

St Augustine Academy

Oakwood Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 8AE

Inspection dates 1–2 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well in the range of different subjects they study, especially in English.
- There have been good improvements in the quality of teaching since the last inspection.
- Disabled students, those who have special educational needs, students who speak English as an additional language and those in receipt of pupil premium funding achieve as well as their peers.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress, particularly in vocational subjects.
- The Principal, other leaders and the academy council are ambitious and they are well supported by the Academy Trust. They have taken prompt and decisive action to improve teaching, and this is having a positive impact on the progress students make.
- Students behave well in lessons and around the academy. Students are punctual, attendance is improving and exclusions have reduced. The respectful and harmonious values and beliefs permeate the academy community, ensuring students feel safe.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress for all students and groups of students is good, but not yet excellent. Over time, there has been some variation in how quickly students make progress in some subjects.
- Students' literacy and numeracy skills are not sufficiently and consistently promoted across all subjects.
- Occasionally, students are given work that is either too easy or too hard.
- Teachers' marking does not always identify precisely how students should improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- During the two days, inspectors observed 35 part lessons, several of which were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also observed an assembly.
- Inspectors looked at students’ work in lessons and discussed the students’ learning and progress with them.
- Meetings were held with three groups of students from Years 7 to 13 and there were informal discussions with students before school and at break times to gather their views.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, the chair of the academy council, two representatives from the Woodard Academy Trust and a representative from the local authority.
- A range of documentation was analysed, including lesson observation records, academy council minutes, self-evaluation information, development plans, safeguarding documentation and attainment and progress information.
- Inspectors took account of 61 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as 50 responses received from the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

David Smith, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Teresa Gilpin	Additional Inspector
Neil Strowger	Additional Inspector
Janice Williams	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy opened in September 2011. The academy is sponsored by the Woodard Academies Trust.
- The academy is a small secondary school with a much smaller than average sixth form.
- The academy was judged to require improvement following the last inspection in December 2012.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs on the school roll is just under one third. This is higher than found in most schools.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is higher than that found in most schools. This is additional government funding provided to give extra support to those students known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after.
- The large majority of students are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The academy has good partnerships with other local school and colleges.
- Some students in Year 10 and Year 11 attend Maidstone Skills Centre, MidKent College and Hadlow College on a part-time basis each week to follow a range of vocational courses. A small number of Year 11 students attend the Marc and King's Reach Pupil Referral Units on a full-time basis if they have behavioural problems.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Governance of the academy is the responsibility of the Woodard Academy Trustees and their representatives on the advisory council.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching across different subjects and year groups, so that more is outstanding, by:
 - sharing the best practice in the academy to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently high in all subjects
 - ensuring that marking consistently identifies what students need to do to improve their work
 - making sure students' work is not too easy, or too hard, and ensuring that students write more extensively and develop and use their mathematical understanding across a range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership is strong. The Principal, supported by his senior staff and academy council, is determined to ensure that the academy serves the needs and aspirations of all of its students as well as it possibly can. They are united in their aim to make sure that students of all abilities make at least good progress.
- Senior and middle leaders are highly ambitious for the students. The Principal has been determined to see standards continue to rise and has been uncompromising in challenging underachievement in the academy where it has occurred. As a result of this sharp focus on improving teaching, performance at GCSE has increased so it is now in line with the national average and is set to improve even further.
- The academy's self-evaluation and improvement planning are good. Senior and middle leaders have an accurate view of both the strengths of the academy and the areas for improvement, which they are addressing effectively. There is a shared belief that the academy will achieve the very highest standards.
- The large majority of parents are very positive about the academy. Staff are equally complimentary and say they enjoy working at the academy. 'This is a fantastic school to teach in, I have seen huge changes for the better here' and 'I am proud to be a part of this establishment' are comments which reflect the views of adults working in the academy.
- The academy has been successful in raising the attainment of students in receipt of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding. It is using the additional funds very well, and as a result, the progress and achievement of these students are improving and gaps between these students and their peers are closing rapidly in English and mathematics at both key stages.
- Teachers appreciate the effective professional training programmes which the academy has in place to support and develop them. This is linked to robust performance management, which ensures that staff at all levels are held fully to account for the progress of the students they teach.
- The curriculum is well matched to students' needs. The development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good and is enhanced through a comprehensive programme of enrichment activities and visits. The curriculum is appropriately balanced to prepare the students for life in modern Britain.
- The academy's arrangements for safeguarding, including those who attend other settings, meet the current statutory requirements and equality of opportunity is promoted well through the highly inclusive culture of the academy and by support for individual students. Discrimination is not tolerated in any form.
- The academy has received good support from the local authority improvement adviser who works closely with the academy and fully understands the academy's strengths and priorities for further development. The local authority's view is that this is a good academy.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance of the academy is a strength. The academy trustees and their representatives on the academy council are committed and have the skills and ability to hold the academy to account and to identify priorities. Trustees are well equipped to carry out their statutory duties, which they do effectively. Trustees are supported by improvement advisers and consultants who work with senior leaders to develop and improve the academy. They have a very accurate view of the academy's strengths and weaknesses and a very good understanding of the quality of teaching and the performance of the students and how this compares to the national picture. They have a good understanding about the impact of pupil premium funding and how it is benefiting students' progress. They challenge and support academy leaders effectively. They ensure that the performance management of staff is effective and rigorous and are aware of what is being done to reward good teachers and to tackle underperformance. They ensure that effective arrangements for safeguarding are in place and that resources are managed effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Students' behaviour around the academy and at break times is excellent.
- A positive attitude to learning helps students to make good progress in their lessons.
- Relationships are very good. Students are courteous and polite to each other and to adults and visitors.

Different year groups interact positively with each other. Students respect each other's opinions when answering questions in lessons. The academy is very calm and orderly.

- Students enjoy coming to the academy and they wear their uniform with great pride. They respect the academy and there is very little litter or graffiti.
- There are many opportunities for students to take on leadership roles, for example as members of the student council, and to work with younger students.
- There are good systems in place to ensure that behaviour is managed well. Students say that bullying is rare and that it is quickly dealt with by staff.
- Attendance has improved as a result of effective strategies by the academy. It is now above the national average.
- The number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions has decreased over time as a result of improved behaviour management and the strategic use of alternative provision, and figures are now below the national average.
- The academy ensures that students who attend alternative provision for their education also behave well, by checking and monitoring their attendance and progress carefully.
- Behaviour and safety are not yet outstanding because in some lessons students are less than enthusiastic in their learning.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students say they feel safe and they appreciate the support available to them should they need it from teachers and other adults. Students know how to keep themselves safe and they are given good information about e-safety.
- Parents are very positive about how safe their children are in the academy, and are very positive about the academy overall.
- The academy has well-developed systems, all staff are properly trained in safeguarding procedures and good practice in safer recruitment is well established.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good. The quality of teaching is characterised by strong subject knowledge which is used well to plan carefully resourced, fast-paced and mostly challenging lessons which enable students to make good or better progress.
- Students enjoy lessons which are engaging. However, sometimes work is too easy or too hard. As a result, students do not always make the best progress they should.
- Most students are motivated and enthusiastic learners who enjoy the full range of activities they are given.
- Students enjoy getting to grips with challenging questioning which probes their understanding and moves their learning on. However, this is not always the case and then progress stalls.
- Students thrive when challenged to use what they have already learned to think things out for themselves.
- Marking is not always consistent across the academy. Students understand how well they are doing and know their targets for each subject, but sometimes feedback does not focus well enough on what they need to do next to improve their work.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, as well as those who speak English as an additional language, benefit from careful planning and the additional help provided by support staff.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium and those who are supported by the Year 7 catch-up funding receive one-to-one support which focuses on literacy and numeracy and ensures that they make good progress.
- There is a focus across the academy on improving students' literacy and this is starting to help students to make better progress in all their subjects. The focus on numeracy is less well developed.
- Students value the well-targeted support from teachers and other staff which is carefully matched to the needs of students of all abilities. Teachers create a very positive learning environment and there is clear respect and good relationships between students and staff.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' attainment improved considerably in 2013, and again in 2014, and is now in line with national figures. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, is now close to the national average.
- In English, the proportion of students making, and exceeding, the expected progress has improved and is well above the national average. This represents outstanding achievement.
- In mathematics, the proportion of students making the expected progress has improved and is now in line with the national average. This reflects good progress from students' starting points.
- Relative underperformance in science and humanities has been rigorously addressed so that progress has improved. Progress is now above average in science and in line with the national averages in Spanish and geography.
- The achievement of all groups, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, is good, with middle ability students making better progress than their peers.
- More able students do not make the progress they should because the work they are given is too easy.
- In 2013, some students with special educational needs did not make as much progress as they should have, but this underperformance has been tackled and the progress of these students is now in line with that of other students. This is a result of the good support that they receive and the opportunities to follow courses which are more suited to their needs.
- Students in receipt of Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium funding make similar progress to their peers as a result of the academy's support for their well-being and the development of basic skills, especially literacy. The attainment of pupil premium funded students has improved and in 2013 for Year 11 students was about half a grade lower in English and just over a grade in mathematics compared with all students nationally. The gaps with those students not receiving this support in the academy were about one third of a grade in the case of English and two thirds of a grade in mathematics. The academy's data show that the gap is reducing significantly and current students, from all year groups, are on track to make progress in line with other students.
- Students attending off-site provision make good progress on courses that are personalised for their specific needs.
- Students make good progress across the academy as a result of the academy's careful tracking and additional support. The improved information available to teachers helps them to support the progress of their students, but this is not yet always used effectively by all teachers.

The sixth form provision is good

- The sixth form is much smaller than the average sixth form.
- Students join the sixth form with overall attainment which is below the national average. When they leave, their attainment in academic subjects is close to the national figure. This represents good progress. They make even better progress in vocational subjects.
- All groups of students achieve equally well.
- Students who do not already have a grade C or above in English and/or mathematics are given good support to achieve these qualifications.
- The quality of teaching has improved and students are well supported by their teachers who monitor their progress effectively.
- Students attend and behave well. There are opportunities for them to take on leadership responsibilities and to work with younger students, for example as members of the school council.
- The academy meets the 16 to 19 interim minimum standards.
- There is good careers advice, guidance and support which help students to make the right choices about higher education, training or employment.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good.
- Students enjoy their studies and they are proud of their academy.

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	136923
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	442488

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	555
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Suthers
Principal	Jason Feldwick
Date of previous school inspection	December 2012
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