

Hinchingbrooke School

Brampton Road, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE29 3BN

Inspection dates 11–12 February 2014

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

- The quality of teaching is not good enough because it is too variable. Some teachers do not challenge students at the appropriate level, mark work regularly enough or make clear what students need to do to improve. Students make less progress than they should in some subjects as a result.
- Too few students gain the top GCSE grades A* to B that they are capable of because they do not make sufficient progress in the science subjects.
- Less-able students do not make enough progress in mathematics.
- The sixth form requires improvement. However, all the necessary steps have been taken to ensure that achievement and teaching are improving.

The school has the following strengths

- The Principal and other senior leaders, including governors, have secured significant improvements through robust, decisive and energetic leadership. Examination results improved sharply in 2013 at GCSE and more students made expected or above expected progress in mathematics.
- High proportions of students gain the top GCSE grades A* to B in English and the humanities subjects. Standards in literacy are high.
- Changes to the provision at Key Stage 4 are helping to ensure students are studying courses that match their needs, interests and abilities.
- Students behave well, and are safe and well cared for. They generally engage enthusiastically in both their learning, and in the exceptionally wide range of sporting, artistic and cultural activities that are available to them.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 lessons or parts of lessons, including eight joint observations with the academy’s senior leaders, and a range of activities that took place around the theme of ‘well-being’ during the second day of the inspection. Inspectors also made short visits to tutor periods.
- Meetings were held with various senior and subject leaders, teachers, and with the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Students’ views were sought during lessons and break times. Inspectors also met with five groups of students and scrutinised their work across a range of subjects.
- Inspectors analysed the school’s own parent surveys, 79 responses to the online, Parent View, questionnaire and 82 staff questionnaire returns.
- The inspection team observed the academy’s work and looked at a number of documents including the academy’s data on current achievement and progress, policies, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Inspectors also examined documents used by the academy’s leaders, including governors, to check standards and evaluate aspects of the academy’s performance.

Inspection team

Jason Howard, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
David Cousins	Additional Inspector
Jalil Shaikh	Additional Inspector
John Greevy	Additional Inspector
Rebecca Hawkes	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Hinchingsbrooke School converted to become an academy on 1 September 2011. When its predecessor school, Hinchingsbrooke School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- This is a much larger than average-sized secondary academy with a very large sixth form.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (extra government funding to support particular groups of students) is well below average.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, including those supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is slightly higher than that found nationally.
- A small number of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable spend some of their time in the on-site provision known as the Gateway School. Others attend alternative off-site provision at the Huntingdon Regional College.
- The academy meets current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the academy need to do to improve further?

- Help students in Key Stage 4 to achieve more highly in mathematics and science subjects, by ensuring all teachers:
 - mark students' work regularly, provide them with precise guidance on what they need to do to improve their work and checking that students respond to this guidance
 - use information about how well students are doing to plan activities that are sufficiently challenging for students of all abilities
 - check that students' understanding is secure before moving on to new learning
 - strengthen the systems to ensure that students with a statement of special educational needs make better progress
 - have the opportunity to learn from the most effective teachers at the academy.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **requires improvement**

- Many students make slow progress in science. The academy's monitoring data indicates that although students currently in Year 11 are starting to catch up, many, especially the less able, are still not making enough progress.
- Although attainment in GCSE mathematics improved considerably in 2013 and students' progress overall was in line with the national average, significant numbers of less able students made insufficient progress.
- In previous years, including 2013, the small number of students supported by the pupil premium were significantly less likely to gain five or more GCSE A*-C grades including English and mathematics than were other students. On average these students finished their GCSE studies more than one grade behind their peers. Effective support is narrowing these gaps for current students.
- Although sixth form students are of above average ability, the proportion of A*-B grades awarded at A level has declined over recent years and remains below the national average. In 2013, students made significantly less progress than expected in biology, chemistry and psychology. More students in Year 12 are now studying courses that better suit their needs and abilities; the academy's monitoring data indicates this, and other changes, are starting to have an impact on rates of progress in some subjects. Almost all students complete their A-level studies and all who leave the academy at age 18 go on to higher education, employment or training.
- In 2013, more-able students made significantly more progress than expected in English, modern foreign languages and the humanities. Their progress in the sciences was in line with expectations.
- Students of all ability levels make outstanding progress in English at GCSE. The proportion of students that gain a grade C or above is consistently higher than the national average. Students make good progress in a number of other subjects including the humanities and modern foreign languages.
- The academy has followed a policy of not allowing or encouraging students to sit any of their GCSE examinations before the end of Year 11. This has helped more students to gain the highest grades in English.
- The academy's use of additional Year 7 'catch-up' funding to provide small-group and one-to-one tuition has helped those who had not reached the expected level in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2 to improve.
- Some students who have social and emotional difficulties benefit from effective alternative provision, including that provided on-site at the Gateway School. Almost all go on to further education, training or work after Year 11.
- Most disabled students and those who have special educational needs make progress in line with that of their peers because they receive effective support. A small number of students with a statement of special educational needs did not make enough progress in mathematics and the humanities in 2013. The academy's systems for tracking the impact of the additional support

these students receive require improvement because the academy is not able, with current systems, to identify potential underachievement quickly enough to address it before students take examinations.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies considerably between, and sometimes within, subjects. The academy's records indicate that, over time, a significant proportion of lessons in science and, to a lesser extent, in mathematics, have not been well taught. Although improvements are evident there are considerable gaps in the knowledge and understanding of many students as a result of the previous limited progress they have made.
- The academy's own records indicate that in many lessons all students complete the same tasks. Many make limited progress because the work is either too easy or too difficult. Students noted this during discussions with inspectors and it was a feature of some observed lessons. During a Year 11 mathematics lesson, for example, some more able students finished their trigonometry questions early and did not move on to more challenging work. In discussion, more-able students suggested that they found work insufficiently demanding in about one in five lessons.
- In some lessons, students are not clear about what they have to do, or do not have enough time to complete their work. Teachers move them on to the next task without checking their understanding. This was evident during a science lesson; students were unsure about the purpose of their experiment, which was rushed. The teacher did not check the students' learning. Some struggled to keep up, lost their motivation, and made little progress.
- In some subject areas, particularly mathematics and the sciences, the quality of feedback students receive varies considerably. In some books, little or no marking was seen. Discussions with students made clear that many were unsure about how to improve or what target to work towards. Some marking indicates the grade a student has achieved but not how it can be improved upon. In other subjects, including English and the humanities, marking is good.
- Teaching is good, and often outstanding, in a number of subject areas, including English and the humanities. Teachers convey enthusiasm for their subject, plan engaging activities, and encourage students to develop their ideas fully through expert questioning. Teachers use their knowledge of students' abilities to plan tasks that will challenge them further. In a Year 11 English lesson observed during the inspection, these techniques helped every student to complete a sophisticated textual analysis of a previously-unseen poem. In a Year 10 history lesson, the teacher helped students to understand the requirements of analytical writing, reflect on their previous work, and construct paragraphs that contained more fully-evidenced arguments.
- The academy's efforts to develop students' literacy skills have considerable impact. Intervention helps students who need support to catch up quickly. In many lessons observed, teachers encouraged students to know, understand and use technical words related to specific subjects. Regular debates and discussions develop students' ability to communicate clearly, articulately and confidently. Some subjects help develop students' numeracy skills but this is less systematic.
- Teaching overall in the sixth form requires improvement because too many students have studied courses that have not been a good match for their needs and abilities. This changed in September 2013. There is now much more rigour in ensuring that students are on appropriate courses. During the inspection, most teaching observed in the sixth form was good. Relationships are positive and students appreciate their teachers' expert subject knowledge and

the opportunity they have to engage in high-level discussion and debate.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Despite the large size of the school site, they usually arrive at lessons punctually. They get started quickly and generally take a pride in their written work. Almost all show respect for their environment, their teachers, themselves and each-other.
- Almost all have a positive attitude to learning and are self-motivated. Students contribute well in lessons and support each other in the classroom; in a Year 9 Religious Studies lesson seen during the inspection, students were keen to offer different interpretations of a biblical text and to consider the views of others.
- Students believe that behaviour has improved considerably following the introduction of a new rewards-and-sanctions system. The school's monitoring suggests that it has helped reduce the amount of disruptive behaviour and disruptions to lessons are now rare.
- A few parents expressed concerns about behaviour. Although the great majority of students behave well, behaviour is not outstanding. In lessons where the pace is slow, or where tasks are not engaging, small numbers of students become passive or, very occasionally, disruptive.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. An innovative programme for personal, social and health education helps students to understand how they can stay safe when using the internet and in other contexts, and how to respond appropriately to different kinds of bullying. Students are taught the importance of respecting others. This, combined with robust action in response to all forms of bullying, has ensured that such incidents remain rare. Students report that homophobic or racially-motivated bullying is almost unknown and this view is supported by the school's monitoring information. Rates of temporary exclusion are low.
- Effective systems are in place to support and monitor students who spend some of their time being educated off-site.
- Attendance rates are high, rising and monitored carefully.
- Sixth form students behave responsibly and demonstrated good attitudes towards their learning in all of the lessons observed during the inspection. Students suggest that their efforts are more focused and productive because of the feedback they receive during the regular 'progress reviews' introduced recently.
- Sixth form students are prepared to take on areas of responsibility and contribute to the broader life of the school. Attendance, already high, has improved since the introduction of a registration period.

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal and other senior leaders, including leaders of the sixth form, are uncompromising in their vision for the academy and determined in their pursuit of improvement. They understand the academy's immediate priorities and are pursuing improvements with energy, imagination, and impact. The academy's development plans are well designed to address areas of under-performance.

- Changes to the way that the school is organised and led are holding leaders, and teachers, accountable for standards in their areas. Teachers receive high quality training and support to help them meet their challenging targets. This is improving the quality of teaching. Leadership is not yet outstanding because some leaders have been appointed very recently and their work has not had time to have sufficient impact. Most middle leaders are supporting their colleagues to improve teaching. Some are not making sure that standards of marking are consistently high within their subject areas.
- New monitoring systems give leaders accurate and regular information about how well students are doing, how far progress is being made towards targets, and the quality of various aspects of the academy's work. This helps leaders to identify problems quickly and act effectively. For example, students supported by the pupil premium are now helped to make more rapid progress and the gap in attainment between them and their peers is narrowing because of the work of leaders to address this problem.
- The range of courses provided is broad and balanced. Leaders work closely with local primary schools so that the Year 7 programme provides students with continuity and challenge. Year 7 students develop key learning skills by completing cross-curricular project work on 'off-timetable' days. Older students can opt to study additional subjects such as Latin, computer game design and business studies.
- Changes to the Key Stage 4 courses provided, including in science, have ensured more students are on courses better suited to their needs and abilities. Students spoke positively about the off-site courses available in courses such as construction. The school's on-site 'Gateway' provision, which opened in September 2013, provides high quality individualised provision for students with a wide range of frequently complex needs, and who often face significant challenges. Students and their parents are exceptionally positive about the impact of this support.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. Students take advantage of the very wide range of opportunities to engage in art, sport, music, and drama. At the time of the inspection, students were performing *Oliver*, and took responsibility for all aspects of the show. Trips and visits such as the language 'exchanges' or the history trip to Auschwitz give students the chance to experience other cultures and consider moral issues. 'Off timetable' days allow them to explore issues concerning relationships, sexuality, mental health and the management of risk. Leaders are expanding the range of opportunities for students to make a positive contribution to the school community.
- The school is using local authority services to ensure the needs of vulnerable students are met effectively, and to provide training and support for governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is highly effective. It uses its clear understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses to set appropriate priorities and plans. It has supported changes to the leadership and organisation of the school in order to secure progress towards those plans. Governors are supplementing the information provided by senior leaders with their own visits. They regularly evaluate their own performance and engage in training. Statutory responsibilities concerning safeguarding are met.
 - Governors ensure the efficient use of financial resources. They have evaluated national research evidence, and the school's own experiences, to make decisions about how to spend the pupil premium to maximise impact.
 - Governors use a number of different measures of teachers' performance, including students' results, when determining pay awards.

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	137475
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	440681

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	1870
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	408
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Fenney
Principal	Andrew Goulding
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01480 375700
Fax number	01480 420536
Email address	communications@hinchbk.cambs.sch.uk

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