

Gloucester Academy

Painswick Road, Gloucester, GL4 6RN

Inspection dates

1–2 April 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
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.

- The proportion of students gaining five good quality GCSEs, including English and mathematics, is consistently lower than the national average. The progress made by all groups of students is too slow, particularly in mathematics.
- Teaching is, and has been, inadequate over time. It is not consistently good enough to ensure that students at all ability levels achieve well.
- The pace of students' learning is often too slow. Teachers do not always check on how well students are learning. They do not ensure that the tasks they set challenge the students sufficiently well.
- Teaching activities often fail to engage students' interest, and activities are not pitched at the right level. As a result, students become bored. This leads to disruptive behaviour and inadequate learning.
- Students' work is not marked routinely. When marking does take place, it does not clearly show students how to improve their work.
- Some subject leaders are not carrying out their roles well enough.
- The academy does not offer students enough subjects or courses to prepare them for their future. The way that the school day is organised does not meet the needs of all students. This leads to disruptive behaviour.
- Students' literacy skills are weak and this hinders their progress in other subjects.
- The academy's leaders, including the outgoing governing body and sponsors, have not secured the necessary improvements required for teaching and achievement.
- The outgoing governing body has not held senior leaders to account for the academy's weaknesses in its performance.
- The school has not evaluated the deployment and impact of additional government funding. Gaps in the achievement of different groups are not closing.
- The new sixth form is yet to set up systems to evaluate its provision.

The school has the following strengths

- The new Principal knows exactly what needs to be done to improve the academy. Actions already taken have had successful outcomes.
- Attendance is in line with national averages.
- Students say they feel safe in school. The academy is effective in promoting positive relationships between different communities represented within the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 23 lessons. Over half of these were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also carried out numerous focused walks around the academy to observe learning in a number of different classes.
- Inspectors took account of 15 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and analysed 14 responses from staff questionnaires. They took account of one individual telephone call from a parent.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and scrutinised students’ books.
- Inspectors looked at examination results for 2013, assessment records, including teachers’ predictions for 2014, the governing body minutes and other policies, which were on the school’s website.
- Inspectors met groups of students and staff, along with the outgoing Chair of the Governing Body, the new Chair of the Interim Academic Board (IAB) and a representative from the new single sponsor.

Inspection team

Lorna Brackstone, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Karl Sampson

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Michael Smith

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Duncan Millard

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.

It is strongly recommended the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

Information about this school

- Gloucester Academy is a smaller-than-average secondary school. It opened in September 2010 as the result of a merger of two schools, one of which was a boys' school. The academy moved into a new building in September 2013.
- A new sixth form opened in September 2013. There are currently 53 Year 12 students on roll.
- Since the academy opened, in September 2010, there have been eight Principals or acting Principals.
- Until 31 March 2014 the academy was jointly sponsored by Prospects Education Services Ltd and Gloucester College. On 1 April 2014, the first day of this inspection, the sponsorship changed to a single sponsor, Prospects Academies Trust. The former governing body and the IAB have been disbanded and a new IAB is to meet shortly.
- The substantive Principal, who was at the academy at the time of the last inspection, left in September 2013. An interim Principal was appointed from October 2013 to January 2014. A new permanent Principal took up his post in February 2014. At the time of this inspection the new Principal had been in post for two months.
- There are twice as many boys as girls at the academy.
- The proportion of students from ethnic minority groups is above average, as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language.
- Over half the students are eligible for additional government funding, which is to support students who are eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority or those from service families.
- The proportion of students for whom the academy receives additional Year 7 catch-up funds is above average.
- There is a much higher than average proportion of students who have special educational needs at school action and who are in need of extra help. The proportion of students at school action plus or who have statements for special educational needs is about the national average.
- Sixteen students receive full-time training away from the academy at Gloucester College, the Youth Offending Service or the Pupil Referral Service. There is also a small number of students who attend Gloucester College on a part-time basis to attend hair and beauty and construction courses.
- In 2013, the academy failed to meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- When the academy was inspected in October 2012 it was judged to have serious weaknesses. Since that time it has received three monitoring visits from Her Majesty's Inspectors. These were carried out in December 2012, May 2013 and October 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement by improving teaching to good or better levels across the academy ensuring that:
 - teachers demand higher standards of work from their students during lessons and in the written tasks they set
 - students' work is accurately assessed and that new work planned enables them to make good or better progress
 - students' work is marked regularly with comments that help students to improve their work and increase the progress they make
 - the progress made by different groups of students is checked regularly against the quality of teaching they receive.
- Improve the impact of leaders at all levels on raising students' achievement, particularly that of the most able, by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders have the capacity to deliver improvement priorities
 - checking that the information on students' progress is accurate in all subjects and staff are clear about the capabilities of each student
 - checking that students who are eligible for the government's pupil premium funding receive high calibre support that meets their specific needs
 - promoting literacy skills in all subjects across the school
 - ensuring that the governing body holds the senior leaders and managers to account for all aspects of the academy's performance.
- Improve behaviour and students' attitudes to learning by:
 - making sure all staff and students understand and adhere to the academy's procedures for managing behaviour
 - ensuring students are engaged productively in lessons and participate actively in their learning

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the academy's use of pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how it can be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Most Year 7 students join the academy with standards that are significantly below average. During their time in the academy students make inadequate progress and achieve standards that are well below average at the end of Key Stage 4, in English and mathematics.
- In 2012 and 2013, the proportions of students who made reasonable or better progress by the end of Key Stage 4 in English and mathematics were well below national figures. The academy's own analysis of how well students are likely to achieve this year shows rates of progress in English improving but remaining well below current national figures.
- The academy's own checks on students' progress show that the achievement made by current students in mathematics is poor.
- The academy entered students early for the GCSE mathematics examination in 2013. Not all students who gained a grade C, or better, were given the opportunity to improve their grade. This contributed to their inadequate progress in mathematics. Previously the academy entered students early for history and art GCSEs, but with only limited success. The academy has now changed its policy for entering students early for external examinations to ensure that this no longer occurs.
- The most able students are identified by the academy and all staff are aware of who they are. However, lessons are not adapted sufficiently to give these students greater challenge. Consequently, the most able students make inadequate progress. Although other ability students make better progress, it is still inadequate given their potential from their starting points.
- The academy has not closed the gap between students eligible for pupil premium and others. In 2012, by the end of Year 11, the attainment gap in English and mathematics was less than a GCSE grade. In 2013, the attainment gap had widened to over a grade difference in English and one and a quarter grades in mathematics.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding has been used to support a summer school and to provide additional staff to run the academy's Year 7 transition programme. However, the academy's leaders did not evaluate how successful the summer school was in ensuring students did not regress over the summer break. The academy has rightly identified that the arrangements for provision in Year 7 is inadequate.
- Progress made by disabled students and those with special educational needs has been inadequate over the last three years. Very recent changes are providing better quality support to students in Years 7 and 8; but, in other year groups, students make inadequate progress.
- Students who attend training off-site for one day each week enjoy their placements. They make steady progress with their construction or hair and beauty skills. However, there are 16 students from Years 10 and 11 who attend full-time placements off-site. Many of these students are at these placements because they have social or emotional challenges. These students take few qualifications and their achievement is often low.
- Students have poor literacy and numeracy skills, which impacts negatively upon their work across a wide variety of subjects. Written work often lacks precision, handwriting and basic spelling is poor and grammar is weak. Speaking is not used well to enable students to think through work before writing. Poor numeracy skills mean students do not have a good recall of basic number facts and this hinders their work when these are needed, such as in science.
- The academy tracks the progress of many different groups, including those from different ethnic backgrounds. Records show that while students who are in the early stages of learning English make better progress than others, they still do not make adequate progress.
- In 2013, the proportion of students who proceeded to employment, education or training was slightly below the local authority average. The opening of the sixth form saw a big increase in the proportion of students who stayed on in education.
- Students produce some high quality art work, which is exhibited attractively around the buildings. Students spoke very positively about how they enjoyed being part of academy

productions and, at the time of the inspection, they were preparing to perform the musical, *Bugsy Malone*.

- The sixth form provides a mixture of A levels and work-related courses. Students enjoy being in the new sixth form and say that they are making good progress. However, procedures and routines to validate this perception are not yet fully developed.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- Too much time is wasted in lessons and the pace of learning is slow. Many teachers do not expect enough high quality work from students.
- Teachers rarely stretch students' thinking and do not demand the engagement of all students in their lessons. Most teachers fail to challenge untidy writing, poor presentation and incomplete work in students' books.
- Teachers do not assess students' work accurately. Marking does not provide students with the necessary guidance they need to improve their learning. Students often mark each other's work, but this is not effective as they have not been shown how to do it.
- Newly introduced planning sheets identify those students who are most able, use English as an additional language, are in receipt of additional funding and/or have special educational needs. However, teachers do not adapt their lessons to meet the needs of students in these groups. Not enough is demanded of the most able and those who find learning more difficult struggle to make sense of sessions.
- Additional adults are not used effectively to support the learning and progress of those who need it the most.
- Teachers do not develop and extend students' literacy skills in other subject areas. Students' poor speaking skills are not corrected when the students discuss their work in class. Over time, teachers have failed to ensure that those students who struggle with their reading have the basics they need to improve their skills.
- Students' respond well to teachers who demonstrate high expectations of work and behaviour.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is often better than in other year groups, but the impact of teaching over time is not yet established.
- A system for checking the quality of teaching has been recently introduced. This is giving teachers very clear guidance of what the academy expects of good quality teaching over time. This is starting to improve practice and ensure that students start to make good progress in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- The behaviour of students is inadequate. Students who spoke to the inspectors expressed their concerns that, too often, their learning is disrupted by poor behaviour. A significant proportion of staff who completed the inspection questionnaire shared this opinion.
- Staff do not have high enough expectations of how students should conduct themselves in lessons. Observations of students' behaviour and evidence gathered from interviews with students indicate that behaviour is often inadequate and disrupts learning.
- Many students display a poor attitude to learning. Teachers do not take sufficient action to ensure students' behaviour is good. As a result, progress in lessons slows and students disengage from learning.
- Although students are not usually late to school, some take a casual approach to getting to their lessons on time. This is not always dealt with effectively by staff.
- Extremist behaviour is not an issue as the academy is effective in promoting positive relationships between different communities.
- The behaviour of the sixth form students is good. All students sign a behaviour contract when they start Year 12. Students' attitude to work is good and they have received good support

when applying for higher education.

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement.
- Students say that bullying does occur and some talk of 'gangs' who make fun of others. Students have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber bullying and homophobic bullying. There are effective systems in place to deal with different types of bullying, but not all students feel that their concerns are listened to or followed up.
- Despite some weaknesses in the way students feel their concerns are addressed, students say they generally feel safe in and around the school and know who to talk to if there is a problem.
- Sixth form students learn about staying safe through experiencing activities that are appropriate for their age. For example, those old enough to drive learn about the dangers of driving under the influence of alcohol.
- The academy receives an end of week report for students who attend full-time at other providers. However, they are not informed each day of attendance and this means that they do not know until a Friday if a student has had some absence during the week.
- Attendance, which has been consistently below average, has improved since the previous inspection and is in line with national averages. This is a direct result of the impressive work of the pastoral team who have been financed by additional government funding. The number of exclusions has declined considerably since the arrival of the Principal who has introduced a more consistent approach to behaviour management.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Since the previous inspection, the academy's leaders, managers and governors have failed to demonstrate their capacity for improvement. They have not made the changes necessary to raise student achievement.
- The academy's leaders and managers have failed to create a high quality learning environment. Not all groups of students benefit from consistently good or better teaching. A rigorous approach to managing challenging behaviour has not been taken. Consequently, the interruption of lessons due to disruptive behaviour, which was noted at the last inspection, remains a serious weakness.
- The way in which the timetable is planned does not enable the students to receive broad and balanced opportunities in all subject areas. There is no consistent approach across the academy to develop and promote the students' literacy and numeracy skills.
- Although pupil premium money has been used effectively to support students with low levels of attendance, it has not been used effectively to reduce the gap in attainment between eligible students and others. The academy has only very recently introduced strategies to reduce the achievement gap between different groups of students. To assess the impact of these interventions the academy's leaders have developed systems to measure their effectiveness. Consequently, at the time of the inspection it was not possible to judge the impact of this spending. Year 7 additional government funds have not been used well to ensure students quickly make up for lost ground when they start in Year 7.
- Following his arrival, the Principal has very quickly developed a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. He has absolute clarity of what needs to be done and is being supported well by an assistant headteacher. There have been very recent improvements made to teaching. However, these have yet not had time to impact on raising students' achievement.
- The Principal has proven experience of turning round academies facing difficulties. He has a clear, undeterred sense of direction and his shared purpose has been welcomed by staff. A secure start has been made in tackling the legacy of poor behaviour and there are robust plans in place to reorganise the way in which the school timetable operates.
- The Principal has wasted no time in identifying teachers who need to improve the quality of their work. By introducing a series of detailed lesson requirements, he is raising their awareness of how their poor performance impacts negatively on student progress. Robust measures to

evaluate the performance of individual teachers have already had an impact. As a result, a number of teachers are now receiving support to improve the quality of their teaching and others have decided to leave the academy.

- Over the two month period since the Principal arrived, there has been an improving focus on the promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are stronger community values and, generally, students from different ethnic backgrounds interact harmoniously together. The increased opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities, such as sporting and musical events, are starting to expand the social experiences of the students. Greater involvement in the local community, for example through drama and musical performances, is raising the profile of the academy. Although some tutor group meetings do not enhance the students' experiences, the assemblies taken by the Principal provide opportunities for reflection. Year 11 students said they found their one-to-one meetings with the Principal very useful.
- The sixth form director has been effective in establishing the new sixth form. Students receive effective advice and guidance to support them when making choices at the end of Year 11. The range of subjects meets students' needs well through a variety of A level and work-related courses, which are being extended for next year. Students can retake GCSEs, including English and mathematics, although there has been limited success with resit examinations. The director does not formally monitor the quality of teaching. However, the very recent procedures introduced to check on teaching will be expanded to include sixth form lessons.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures meet current national requirements and are secure.
- The external support received by the academy since the last inspection has not been effective in securing improvement. Since the arrival of the new Principal an external consultant with a wealth of experience has undertaken an accurate review of Year 7 provision. High quality support has also been planned by the new sponsor.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Over the past 18 months the governors of the joint sponsored academy have not acted quickly enough to take decisive and challenging action to improve the leadership of the academy. Governors have lacked the necessary understanding to analyse information on students' progress to challenge senior leaders about the academy's performance. They have not demonstrated the ability to judge how well the school is doing in comparison with others or to ensure pupil premium funds are being used effectively. Systems to manage the performance of teachers were put in place in September 2013. However, the delay in holding senior leaders and teaching staff to account, through setting targets for teachers, has been detrimental to students' achievement. The failure to make senior staff accountable for the way in which the substantial amount of additional government funding the academy receives is inexcusable. Consequently, governors have not been able to ensure equality of opportunity for all students. The new IAB has yet to meet, but its Chair is fully aware of the significant weaknesses of the academy and is clear that improvements need to be made with the utmost speed. New IAB members are experienced and well trained governors. Plans are in place to link the academy with other schools within the academy trust so that they can share good practice.

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	136199
Local authority	Gloucester
Inspection number	426705

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	822
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	53
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Leslie Stephen
Principal	Showk Badat
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 October 2012
Telephone number	01452 428800
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