

# The Voyager Academy

MountSteven Avenue, Walton, Peterborough, PE4 6HX

## Inspection dates

12–13 February 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires special measures.

- Students leave the academy with GCSE results that are well below the national average. Achievement in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 is inadequate.
- Students make less than the expected progress in English and mathematics. Progress in the current Years 8 and 9 is especially slow.
- The quality of teaching is inadequate. Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve and their standards of behaviour are too low. Marking is variable, but poor overall. Too few teachers insist on high standards of presentation, or that students come prepared to lessons on time and with the right equipment.
- Poor behaviour disrupts too many lessons, limiting the learning of whole classes.
- Attendance is low and in decline. Large numbers of students are late in the morning. Equally large numbers abscond and miss lessons throughout the day.
- Leaders and governors have not been effective in bringing about improvements in teaching or behaviour.

### The school has the following strengths

- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress, and teachers have high expectations of what they can achieve.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 48 lessons. Four of these were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also listened to students reading.
- Inspectors took account of 64 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The academy declined to offer staff the opportunity to complete a staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors analysed examination and assessment results for 2012 and 2013. They scrutinised the academy's current assessment data, students' work, minutes of meetings and policies, safeguarding documentation, and the academy's self-evaluation documents.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, teachers, students and three members of the governing body.

The inspection took into account three complaints made to Ofsted which raised serious concerns. The complaints were deemed to be qualifying complaints and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that the inspection of the academy should follow up the whole-school issues that were raised. Inspectors sought to establish whether:

- the behaviour of students in the academy is good enough
- leadership and management are effective in bringing about necessary improvement
- staff are appropriately supported by senior leaders.

## Inspection team

Christopher Moodie, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sean Harford	Her Majesty's Inspector
James Coyle	Additional Inspector
David Webster	Additional Inspector
Kathy Twin	Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.*

### Information about this school

- This secondary academy is larger than average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for certain groups of students, is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of educational needs is also above average.
- The academy uses the following providers for alternative provision: Peterborough Regional College, RM Motors and Tops Academy.
- The academy is part of the Comberton Academy Trust.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The academy was inspected in July 2013 and was judged to require improvement. On 7 February 2014, it received an unannounced monitoring visit from one of Her Majesty's Inspectors focused on behaviour. During this visit the standard of behaviour in the academy was a cause for serious concern and a full inspection was instigated.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that:
  - all teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve, their behaviour and how they present their work
  - all students receive high-quality feedback about their work
  - academy policies are consistently applied in all classrooms
  - errors in literacy, especially punctuation, spelling and grammar, are corrected in all lessons.
- Improve achievement in Key Stages 3 and 4 so that:
  - more-able students attain higher grades in GCSE examinations
  - students in Key Stages 3 and 4 make more rapid progress
  - the wide gap in attainment between students supported through the pupil premium and other students is closed.
- Urgently improve the standard of behaviour so that:
  - lessons are not disrupted, and learning occurs in a calm and orderly environment
  - students are respectful of one another and all staff
  - students arrive punctually to the academy and to all lessons
  - attendance at the academy and in lessons rises swiftly
  - the academy's revised behaviour code is adhered to consistently.

■ Improve leadership and management so that:

- senior leaders take responsibility for setting and maintaining high expectations of behaviour
- senior leaders spend much more of their time ensuring that lessons are not disrupted and that incidences of poor behaviour are tackled swiftly
- more is done to support and improve teaching throughout the academy
- leaders at all levels, including governors, work collaboratively to bring about the necessary improvements.

Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

An external review of governance should be carried out, to include a specific focus on the academy's use of the pupil premium, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- Students' achievement is low in the majority of subjects. It is especially low in mathematics, humanities subjects, science, design and technology, media and French.
- Very low numbers of students achieve the higher grades A/A\* in GCSE examinations. Too many students who have achieved well in primary school fail to gain these high grades, especially in mathematics.
- Students make less than expected progress in English and mathematics. The academy's tracking system shows signs of improved progress in the current Year 11. However, in all years other than Year 7, students are not moving on in their learning as they should.
- Students supported through the pupil premium make less progress than other students. Last year, the gap between their attainment in Year 11 and that of other students narrowed slightly but was almost one GCSE grade behind in English and just over one grade in mathematics.
- The standard of work in students' books is mixed. Some is presented neatly and with care. In contrast, some books are full of untidy work, with little evidence of pride or concern for presentation. Many students are unprepared for lessons and, for example, draw diagrams without the aid of a pencil or the proper equipment.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Students make good progress in most subjects. Their attainment and levels of progress have improved since the last inspection. However, too few students attain the highest grades at A-level because of their low starting points following disappointing performance in their GCSEs.
- Students who have special educational needs achieve well. Highly structured support for learning, and effective leadership in this area are key factors in this success.
- Academy data indicate that attainment for students in Year 11 will rise in mathematics but will fall in English. The academy has abandoned its previous practice of early entry in mathematics. Many of the students that were entered early for their GCSE in mathematics last summer failed to achieve their target grade.
- Year 7 catch up funding is effectively spent. During the first year of this funding, little impact was seen, but the academy altered its strategy and the current interventions are helping students in Year 7 to make stronger progress.
- Progress reports are received from providers of alternative provision for each half term. These currently indicate that students are making adequate progress and that the placements are working well for individual students.

### The quality of teaching

### is inadequate

- Teaching is inconsistent in most year groups in the academy and inadequate overall.
- Too many teachers have low expectations of students. This means that they tolerate work and behaviour that is well below what is acceptable. This is most clearly seen when the same

students behave very differently in different subjects. Inspectors saw a group of students behaving very well in one lesson, working hard to produce work of a good standard. Then, in another lesson, the same students' behaviour and work were very poor.

- Teachers do not routinely provide students with feedback about their work. There are some exceptions where, for example in art and photography, students receive very good written feedback. In far too many cases, however, marking is non-existent and has been so for several months.
- Where teaching is weak, teachers do not check the depth of students' understanding about what they are learning. This leads to teachers making inaccurate assumptions about learning, and moving on either too quickly or too slowly. An example of this was seen in a science lesson. Students listened to a long explanation by the teacher and then set about starting their practical work. When asked about why they were doing it and what they were looking for, it became clear that very few understood what they were trying to achieve.
- Students are struggling to master more complex elements of mathematics because they do not sufficiently understand basic concepts. The academy's approach to handwriting and presentation is far too relaxed. Students enter the academy with joined-up handwriting, but they quickly revert to printing because teachers neither expect them to join their writing, nor correct them when they do not. This leads to writing that is untidy and littered with simple errors, including placing capital letters in the middle of words and missing out full stops. Because the work is largely unmarked, these errors go unchecked, and very poor standards of writing have developed.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Lessons maintain the students' interests and develop their knowledge, key skills and wider learning. The academy offers a broad range of subjects, and students receive good quality advice and guidance about which most suit them. Entry requirements for academic subjects have risen recently to prevent students from choosing courses that are too demanding.

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

- The behaviour of students is inadequate. Behaviour in lessons is very poor far too frequently. This includes students being disrespectful to one another and to members of staff. This has a significant impact on learning and is a factor in the underachievement across the academy.
- The academy's systems for tackling poor behaviour are not fit for purpose. An 'on-call' system enables teachers to request support during lessons. Support staff arrive and try to resolve the situation but, in the majority of cases, remove the student to the 'on-call' room where they wait – often doing nothing – until the start of the next lesson. This system is over-used and does little or nothing to tackle the cause of the problem. The academy's records show that significant numbers of individual students have been in the 'on-call' room.
- The behaviour of a significant minority of students in corridors and shared areas is poor. Shouting and swearing are common, but some staff do little in response. Small numbers of students smoke on the academy site, sometimes making little attempt to avoid being seen by staff. Supervision levels, especially from senior leaders, are too low in areas such as the canteen and corridors. During the inspection, large numbers of staff were in these areas, and were very active in calming behaviour down. Staff and students told inspectors that the standard of behaviour observed was not typical, and that it was usually much worse.
- The inconsistent way that the academy's behaviour code is applied, coupled with weak support

from senior leaders, has led to the current state of affairs. A revised code of conduct is being implemented by a recently appointed senior leader. This is at an early stage and has yet to have an impact, but many staff are encouraged by this new direction.

- Students in this academy can behave very well. Many are keen to do so and are polite and welcoming. In some cases, their behaviour is outstanding as they work very hard and contribute enormously to their own learning.
- Punctuality is a problem for the academy: large numbers of students are late every morning. On the first day of the inspection, 222 students arrived after they should; many of them were more than 15 minutes late. This is very poor preparation for employment or further education, and fractures the start of every lesson, as students arrive at very different times. Teachers have become accustomed to re-starting lessons and delivering the same instructions several times.
- Punctuality throughout the day is also poor. A warning bell sounds to enable students to move from break or lunchtime into lessons. Many students disregard this and wait until the second bell, which signals the beginning of the lesson, before they move. This staggers the start of their lessons and valuable learning time is lost.
- Internal truancy is rife. Too many students either do not turn up to lessons or abscond during a lesson, sometimes meeting up with friends at a pre-arranged location. Senior leaders have been ineffective in tackling this problem.
- Few students adhere to the academy's uniform code. Many wear trainers, and ties are worn in a tokenistic way. Staff report that senior leaders do not provide any support if they challenge students about their uniform.
- Attendance figures are low and have declined since the previous inspection. Systems are in place to monitor attendance and the academy is working hard within its community to improve things.
- Numbers of exclusions have dropped in the last year. Permanent exclusion is now rare and fixed term exclusions have decreased by two thirds. Internal exclusions, the Enterprise Unit and student support provide effective alternatives to exclusions.
- The academy's work to keep students safe requires improvement. Too many students abscond or truant and, although systems to locate and retrieve them are well developed, they are at increased risk of harm during this time.
- Students say that they feel safe. The college system provides a point of contact for all students and this is valued. Bullying does occur, but it is uncommon and students say that it is usually dealt with well. Students understand the different types of bullying and recognise the potential threat that mis-use of the internet may pose. Students are tolerant of one another's differences and, for example, they reported that homophobia was not an issue in the academy.
- Parents are very concerned about behaviour at the academy. Only a quarter of those who responded think that the academy makes sure its students are well behaved. Similar numbers are concerned about how well the academy deals with bullying.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is good, in stark contrast to the rest of the school. Students have positive attitudes to their work and take pride in the quality of their outcomes.

**The leadership and management are inadequate**

- The academy's leadership has not tackled weak teaching and very poor standards of behaviour, and this has resulted in students underachieving.
- The senior leaders' evaluation of the academy's effectiveness is too generous. Because of this, the academy's plans have not prioritised the much needed improvement in behaviour and teaching.
- Many staff have lost faith in senior leaders because they do not feel supported. Too many roles that should be undertaken by senior leaders, such as dealing directly with poor behaviour, have been assigned to support staff. In contrast, there are some members of staff who value senior leaders and their impact on, for example, the achievement of individual pupils.
- The Comberton Academy Trust is supporting the academy. It has accurately identified key areas of concern and is allocating resources to support their improvement. An example of this is the appointment of a senior leader specifically to improve behaviour. This leader has quickly appraised the situation and is already making a difference to the behaviour of some students and to the confidence of staff. The most direct way that she has done this is by being available for the students at lunch and break times. In addition, the Trust has provided expert colleagues to support assessment. As a result, the academy's English teachers are now assessing the progress that students are making with more confidence and accuracy.
- The roles of middle leaders are not clearly enough defined. Too much of their time is spent in dealing with behavioural issues, leaving them with too little time for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching across the school.
- Policies to promote equality of opportunity are ineffective because of the underachievement of several groups of students, including those eligible for the pupil premium and the more-able students.
- The academy's curriculum is varied in quality. Some courses, such as one-year GCSE courses for students in Year 9, 10 and 11, have met with inconsistent results. Other courses, and in particular those concerned with the performing and creative arts, are very popular and are well taught. The academy offers students a good range of opportunities to broaden their experiences via trips, visits, volunteering and other extra-curricular activities.
- Leadership in the sixth form is good. Leaders track students' progress well, and interventions are put in place where necessary. Teaching is improving and achievement is rising.
- The academy adequately supports the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Of these, the cultural development is strongest, as the academy makes good use of the ethnic diversity of the students to foster tolerance and community pride. The academy provides students with access to independent information, advice and guidance to prepare them for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- Safeguarding systems and procedures meet statutory requirements. Inspectors checked safeguarding records, alongside documentation such as the child protection policy and risk assessments.



### ■ The governance of the school

- Governance is inadequate because leaders have not been held to account for the failures in key areas of the academy's work. Only very recently have governors been made aware of serious concerns about behaviour, by which time issues have already escalated too far.
- Governors check that school leaders complete the annual review of teachers' pay. Procedures to tackle underperformance of teaching staff have been recently reviewed. However, despite having these procedures in place, the governing body has not been able to challenge the academy's over-generous view of the quality of teaching and its own effectiveness.
- Governors have an oversight on how the pupil premium funding is spent and the positive impact of this expenditure. They are aware that the gap closed slightly in 2013, and that there are indications that it will narrow further this year.

## 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>	137084
<b>Local authority</b>	Peterborough
<b>Inspection number</b>	443145

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<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>	1383
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	241
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Stephen Munday
<b>Principal</b>	Yvonne Birch
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 July 2013
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