

The James Hornsby School

Leinster Road, Laindon, Basildon, Essex, SS15 5NX

Inspection dates 14–15 May 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 do not achieve as well in mathematics and sciences as they do in English because the quality of teaching and leadership of these subjects is inconsistent.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is not routinely monitored to ensure that they all make expected progress.
- Students known to be eligible for free school meals make similar progress to others in English, but not in mathematics.
- Teaching requires improvement, particularly in mathematics, science and in a range of other subjects.
- Teachers' low expectations, and tasks that fail to stimulate, interest and challenge students prevent them from making good progress. Students' literacy and numeracy skills are not reinforced regularly in lessons.
- Low-level disruption of lessons by a small minority of students interrupts the learning of others.
- The leadership of some subjects and the monitoring of the progress and welfare of disabled students and those that have special educational needs are not firmly established.
- The quality of teaching is monitored regularly but senior leaders' views of its effectiveness are too generous.
- Improvement plans do not prioritise actions to raise achievement in science.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's inspired leadership is raising achievement throughout the academy.
- The academy sponsor, strengthened governance and the new teachers, leaders and managers who have joined the academy add significantly to its capacity to improve.
- Current data show that standards are rising.
- The academy is a calm, orderly environment where students feel very safe and free from bullying. They value the recent changes made and the care and support provided by staff.
- Students' pastoral care is good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons. Eight of these were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior, subject and other leaders, the executive headteacher, three groups of students, three representative of the governing body and two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of other evidence, including the academy’s improvement plan, self-evaluation, attainment and progress data, lesson monitoring information and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors scrutinised a selection of students’ books and listened to a group of Year 7 students read aloud.
- They took account of the 67 responses to questionnaires completed by staff and the 16 responses to Ofsted’s online Parent View questionnaire.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty’s Inspector

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Full report

Information about this school

- The James Hornsby School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The predecessor school, The James Hornsby High School was judged to be satisfactory at its last Ofsted inspection in 2012. It opened as an academy in October 2012. It is sponsored by The King John School, Benfleet.
- A new headteacher was appointed in April 2013.
- Most students are White British. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language, mostly from Black African and Asian backgrounds, is below average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average. This is additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- The percentage of disabled students and those that have special educational needs, mostly moderate learning difficulties or behaviour, emotional and social difficulties, supported by school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are above average.
- Alternative arrangements are made for four students to be taught off-site. Two students are educated at Circles Farm for two days each week. One student is taught part-time at the Space Centre, and the other attends the local tertiary college.
- In 2013, the academy did not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good across and within all subjects by:
 - planning learning that quickly captures and retains the attention of all students and stimulates their interest and enthusiasm for learning
 - ensuring that middle and higher ability students are always stretched in lessons by providing them with work that is sufficiently challenging
 - taking every opportunity to reinforce students' literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects.
- Raise achievement, particularly in mathematics and science, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what all students are capable of achieving and monitoring the impact this has on students' learning and progress
 - closely monitoring that new teachers and the new subject leader accelerate students' learning and progress, and the gaps between what students eligible for the pupil premium achieve compared with other students and subjects are narrowed
 - ensuring that science and the actions to raise achievement in it are prioritised in the academy's improvement plans.
- Ensure that behaviour is always consistently good by eliminating the low-level disruption caused by a small minority of students.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - making regular checks that leaders in English, mathematics and science make a significant contribution to raising students' achievement in their subjects, and in improving the overall performance of the academy
 - ensure that the education of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is led and managed effectively

- using the information gained from senior leaders’ analysis of performance data and from their regular lesson monitoring to form an accurate overview of what teachers do well, and what they need to do better to enable students to make consistently good progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- The prior attainment of students joining the academy is lower than that found nationally. A significant proportion of older students have gaps in their knowledge skills and understanding due to poor teaching in the past.
- Opening as an academy last year made little difference to overall standards. Results in GCSE and vocational awards achieved by Year 11 students were low. The proportion of them making expected progress in English and mathematics declined compared to the previous year. Entering students for examinations in mathematics earlier and then later in the year had no impact on overall attainment. There were no notable differences in the achievement of groups of students. Poor teaching and low rates of attendance meant that most of them underachieved.
- Decisive action has been taken by school leaders to tackle this underperformance. A new headteacher has refocused the academy on raising the achievement of all students. Ineffective staff have left the academy. New appointments have been made to improve the quality of teaching in order to halt the underperformance, improve attendance and accelerate students' progress.
- Regular assessments of students' progress are made to gauge how well they are progressing against the personal targets set for them. Current data shows that students of all abilities are making better progress in core subjects, most notably in English, where the majority of students are making the progress they should. A much higher proportion of Year 11 students are expected to attain an A* to C grade in English this year.
- Improvements are being made in mathematics but at a slower rate. The proportion of students expected to attain an A* to C grade in mathematics is higher than in 2013 but is much lower than in English.
- Additional support for students who are eligible for the pupil premium, including personalised mentoring, additional lessons and revision classes, is beginning to narrow the gap between their achievement and that of other students in English. In mathematics, the gap is closing but remains too wide due to the same inconsistencies in the teaching of mathematics experienced by most students.
- The school routinely monitors the achievement and well-being of the four students taught off-site to ensure that this alternative provision meets their needs. Students attending off-site provision make reasonable progress in developing workplace skills that prepare them suitably for life after school.
- Less attention is paid to science, where significant numbers of students underachieved in 2013. A new subject leader is due to join the academy later this year. Achievement varies widely in a number of other subjects, including French, humanities, information technology and religious education, because the quality of teaching is inconsistent.
- Extra funding provided by the government is used effectively to help students in Year 7 and Year 8 who are behind when they start secondary school to catch-up with others in their reading and mathematics.

- Lesson observations and scrutiny of students' work carried out by inspectors confirmed the views of senior leaders. Most students, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs are making improved progress in both key stages. Better quality teaching – particularly, systematic procedures to plan learning, mark students' work, set homework and monitor how well students are doing – is enabling most of them to make improved progress.
- Some lessons do not capture students' interest and enthusiasm, so not all students engage fully and make good progress. Students' books in a range of subjects show that they work steadily, rather than work hard. Not all teachers have high expectations of them. The good quality and quantity of work completed in some lessons contrasts sharply with that in others because students are not expected to complete all of their work to a high standard.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Based on their regular monitoring, school leaders evaluate that the large majority of teaching as good or outstanding. This was not confirmed by inspectors from their observations of teaching, evaluation of students' work and scrutiny of assessment information. The quality of teaching varies too widely between and within subjects. Often, good teaching does lead to good progress, but the features that enable this to happen are not common in all lessons. As a result, students' progress is uneven.
- The introduction of longer lessons to promote students' deeper learning is welcomed by students. Inspectors found that, in some lessons, students were not always attentive and fully focused on learning because teaching did not stimulate their interest. Most students behave themselves and work steadily rather than enthusiastically, which limits their progress. Regular reading is accelerating the progress made by younger students. Older students are not encouraged to read widely and often in their own time.
- Most teachers manage students' behaviour well and share good relations with them. Very little off-task behaviour was seen during the inspection, but the views of some students, and staff, and the academy's data shows this is not the case. Records show that the number of students removed from lessons is falling, but remains too high.
- Teacher's planning usually identifies the different needs of students but not all teachers have high expectations of what they are capable of achieving. Students of middle and higher ability are not always stretched in lessons because work is not challenging enough. Newly introduced procedures to develop students' thinking skills are beginning to add further challenge and generate higher quality work.
- Teachers set tasks and provide good one-to-one support for individuals and groups, but not all of them look at students' work during lessons to check that it is being completed promptly and to a high standard. Students feel that regular marking of their books helps them to make progress because they have to follow-up the comments made to correct and improve their work. Older students say that they get enough homework, but younger ones expected to be set more than they are currently asked to do.
- A few teachers help to reinforce students' literacy skills by explaining technical language and supporting their spelling and use of grammar, but this is not widespread. Very few examples of promoting students' numeracy skills were noted.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Senior leaders evaluate the behaviour and safety of students as good, based on the calm atmosphere in the academy and the improvements made to students' attendance, punctuality and behaviour that has led to fewer exclusions. Inspectors noted these improvements, but found that behaviour requires improvement.
- Over one-fifth of staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire disagreed that behaviour is good or that it is consistently well-managed. Students say that it is usually good but a small minority of students regularly spoil it for others, by interrupting their lessons.
- Not all students display positive attitudes towards their learning. For example, despite regular checks of equipment in weekly tutorial sessions, some students still arrive at lessons without a pen. During teachers' questioning and group discussion, some students choose to sit back and let others do the work.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students feel completely safe in school. They say that all forms of bullying are rare and, when it does occur, they know which staff to approach to help them. Recent assemblies have helped to raise their awareness of cyber-bullying and the risks involved.
- Students enjoy being members of one of the academy's four 'colleges'. They feel part of a community that knows each other well. Dividing students into smaller, manageable groups in this way enables staff to provide good pastoral care, and to routinely monitor their attendance and progress. Regular assemblies, tutorials, competitions and social events held between colleges make a significant contribution to students' spiritual moral, social and cultural development.
- Attendance has improved significantly this year and is much closer to the national average. This is due to improved procedures for following up absence and by rewarding students for regular attendance.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher's leadership and management are good but overall, leadership and management requires improvement because there are too many weaknesses in the leadership of some subjects, and in ensuring that the needs of some of disabled students and those who have special educational needs are fully met.
- Changes have been made to the leadership of English and mathematics. A new subject leader of science has been appointed. English is showing signs of improvement, the other two subjects require urgent improvement. A senior teacher is undergoing training to take full responsibility for assessing the progress and monitoring the welfare of disabled students, and those who have special educational needs. These arrangements are not firmly embedded.
- Responsibility for students eligible for the pupil premium has been suitably clarified and strengthened to ensure that they achieve equally as well as other students, particularly in mathematics. A senior teacher and an experienced governor have been given responsibility for monitoring and reporting upon their progress.

- In its first year, the academy relied upon too many vocational awards to improve its overall performance. The curriculum has been remodelled to ensure that students are following appropriate courses, with greater breadth and balance so that students have sufficient time to study GCSE qualifications in depth.
- The improvements led by the headteacher are promoting a positive ethos in the academy based on much higher aspirations and the expectation that all teaching must be consistently good. Tough decisions have been made. All staff have clear targets to demonstrate their impact on raising achievement. Improvement plans are in place to raise achievement in English and mathematics, and to further increase attendance. These plans do not prioritise improvements in science.
- Lessons are routinely monitored by leaders, and staff are held much more accountable than they were last year. These procedures have helped to identify and challenge weak teaching, and to target training towards those teachers who need it. However, senior leaders' views of the effectiveness of teaching are too generous because they are too reliant on snapshots of lessons. They do not use this information alongside their analysis of student progress data to form an accurate overview of what teachers regularly do well, and what they need to do to ensure that all teaching is consistently good.
- The executive headteacher shares her extensive knowledge and experience with the headteacher to drive improvements. They manage the strategic development of the academy and are fully focused on raising achievement.
- Senior leaders are forging partnerships with local schools and raising the academy's profile in the local community. The changes made this year have been warmly welcomed by most staff, students and their parents.
- All statutory requirements for safeguarding students are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The executive headteacher of the academy's sponsor school and the governing body took decisive action to tackle the underperformance of the academy in its first year. Appointing a new headteacher has put the academy back on track. Appointments to the governing body have also strengthened the leadership of the academy. Recent training has increased governors' understanding of using performance data. They know where the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching, and in leadership and management lie and manage the performance of staff appropriately.

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	138865
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	440127

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	749
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Hunter
Headteacher	Jason Carey
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01268 582400
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