GCSE grades that are lower than those typical in most schools. Most students complete their courses and gain the qualifications they pursue and often achieve better results than their starting points indicated. In work-related courses, they achieve well and the proportion gaining the highest grades rose from just under half to over 70% in 2013.
- More students continue from Year 12 to Year 13 than nationally, and growing numbers progress to higher education. GCSE courses are available for those who did not achieve C grades or above in Year 11. Students who follow courses off-site also achieve well, and largely gain the qualifications for which they were entered.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is improving, but is not yet good. Although some is good or outstanding, most requires improvement. This is because students are not always given work that challenges them the most able students. Too often, teaching does not motivate students with tasks that enthuse them to learn.
- Teachers often make good use of questioning to help students think deeply about the subject they are studying, but they are sometimes reluctant to adapt the course of the lesson to ensure that all ability groups achieve well. In these situations, students lose interest and do not learn as much as they could.
- In situations where some students struggle to cope with the work and lack understanding, teachers sometimes hold up the lesson too much while responding and this slows the learning of the other students. Teachers assess what students know but do not make sufficient use of this information to guide them in setting the next steps in learning. Teachers plan learning in lessons carefully, with details of what they expect students of different abilities to be able to do. However, by not adapting these plans when appropriate, they sometimes hold back students' learning and success.
- Teachers set homework regularly, often using the academy's virtual learning environment. Students respond well and say that their work is regularly marked, with comments to help them to make further progress. However, there is no well-established routine for following up teachers' marking to make sure students have read it and acted accordingly, so in some cases it is of little benefit to students' learning.
- Many teachers promote the development of literacy skills in lessons, but the academy does not promote a culture of reading for pleasure, or reading for information. Writing standards are lower than they should be, and many students reach Year 11 still with real difficulties in written communication. These weaknesses are not tackled effectively at an early enough stage.
- When teaching is good, teachers show that they have high expectations of students, capture their interest, and deepen their understanding. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson on sequences, for example, the teacher kept students on their toes and increasingly complex examples developed their ability to think as mathematicians, so they made good progress.
- The academy's rapid identification of the needs of disabled students and those who have special educational needs ensures they are supported in class or in small groups by teachers and learning support assistants and progress well. Those who attend the Inner College, where they receive specialist help, are supported very well and make good progress.
- In the sixth form, teaching is usually good and consequently students achieve well. In some lessons observed, outstanding teaching enabled students to reach high standards, as in an impressive Year 13 dance lesson on how to evaluate choreographic routines. The teaching was focused on using ongoing assessment to evaluate students' progress and respond to difficulties as they arose.
- Sixth form students' progress through their courses is closely monitored and they know how to improve from the guidance they receive. They are well supported to overcome earlier weaknesses in English and mathematics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- Students' attitudes to learning require improvement. They were good in about half the lessons seen. However, when the teaching does not capture their interest, they lose concentration and the desire to learn and their progress slows. Students usually come to lessons ready to learn. When teaching is good or better, they show a thirst for knowledge and a love of learning.
- Around the academy, students are usually polite and orderly, but supervision at break and lunchtimes is limited for such a large site, and behaviour can deteriorate. The academy's systems to deal with any oppressive behaviour are usually effective, but the general behaviour policy is not always applied rigorously.
- Sixth form students are proud of the academy, and reflect this in their behaviour. They are proud to act as ambassadors and to take on responsibility for aspects of the academy's work. Their opportunities to do so are currently limited because most lessons take place at a different site from the main building, but plans are at an advanced stage to bring all teaching to the town site in the near future.
- Sixth form students have mature attitudes to learning which contribute well to their academic success. They gain in personal and social skills and make themselves more employable.
- The academy sets high standards for all its students in matters of dress, and in courtesy towards each other and to adults. Usually these standards are respected, and this contributes to the smooth running of the academy.
- Discussions with students confirm that they generally feel safe, and know how to keep themselves safe. Most parents think their children are safe at the academy.
- The academy has robust procedures for ensuring that students attend school regularly, and attendance has been rising over the last three years. It is now close to the national average.
- There is very little bullying and the academy deals sensitively with what there is. There is very little evidence of homophobic or racist bullying, and the academy records and deals with any incidents firmly.
- There are no permanent exclusions. The academy makes use of internal or fixed-term exclusions to remind students about what is required of them, and use of these is not excessive. Students and parents confirm that behaviour has improved greatly since the previous inspection.
- Students in Key Stage 4 who spend part of their time studying work-related courses at the Colchester Institute attend regularly and usually complete their courses successfully. The academy monitors their attendance and progress meticulously. Students enjoy these courses and do well on them.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, the academy has improved many aspects of its work. However, leaders have not yet done enough to establish good teaching as the norm, and not all students reach their full potential.
- The Principal and her senior team have worked to secure much-needed improvement in teaching and students' achievement. At the heart of this drive is their effort to create a harmonious

environment in which students can learn as well as possible. Leaders are becoming more successful, as shown by improved GCSE results in 2013, and impressive progress measures for nearly all groups of students at age 16.

- Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in lessons, thorough analysis of outcomes of the monitoring process, and effective use of the management of staff performance have been used to take the academy forward. However, leaders have not used the national Teachers' Standards as a tool to raise staff skills to the next level.
- There is no complacency, especially in the drive to improve teachers' success in capturing students' interest, and promoting a thirst for knowledge. Subject leadership has supported the drive for improvement in achievement and teaching, but with varied results across subject areas.
- The sixth form is led and managed well, and students often proceed to university from the academy. The curriculum provides a good mix of work-related and academic courses, designed to prepare students for employment or further study and matched to their individual needs. They are well supported, grow in self-esteem, and have good opportunities for work experience. Those who have difficulties in literacy and numeracy are helped to advance their skills in the sixth form.
- Many of the disabled students and those who have special educational needs have multiple and serious conditions. The academy provides a very high level of support for such students, including in the Inner College. It works with outside agencies where necessary, but also provides a compassionate and supportive environment. This is a particular strength of the academy.
- The curriculum is closely matched to the needs of all students. Work-related courses widen the range of options available to students. The academy ensures that students who study at the Colchester Institute attend well, are safe and are well supported.
- A particular feature of the curriculum is the way social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is provided as a distinct subject. Students confirm that this contributes well to their personal development. The helpful educational and work-related guidance all students receive through the main school and in the sixth form contributes well to helping them to make suitable choices for the future.
- Staff at all levels, as well as students and their parents, confirm that the academy has improved since the previous inspection. The impact of leaders' actions is seen in improvements in students' progress and examination success, in teaching, and in students' behaviour. This positive track record of improvement indicates the academy has the capacity to go further forward.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors bring a good range of expertise to the management of the academy. They undertake training to enhance their skills and understand the challenges facing the academy. They challenge leaders and hold the Principal to account for the academy's performance. They are securing clear improvements in achievement and teaching but freely acknowledge there is further to go before the academy can be judged to provide a good education for all its students. Governors are appropriately involved in managing staff performance, including that of the Principal, and make sure pay rises are based on teachers' success in how well students achieve. They work with the Principal to promote partnerships which benefit the students, and actively promote productive links with parents. Astute and rigorous financial management ensures that the budget is balanced. The allocation of the pupil premium funding is well thought out and managed, and is beginning to be successful in

supporting the progress of eligible students. The sponsors work closely with the academy, matching their support closely to its priorities. All requirements for safeguarding are met.

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	135957
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	425334

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1631
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	342
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ben Wright
Principal	Tracey Hemming
Date of previous school inspection	9 November 2011
Telephone number	01255 428131
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