

The Robert Napier School

Third Avenue, Gillingham, Kent, ME7 2LX

Inspection dates

8–9 July 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

- The progress made by students across a number of subjects, including mathematics, and year groups is not yet good.
- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is not yet good enough to ensure that all students achieve as well as they could.
- The quality of teachers' feedback on students' written work varies considerably. Students are not consistently provided with the advice and guidance they need to improve their work, or given enough opportunities to respond to teachers' comments.
- Untidy and careless work produced by students is not always challenged.
- Not all teachers consistently apply the academy's strategies for managing students' behaviour in lessons.
- Leadership and management require improvement. Measures taken by leaders to raise the quality of teaching and students' achievement have not yet resulted in sufficiently rapid improvement.
- The sixth form requires improvement because students are not making enough progress from their below-average starting points.

The school has the following strengths

- The standards reached by students by the end of Year 11 have risen sharply. Students achieve well in English, especially in reading.
- The academy makes good use of the additional funding it receives for many of its students. This has helped to improve their attainment in English and mathematics.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve well because of the good support and teaching from which they benefit.
- Leaders have driven notable improvements in students' achievement and the quality of teaching in the short time the academy has been open.
- The board of trustees has a good understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. The trustees have high expectations of the academy's leaders and staff, and are determined to ensure that these are met.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 32 part lessons, four of which were observed together with senior leaders. They also visited a number of other activities, including an assembly and the academy's sports day, and listened to students read.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of students' written work, especially in science and mathematics.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of staff, groups of students, the Chair and the Vice Chair of the advisory board and the executive principal of the academy trust. They also spoke with a number of parents during sports day.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including: the academy's evaluation of its strengths and areas for development; the school improvement plan; minutes of advisory board meetings; data relating to attendance and exclusions; information about students' attainment and progress; and safeguarding and behaviour records.
- Inspectors took into account the views of the 20 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as the results of similar questionnaires that had been conducted by the school.
- Inspectors reviewed 77 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Annette Rhodes, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Robin Gaff	Additional Inspector
Teresa Gilpin	Additional Inspector
Angela Podmore	Additional Inspector
Adam Mirams	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Robert Napier School is a larger-than-average, non-selective, secondary school in an area where approximately 30% of students attend selective grammar schools.
- It became an academy in September 2012 and is sponsored by the Fort Pitt Academy Trust. When the predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted in September 2009 it was judged to be satisfactory.
- The proportion of boys in the academy is higher than in similar schools nationally.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students who are learning English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding for young people who are looked after or for students known to be eligible for free school meals, is above average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A small number of sixth form students attend courses at local grammar schools.
- The academy has specially resourced provision for visually impaired students. This currently caters for eight students.
- There have been significant changes in staffing, including senior and middle leadership, since the school became an academy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to raise the achievement of all students across the school by:
 - making sure that teachers always give students work which is demanding enough and engages their interest
 - sharing the good and outstanding practice that exists in the academy
 - improving the quality of teachers' feedback to ensure that it provides clear guidance on the steps students need to take to improve their work
 - providing more opportunities for students to act upon the advice teachers give them.
- Improve students' behaviour, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers apply the academy's expectations and policies consistently
 - poor presentation and work that is incomplete are challenged.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that the pace of improvement is more rapid.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The vast majority of students enter the academy with attainment levels that are well below average. Whilst standards have risen sharply in the time the academy has been open, students' attainment on leaving the academy remains low. The progress of students across different year groups and subjects in the academy is not consistently good.
- Students' achievement in mathematics requires improvement. In 2013 too few of the most-able students made good progress. New leaders have taken appropriate action to remedy this, and academy records show signs that this is beginning to have a positive impact. The academy is not limiting students' chances of achieving higher grades by entering them early for GCSE in mathematics.
- The achievement of students in the sixth form, including those who attend courses at other schools, requires improvement. This is because, even taking into account their low starting points, they do not reach as high standards or make as much progress as they could.
- In 2013, students achieved well at GCSE in English. From their different starting points, the proportion of students making good progress compares favourably with national figures. The academy's own reliable data show that current students are achieving at least as well as their predecessors.
- Additional funding has been spent well on a wide range of initiatives, including the appointment of extra specialist teaching staff in some subjects. As a result, students are benefiting from more individual support and are making faster progress. In 2013, the gap in performance between those known to be eligible for free school meals and that of other students was equivalent to a whole grade in English and almost one grade in mathematics. The academy's most recent assessment data show, however, that these gaps are beginning to close.
- Extra funding is used well to provide support for those students who join the academy with particularly low starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. The academy's own records show that these students are currently making better progress than their peers.
- As a result of well-tailored individual support, disabled students and those with special educational needs are now making better progress than similar students nationally. The academy caters well for visually impaired students and, consequently, they make good progress.
- The progress of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those for whom English is an additional language, does not differ significantly from that of other students in the academy.
- Achievement gaps in performance between girls and boys are narrowing, reflecting the academy's effective promotion of equality of opportunity.
- Staff actively promote a love of reading and this is resulting in improvement in students' achievement in reading. The academy uses its links with a local professional football club very effectively to encourage students to read more often, by providing them with good role models.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although, as a result of decisive action taken by leaders, the quality of teaching is improving, it still requires further improvement. This is because the work which students are expected to do does not always capture their interest or challenge them sufficiently.
- Teaching in the sixth form requires improvement. Students enjoy their courses, but teaching is not yet good enough to enable them to make as much progress as they could.
- Students are aware of their target grades, but they are not always made aware of what they need to do to achieve them. Work is regularly marked, but teachers' comments do not always provide the detailed information that students require to understand how to improve their work. Where advice is given, teachers do not consistently ensure that students act on it.
- Students achieve well in a number of subjects, including English, physical education and history, where they benefit from consistently good teaching. Teachers' secure subject knowledge enables

teachers to explain topics and tasks accurately and clearly. They have high expectations of what students can achieve, and plan activities for them which match the needs and abilities of different groups. They use questioning well to develop students' understanding.

- For example, in a physical education lesson, the teacher made sure that students knew how to use electronic devices to record their own performance. In responding to the teacher's questions, students, including the most able, demonstrated a high level of confidence and competence in being able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses. As a consequence, the teacher was able to help them to improve their performance significantly.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics is improving as a result of recent appointments.
- As a result of effective communication between themselves and subject teachers, teaching assistants have a clear understanding of their role. This enables them to help individual and small groups of students to make good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils require improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement.
- Evidence from lesson observations during the inspection, together with views of staff, students and parents, confirms that behaviour in lessons is not consistently good. It also indicates that staff do not apply the academy's expectations of behaviour and its policies consistently. This results in some incidences of low level disruption which impede students' progress.
- Work in students' books includes too many crossings out and graffiti. This shows that students are not being encouraged sufficiently to recognise the importance of, and to take pride in, good presentation.
- When the quality of teaching is good or better, students behave well.
- There is a very positive atmosphere around the academy where students' behaviour, including at break and lunch times, is generally courteous and respectful. The recent introduction of a new system, focused on helping individual students to improve their own behaviour, is proving to be effective. As a result, behaviour in lessons is improving.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students are aware of different types of bullying, including homophobic and cyber bullying, and of how they can be prevented. Students know how to keep themselves safe, for example when working with computers.
- Students confirm that they feel safe in school and this view is echoed by staff and parents. They also confirm that incidents of bullying are rare but that, when they do occur, students know staff will respond effectively.
- Students' attendance rates are below average, but are rising.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because students' achievement and their behaviour are not yet good. As a consequence, not all students are achieving the standards of which they are capable, including in the sixth form. They are not being prepared as well as they could be for the next stage of their education and for future employment.
- Leaders have not ensured that teachers benefit sufficiently from opportunities to improve their practice by observing and learning from examples of good and outstanding teaching in the academy.
- Senior leaders recognise that the progress made by students in the academy is not improving rapidly enough. They have put in place robust systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and the achievement of all groups of students, including in the sixth form. These systems, however, are yet to lead to students making consistently good progress.
- Improvements in students' achievement over time in mathematics have been slowed by staffing difficulties. Senior leaders have recognised this and changes have been made to improve the

situation. Early signs are that the quality of teaching, including in mathematics, is steadily improving.

- Leaders and trustees are ambitious for the school and are strongly committed to improving the quality of teaching and students' achievement and well-being across the academy. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching in the academy. They communicate their high expectations clearly to staff and students and their efforts are beginning to have a good impact.
- Middle leaders are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They are becoming increasingly successful in improving the quality of teaching in the areas for which they are responsible.
- Arrangements for the management of teachers' performance are sound. Leaders have developed a coherent and effective programme of training and support for teachers, tailored to meet their individual needs and those of the academy. The headteacher, other senior leaders and the board of trustees ensure that pay awards are closely linked to teachers' performance.
- The academy promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. A high proportion of students take part in out-of-school activities, including sport, music and drama, and charity fundraising events. Students from different backgrounds get on well together and learn to understand and appreciate different cultures and traditions. There is no evidence of any discrimination or extremist behaviour.
- The academy curriculum is broad and balanced and has been adapted to meet the needs, aptitudes and interest of different groups of students, including those in the sixth form.
- Students receive timely independent information, advice and guidance as they move through the school to assist them in taking their next steps in education or training.
- The rise in students' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 and improvements in teaching demonstrate that leaders have the capacity to bring about further improvement. Recent staffing appointments and a restructuring of the senior leadership team have increased this capacity.
- The trust is having a positive impact on the academy's effectiveness. Staff benefit from training courses which it provides. Sixth form students are able to choose from a wider range of subjects, owing to the academy's cooperation with the other trust schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The advisory board and the academy's sponsors are determined that the academy will be successful. They have the highest expectations of the academy's leaders and demonstrate a sound understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They know how well students are doing compared to those in other schools, and what leaders are doing to improve the quality of teaching. Members are very proud of improvements secured since the school became an academy, but are very much aware of what still needs to be done. They ensure that arrangements for managing the staff's performance are robust and that pay increases have to be earned. Members ensure that the budget is effectively managed. They are very knowledgeable about how extra funding is used and the impact it is having on students' achievement. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.

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	138511
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	440048

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	1223
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Chris Barker
Headteacher	Miss Fiona Miller
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01634 851157]
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