

The Parker E-ACT Academy

Ashby Road, Daventry, NN11 0QF

Inspection dates

28–29 January 2014

Overall effectiveness

Previous inspection:

Not previously inspected

This inspection:

Inadequate

4

Achievement of pupils

Inadequate

4

Quality of teaching

Inadequate

4

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Requires improvement

3

Leadership and management

Inadequate

4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures

- Achievement is inadequate. Students underachieve in several subjects, including mathematics, but particularly in science.
- The academy's most-able students underachieve.
- Teaching is inadequate. Too many lessons are less than good. Over time, this has resulted in underachievement.
- The sixth form is inadequate. Students underachieve because there is not enough good teaching.
- Behaviour requires improvement because students' attitudes to learning are not consistently good. Members of staff do not always manage behaviour consistently.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. Essential improvements have not been secured quickly enough, particularly in relation to improving the academy's overall quality of teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- Students achieve well in some subjects, including English language, German and physical education.
- Achievement is improving in some subjects, including mathematics.
- The arrangements for keeping students safe in the academy are good.
- Senior leaders have correctly identified the academy's areas for improvement. Actions have been taken, but it is too early to judge the impact of many of them.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 44 lessons taught by 42 teachers. Five of these observations were conducted jointly with three senior members of the academy’s staff. In addition, the inspection team made a number of shorter visits to lessons to look at specific aspects of students’ work.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, other senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and some subject leaders. Interviews took place with two representative of the governing body. The lead inspector conducted a telephone interview with a representative of E-ACT, the academy’s sponsor. Meetings were also held with groups of students.
- Inspectors took account of the 42 responses to the Parent View questionnaire.
- Inspectors reviewed the 28 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspection team evaluated other information including: the academy’s self-evaluation; a report based on an external review of the academy’s performance; behaviour, attendance and exclusion data; information about students’ achievement and progress; documents used by leaders to monitor the academy’s work; and minutes of meetings held by the leadership group and the governing body.

Inspection team

Ian McNeilly, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Isobel Randall

Additional Inspector

Simon Hughes

Additional Inspector

Paul Armitage

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

- The Parker E-ACT Academy is slightly smaller than the average-sized secondary school with a sixth form. It became an academy in September 2012. Its predecessor school was William Parker School A Humanities College.
- The proportion of students for whom the academy receives the pupil premium is broadly average. This additional government funding is for students in the care of the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and some others.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is slightly below average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The academy has a collaborative sixth form with DSLV E-ACT Academy in Daventry.
- A small number of students attend courses offered by alternative providers of education: Greenacres in Staverton, SWAN Community Interest Company in Alderton, and Complementary Education Academy in Northampton.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - have higher expectations of what students can achieve, particularly in their written work
 - use information on students' performance to set work at the right level of difficulty for students, particularly the most-able
 - apply the academy's policies on marking and behaviour management rigorously and consistently.
- Raise the achievement of all groups, especially the most-able students, and particularly in mathematics and science, by:
 - giving students a greater challenge and building on their successes
 - refusing to accept work that is clearly well below students' ability levels
 - marking work regularly and in detail so that students know that their efforts are valued and are able to understand how to make progress
 - preventing the poor behaviour of a minority of students from affecting learning.
- Improve behaviour and safety by ensuring that all teachers, including senior teachers, address low-level disruption and other poor behaviour consistently and rigorously.
- Ensure that leaders and managers increase students' achievement across all year groups, including the sixth form, and raise the quality of teaching by:

- ensuring middle leaders make accurate judgments about the quality of teaching and provide effective support to those teachers who need it
- replacing the current system used for tracking students' progress with one that is fit for purpose.

Ofsted will make recommendations for action on governance to the authority responsible for the school. An external review of governance, including a specific focus on the academy's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- Students are underachieving in several subjects. In 2013, 46% of students achieved five GCSEs, including English and mathematics, at grade C or above. While not enough students are making progress in mathematics, the reason for the low overall figure was mainly due to poor performance across a range of GCSE subjects.
- Underachievement in the sciences – core science, additional science, biology, chemistry and physics – is of great concern. Other subjects which performed poorly in the 2013 GCSE examinations include French and geography. The deepest underachievement was in religious education, where only two of the 61 students who took the course achieved a C grade or above.
- The most-able students in the academy are underachieving in almost every subject. This is even the case in most of those subjects where other students are doing well. It is an academy-wide issue.
- In the mathematics GCSE in 2013, 58% of students made the progress expected of them. This is significantly below the national average. However, this is an improvement on the performance of the predecessor school and the academy's current data show a continuing trend of slow improvement.
- Students who are supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs make expected progress. In 2013, students supported through school action made progress that was significantly below that expected of them. The academy has taken steps to address this underachievement and early indications show that improvements are being made.
- In 2013, the average results in examinations and the progress made by students supported by the pupil premium were lower than for other students in the academy. This group of students was almost one GCSE grade behind their peers in English and in mathematics. The academy's data show that the progress and performance of younger students in the academy who benefit from pupil premium funding is improving.
- Achievement in the sixth form is inadequate. Sixth form provision began at the predecessor school in 2011; there is a small but growing number of students. The achievement of the 18 students who took A levels in 2013 was below average, and was significantly below expectations for the eight students of English literature. Achievement at AS level is slightly better, though still below expectations. Some students appear to have made good progress but this is often from a very low starting point because of their underachievement at GCSE. However, students achieve well in AS German. Not enough students complete their courses.
- Early entry to mathematics GCSE was used by the academy last year. All students sat examinations early. While the academy's least-able students performed well in terms of making the progress expected of them, the most-able students performed significantly below expected levels in mathematics. The policy of early entry has not helped those students.
- Students eligible for Year 7 'catch up' funding are making adequate and sometimes good progress. An accelerated reading programme has recently been introduced for Year 7 students and early indications are positive, though it is too early to judge lasting impact.

- Alternative provision is carefully selected to meet the emotional and behavioural needs of students involved. The few students who are educated off-site are carefully monitored and are benefiting from their placements.
- Students achieve well in some GCSE subjects. In 2013, 95% of the students who studied English language achieved a C or above. This standard was also achieved by 80% of students who took English literature and 88% of students studying statistics. However, even here, the progress of the most-able students was well below expectations. Students made particularly good progress in German and physical education. Students studying home economics, and art and design performed in line with national averages.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- A wide range of teaching quality was seen during the inspection, including both outstanding and inadequate teaching. Just over half the teaching seen was of good quality, and this is broadly in line with the judgements on the quality of teaching made by the academy's senior leaders. Pupils regularly experience lessons that are not good and, over time, this has led to underachievement.
- Not enough teachers have high expectations of their students and, as a result, many young people meet the low aspirations set for them. In too many lessons, this leads to poor-quality written work which is not sufficiently challenged by teachers.
- Teachers often fail to set work at the right level for students. This means that many students, especially the most able, do not make the progress expected of them because they are not challenged.
- The standard of marking in the academy is inadequate. While some members of staff follow the academy's clear marking policy, others choose to ignore it. Some students' work has not been marked for months. One student described this as 'very frustrating'. Another, when asked how students knew how to improve their work, simply said, 'We don't.' This contributes directly to low expectations and underachievement.
- Teaching in the sixth form is inadequate because there are not enough lessons of sufficient quality to ensure that good progress is made. Students' work is not assessed often enough and the quality of marking is not detailed enough.
- The English department and those teachers who work with disabled students and those who have special educational needs are effective in teaching literacy skills. The teaching of mathematics is improving which, in turn, is helping students to develop their numeracy skills. However, the teaching of both literacy and numeracy across the curriculum requires improvement.
- The quality of teaching of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is variable. Recent actions taken by the academy have helped the progress of these students, particularly those in Year 7 who have benefited from reading support.
- Staff turnover has a negative impact on learning. Students become frustrated with changes of teacher and say they learn very little when lessons are led by supply or cover teachers.
- In the best lessons, positive relationships and expectations have been developed. As a result, students came to class keen to learn and are aware that poor behaviour will not be tolerated.

Engaging tasks were set and students' successes built upon. An outstanding physical education lesson was seen in which skill development was linked directly to what was needed to succeed at GCSE. Some excellent work was seen by Year 11 students studying expressive arts.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Positive attitudes to learning are not consistent. Students are not helped in this regard by teachers who do not clearly and consistently tackle unacceptable behaviour.
- In lessons where poor behaviour is not well addressed, the rate of learning is affected. Some lessons which had been well planned and were potentially engaging were spoiled by ineffective behaviour management. Students who want to concentrate and learn in this atmosphere find this difficult. Students interviewed felt frustrated by this, and said that too much time was spent dealing with the poor behaviour of a minority of students.
- Half of the members of staff who responded to the questionnaire felt that behaviour was not well managed. Some staff felt that senior leaders needed to be more visible to students and take a more active role in behaviour management.
- The behaviour of students as they move around the site is generally good, and the overwhelming majority are courteous to visitors.
- The number of exclusions is reducing. No girls, and just a small number of boys have been excluded this year.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is generally good, though some lessons are marked by compliant rather than positive behaviour.
- Attendance in 2012/13 was slightly below the national average. Attendance is improving this year as a result of focused attention to the specific needs of individuals, and the employment of a member of staff to develop positive relationships with parents. The number of persistent absentees is in decline.
- The academy's work to keep students safe is good. Arrangements for students' safeguarding meet requirements. Students say they feel safe in the academy.
- Although there are some reported racist, homophobic and bullying incidents, these are well addressed by members of staff. Students are well informed about issues such as e-safety.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leadership and management are inadequate because senior leaders have not been effective in making essential improvements quickly enough, particularly with regards to the quality of teaching.
- Systems for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching have become more robust. Senior leaders now have accurate information on individual teachers' strengths and areas for development. Programmes of support have been put in place to help members of staff. However, in the 17 months since the school became an academy, the improvements made to the overall quality of teaching have been slight, and have certainly not been sufficient to prevent

students' underachievement in several areas.

- Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- The effectiveness of middle leaders is inconsistent and, in some cases, inadequate. Their understanding of data and its potential uses is not secure, and neither is their ability to improve teaching. Senior leaders have identified those middle leaders who need support and have plans in place to address this.
- Leadership in the sixth form is inadequate. Leaders' understanding of data and their overview of students' achievement are not secure. Previous poor outcomes were unexpected. The quality of teaching is not monitored regularly or rigorously enough and, therefore, necessary improvements are not being made.
- The data system used by the academy is not fit for purpose. This causes inconvenience to several members of staff. Certain key data is not readily available in the form it needs to be.
- The Principal and senior leaders are trying to raise the expectations of both teachers and students but are only having limited impact at present.
- Senior leaders are honest and realistic about the academy's strengths and weaknesses. They are good at identifying issues which require improvement. Many actions have been taken to try to improve the academy, with varying degrees of success. Some of the actions; for example, changes to staffing or teacher training, have not had the intended impact. The overall picture is of a school which still has a long way to go to become good, though it does have successes upon which to build.
- Significant changes have been made to the curriculum to meet the differing needs of students. Year 9 students are now following either vocational or academic pathways. More subject choices are being made available, such as media studies. However, some subjects, such as music, will no longer be available at GCSE level. The three single sciences are offered to as many students as possible.
- In the sixth form, the study programme is developing. In 2012/13, there were 12 subjects available, all at A level. In 2013/14, this extended to 23 subjects. Vocational courses are planned for September 2014. The programme is expanding to meet both the differing needs of students and the increasing numbers who want to join the sixth form.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development requires improvement. Opportunities are provided for students to reflect on moral issues in assemblies, though the value of some of these is questioned by students. The academy's 'respect' agenda helps establish moral expectations but is undermined by some poor behaviour. Students are provided with regular opportunities to work together; they get on well together, both in and out of lessons.
- Opportunities to learn about other cultures are limited. There is a good range of extra-curricular clubs, both during and after school. These include a choir, drama and English clubs and a range of sporting activities.
- The academy's information, advice and guidance require improvement because not enough care is taken in matching students' prior learning experiences to future programmes of study in the sixth form. However, the vast majority of students who leave the academy at the end of Years

11, 12 or 13 are in further or higher education, employment or training.

- The sponsor has been ineffective in addressing the recruitment issues necessary to improve the academy in the long-term. The education adviser knows the academy well and makes regular visits to offer support and challenge. The sponsor arranged support for the mathematics and science departments through consultants; both consultants had a positive effect.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors understand the issues facing the academy and ask senior leaders challenging questions about underachievement and the quality of teaching. However, specific follow-up actions have not always been insisted upon. As a result, the impact of their requests is difficult to see. Governors have been involved in decisions about pay progression for teachers and some pay requests have been refused. Following the resignation of the Chair of the Local Governing Body in early January, a new Chair has been appointed by the academy sponsor. At the time of the inspection, the members of the local governing body had not been formally informed of this.

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	138235
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	424942

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	865
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	None
Principal	Krycia Butwilowska
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Telephone number	01327 705816
Fax number	01327 300156
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