

Rushden Community College

Hayway, Rushden, NN10 6AG

Inspection dates 29–30 April 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		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

- Students are not achieving well, especially in Years 9, 10 and 11.
- Some teaching is not good and students are not learning quickly enough.
- Students' work is not always marked regularly or effectively and this is contributing to some not making good progress.
- The work of teaching assistants is sometimes not well planned.
- Some students' presentation of work is poor and improving it is not a clear priority.
- Students' behaviour is not consistently good. A few students lose interest in lessons and a small number do not behave well at lunch and break times.
- The academy's agreed approach to improving behaviour is not being used well by all staff.
- Leaders have not ensured that information about students' progress is used effectively to improve their achievement fast enough. Monitoring and evaluation of the progress of different groups of students, including by governors, has not always been strong enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Progress is best in Years 7 and 8 because these students have been in the academy longest.
- The progress of students in Years 9, 10 and 11 has accelerated since September 2013.
- Academy data and students' work show that over half the students in Year 11 should achieve five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including in English and mathematics, in 2014.
- The sixth form is good. Students achieve well and have the opportunity to study a good variety of courses and subjects.
- The management of behaviour has become more effective. This is confirmed by records kept by the academy.
- Students say that the academy provides a safe environment for their learning. Older students report improvements, including in behaviour.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 36 lessons. Six lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also conducted a series of further brief observations of learning and students' behaviour, a scrutiny of students' work and observed the supervision of the students during different points of the day.
- Inspectors heard a group of Year 7 students reading.
- Members of the inspection team asked students for their views of the academy when observing learning and interviewed four groups of students from across the academy.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, representatives from the senior leadership team, subject leaders, and a representative from the academy sponsor.
- Inspectors took account of the 37 responses available to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 37 responses to the staff questionnaire. In addition, the inspectors took account of the academy's own survey of parents' views.
- Inspectors looked at improvement plans, records and analyses of students' behaviour and the academy's tracking of students' progress. They scrutinised attendance figures.

Inspection team

David Bray, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Rosemarie McCarthy	Additional Inspector
Christopher Crouch	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Pentlow	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized secondary school. It opened as an 11-18, sponsored academy in January 2012. The sponsor is the Education Fellowship Trust.
- Almost all students are White British.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided to the academy for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those in care and those from service families), is slightly below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The number of students entering and leaving at different points of the school year is slightly above average.
- The academy has not been open long enough to be required to meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. The first year group to complete Year 11 examinations after a full year in the academy will be in 2014.
- The Principal has been on sick leave since October 2013. The academy sponsor has appointed an Associate Principal to support the leadership of the academy and he has been in post since September 2013.
- Some Key Stage 4 students are partially educated at Moulton College, Tresham College, Manor School and Lunar Racing. They study courses in beauty, motor vehicle engineering, catering and construction.
- The sixth form provision is part of the East Northamptonshire College, a consortium that includes the Ferrers School and Huxlow Science College.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is good or better and students achieve higher standards, by ensuring that:
 - teachers stretch and challenge students in their learning and make work interesting to motivate and engage all students to make more rapid progress
 - marking of work is regular, tells students how to improve and makes sure that they respond by reviewing their work and improve future work
 - all staff have high expectations for how students should present their work
 - the work of teaching assistants ensures that they improve students' work during lessons.
- Improve leadership and management so that:
 - information on progress is used more effectively to ensure that a greater proportion of students make better progress than is usually expected
 - leaders at all levels monitor and evaluate the progress of different groups of students more rigorously and ensure better achievement where necessary
 - the academy's behaviour policy is used more consistently by all staff.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of 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 requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because many students in Years 9, 10 and 11 have not yet made good progress in English and mathematics from their starting points in Year 7. The academy's data and students' work shows that they are now making better progress and have started to catch up, especially since September 2013.
- Students start at the academy with below average attainment. The academy's data predict that 51% of Year 11 students should achieve five GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, in 2014. This performance would be below the current national average but work in books shows that these students have made more rapid progress since the academy opened.
- Some students have been entered early for GCSE examinations. However, results have been below what was expected, particularly for more-able students. The academy is making sure that early entrants who did not attain good results have an opportunity to retake these examinations in order to secure a higher grade and is not intending to use early entry with future Year 11 students. More-able students in all year groups have made better progress since September 2013.
- Not all disabled students and those who have special educational needs have made good progress. The progress of these students in most years is improving – but not rapidly. Progress of these students in Years 7 and 8 is stronger than in other years.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium are not consistently achieving well. The academy's data show that in 2014 Year 11 students are predicted to achieve two thirds of a grade lower than other students in English and mathematics. The academy's data also show that this gap in attainment has improved since the academy opened and this was confirmed by the students' work over time. There are similar recent improvements across other year groups. The progress of eligible students in Years 7 and 8 is stronger.
- The achievement of sixth form students is good. The academy's data show that current students, including AS, A level and those studying vocational courses, are on track to achieve their targets, which are challenging and based on their achievement in Key Stage 4. Evidence in students' work in lessons and in their books supports this information.
- The academy provides a good range of enrichment activities that are helping sixth form students to develop their readiness for employment. There is currently no information available about how well students complete courses because 2014 will be the first year that results are available. Academy data shows that all groups of students are achieving well and effective arrangements are in place to support those requiring further support in English and mathematics.
- All groups of Year 7 and 8 students, who have been in the academy for the greatest proportion of their secondary education, are making better progress. Older students are making more rapid progress since the academy opened and are starting to catch up.
- Many, but not all, of the students studying at local further education colleges, schools and other provision are making good progress on their courses.
- The academy is improving students' literacy skills. The Year 7 'catch-up' funding has been used to fund activities to help those who are behind in literacy and numeracy to make better progress from their low starting points. This includes a variety of extra sessions, and additional support to boost students' attainment.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because students, especially those in Years 9, 10 and 11, have not yet made good progress from their starting points on entry to the academy, although this has improved since September 2013 and students in Year 7 and 8 who have been in the academy for the longest proportion of time are making stronger progress.
- Some teaching has not stretched and challenged students to learn as well as they can. Teachers' expectations for students' progress have not been high enough. Some activities are not capturing the interest of students and are not rousing their enthusiasm for learning. These areas are, however, improving and leading to better progress.
- Students' behaviour is not consistently well managed within a few lessons and the academy's behaviour policy is not applied consistently by all staff. Consequently, there are a few occasions when the behaviour of a few students is allowed to disrupt the learning of others. This has been a priority for leaders and records and discussions show that it is improving.
- Teachers' marking and feedback are sometimes not sufficiently frequent or helpful to students to enable them to improve their work. Students do not always use the feedback they are given to improve their work. Consequently, their progress is not always improving fast enough.
- Expectations for students' presentation of their written work are not high enough. Too much work is accepted that is scruffy and not presented with care and pride.
- Teachers do not consistently organise the work of teaching assistants carefully enough. As a result, this staff resource is not fully effective in improving students' learning at a fast enough rate. However, inspectors also observed good practice in the support provided for individual students by teaching assistants who were clear about the help they were expected to give and how to do so.
- Teaching is improving. Staff and students report that their expectations of what can be achieved have improved since the academy opened. Higher expectations, including for more able students, are resulting in more effective learning, especially in Years 7 and 8 and leading to better progress for older students. Expectations for the teaching of literacy and mathematics have also been raised and recent progress is better.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Expectations are often high and students respond well to the challenge and appreciate the good individual support they receive. Teachers monitor the progress made by students, including those with weaker literacy and numeracy skills, regularly. Students get good feedback and understand how they can improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Although the large majority of students conduct themselves well during the day, a small number disrupt the learning of others during lessons by calling out or not listening patiently. A few students do not behave well enough during break and lunch time.
- The presentation of some work is poor because some students do not take enough care over handwriting, do not use a ruler to underline or do not present information in a clear and careful way.

- The academy has considered its duty to promote equality. For example, guidance to show that homophobic bullying is wrong has been provided. However, insufficient attention has been given to ensuring that different groups of students are making good progress.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is good. Academy data show that students are on track to complete courses and move on to the next stage of their education. Students attend well and participate enthusiastically in enrichment activities. Sixth form students contribute to the learning of other year groups when they are on the academy site.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Leaders make sure that access to the academy is secure and that all safeguarding requirements are applied.
- Academy records report few incidents of bullying or racism. Students report that a small amount of bullying occurs. About one fifth of parents completing the Parent View survey feel that there is bullying, but other surveys indicate that parents are happy with this aspect of the academy. Students say they are confident that swift action is taken if it should occur and they feel confident in how this will be managed by staff. They know and understand different types of bullying.
- The students have a good understanding of how to protect themselves from unsafe situations, including when browsing the internet and using roads. They believe that the academy provides regular and thorough information to help them to be aware of the risks involved with these activities.
- The large majority of students enjoy coming to the academy. Strategies to improve attendance have ensured that current attendance is average. The numbers of students who are persistently absent are falling. Attendance in the sixth form is good.
- The academy has developed a group of students as 'learning partners' in order to get feedback on how well it is improving and support the improvements that are being made. This is supporting the improvements in behaviour that staff, parents and students believe are taking place.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because achievement is not yet good enough. In particular, the proportion of students making better progress than is expected nationally is not yet good, although it is improving, especially in Year 7 and 8.
- Leaders, at all levels, have not always used information on the progress of different groups of students well enough to ensure that achievement is improving fast enough. The progress of students with special educational needs has been a priority and this group is starting to make better progress, especially in Years 7 and 8.
- Although the behaviour policy has been reviewed and is resulting in improvements, it is not being used consistently by all staff. There has been a high level of exclusions. Leaders believe that this has been necessary in order to set out high expectations for acceptable behaviour. Staff and students think that behaviour has improved since the academy opened.
- Pupil premium funding is used to fund activities such as extra tuition to support the progress made by these students. There is still too big a gap between the progress of these students and others in the academy, although there have been some recent improvements, especially in Year 7 and 8. Leaders have taken action to ensure that this has been a priority, but there is more to

be done.

- The academy leaders have a secure understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. They have focused on clear priorities and shown they have the capacity to do more. This has resulted in improvements in behaviour over time, better teaching and improved progress, especially in Years 7 and 8.
- Systems for managing teachers' performance are strong. The academy has ensured that information on students' progress and attainment is used to make decisions about pay progression for staff. Teachers are positive about the training programmes for improving their quality of teaching.
- The academy sponsor has provided effective support by ensuring that leadership has been supported by an Associate Principal. This has been of crucial importance during a time when the Principal has been on long-term sick leave. The sponsor has also ensured that extra training and support has been provided for academy leaders. Despite this help, the sponsor has not focused rigorously enough on the progress made by different groups of students. Some aspects of the academy's website do not meet statutory requirements because there is insufficient information about special education needs, admissions and how effective the pupil premium funding has been.
- There is a good choice of subjects for students to study. Students have access to helpful advice, both from the academy and elsewhere, to inform their choices of subjects to study.
- The sixth form curriculum includes a good range of academic and vocational subjects and the choice of options benefits from the opportunities to share courses with the local consortium. Good advice is available to ensure that students study courses that match their skills and aspirations for the future.
- Sixth form leadership is good and the arrangements for monitoring the progress of students, including those who need extra support in English and mathematics, are strong. This includes ensuring that students taught on other sites are making sufficient progress.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities in sports and a range of other activities that students appreciate.
- The academy has made working with parents a priority. The academy has conducted a parental survey, which shows that parents are positive about improvements that have been made.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a good range of expertise. Governors believe that they understand how well the academy is performing from the available data on students' attainment and progress. However, they have not focused sufficiently on the progress made by different groups of students, including those with special educational needs, the more able and those eligible for pupil premium funding. The governors have not considered sufficiently the impact of Year 7 'catch up' funding. They have a developing understanding of performance management of staff. However, there is lack of clarity between the respective responsibilities of the governors and the academy sponsor. This confusion has been recognised and the levels of delegation have recently been clarified. Governors have access to and participate in appropriate training.

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	139013
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	440040

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	970
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	121
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Dodds
Principal	Mark Lester
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Telephone number	01933 350391
Fax number	01933 350391
Email address	admin@rushden.northants.sch.uk

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