

Prospect School

Cockney Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 4EX

Inspection dates 21–22 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Requires improvement 3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement 3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement 3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement 3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement 3
Sixth form provision		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 make enough progress in all subjects, especially science and mathematics. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged students.
- Leaders set achievement targets for students that are too low. Not enough is expected from more-able students; as a result, they are not making enough progress.
- Leaders' views about how well the academy is doing, including how good teaching is, are inaccurate. This means that leaders' plans for improvement do not focus rigorously enough on the right things.
- Teaching is often uninspiring and does not offer enough challenge to students. Teachers do not consistently use information about students' progress to help them learn better.
- Students' progress in the sixth form is not good in academic subjects and teaching is weaker in these areas.
- Students' behaviour in lessons varies according to the subject and teacher. In some areas, low-level disruption is frequent.
- Governors do not challenge leaders robustly enough, including about how well additional funding is used to support disadvantaged pupils.

The school has the following strengths:

- The headteacher has made robust changes to address previous inadequacies in the academy and these are starting to take effect.
- Students are well cared for and feel safe and happy. They enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided for them.
- The provision for students with special educational needs in 'The Bridge' is a strength, and is improving.
- Leaders have rightly introduced a tighter assessment and tracking system, and are starting to monitor students' progress more accurately as a result.
- Students' behaviour around the academy is respectful and welcoming.
- Students achieve well in vocational courses in the sixth form because teaching is good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out 53 lesson observations, 10 of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and around the academy site during walks around the academy. Inspectors also attended an assembly.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, a wide range of middle leaders, the coordinator for provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs and the academy's child protection officer. Inspectors also met with members of the governing body and a representative of Reading local authority. The lead inspector contacted the Reading Local Authority Designated Officer, a senior social worker and a local authority inclusion officer by telephone. In addition, the lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a parent or carer. Inspectors contacted the four alternative provision centres used by the academy and held discussions with three of them.
- Inspectors met with groups of students from each year group and talked informally to other students in lessons, at break and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors scrutinised a selection of students' books and also looked at their work in lessons.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of academy documentation including the academy improvement plan and evaluation, and data concerning students' academic progress, behaviour and attendance and the monitoring of teaching. In addition, inspectors took note of 51 staff questionnaire responses and considered 57 parents' and carers' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Catherine Anwar, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sue Bullen	Additional Inspector
Deidre Fitzpatrick	Additional Inspector
Angela Podmore	Additional Inspector
David Davies	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this academy

- Prospect School converted to become an academy on 1 July 2011. When its predecessor school, Prospect School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good overall.
- Prospect School is a larger-than-average secondary academy with a sixth form.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and students from service families, is above average.
- More than half of students are of minority ethnic heritages, which is above average. The proportion of students whose first language is not English is also above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is above average.
- The academy currently shares sixth form provision for students in Year 13 with Blessed High Farringdon Academy. This is not the case for provision for students in Year 12.
- The academy uses specially resourced on-site provision, 'The Bridge' unit, for around 30 students with moderate learning difficulties.
- A very few students attend alternative provision at four external providers: The Spire; Red Balloon; The Haven; and Cranberry College.
- The academy meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the academy need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring that leaders evaluate the quality of teaching more robustly so that training is matched more precisely to the individual needs of teachers
 - ensuring that teachers provide consistent challenge in all lessons through activities that inspire and engage students, regular, focused feedback to students and better, more consistent behaviour management
 - using information about students' progress to make sure that all lessons are well planned and teachers' expectations of students are high.
- Make sure that all students make good progress, with a particular focus on achievement in mathematics and science, and the achievement of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium funding.
- Sharpen the accuracy with which senior leaders review how well the academy is doing so that plans for improvement are focused clearly on the right things.
- Ensure that targets for students' progress are ambitious and challenging, especially for more-able students, so that they all achieve the high standards of which they are capable.
- Improve governors' challenge through improving their understanding of achievement data and the ways in which the pupil premium grant is used.

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 leadership and management

require improvement

- The current headteacher joined the academy in September 2013. He and the new deputy headteacher have worked with determination to improve the culture and ethos of the academy and to raise aspirations, and this is slowly starting to take effect. Many students and staff report an improvement in the atmosphere and behaviour in the academy.
- Senior leaders are committed to raising the standards of teaching. However, they are too generous in their views of teaching over time and have not identified training needs precisely enough. Teaching is not sufficiently strong for internally-led training to have a robust impact. The academy's own checks on how well it is doing are too generous. As a result, the development plan lacks the appropriate rigour. It does not set out exactly what actions will be taken, how and when they will be delivered, or what difference they will make.
- Leaders are not yet making effective use of the pupil premium grant to ensure that disadvantaged students make more rapid progress and catch up with their peers.
- The congenial atmosphere of the academy is testament to leaders' commitment to the promotion of equality. Students of all backgrounds treat each other and staff with respect and relationships are positive. Students commented that there were very few unkind comments and that any reported incidents of discrimination were firmly dealt with by staff. Nevertheless, the academy has not focused sharply enough on making sure that disadvantaged students quickly catch up with their peers.
- Leaders set targets for students' achievement that are too low. As a result of this, their judgments about the levels of progress that students are making are too generous, and teachers' expectations are not sufficiently aspirational. This suppresses the achievement of the more able students in the academy, particularly those that are disadvantaged. A new system for assessing students and tracking their progress has very recently been introduced. It is too early to say what impact this is having.
- Middle leaders are not consistently effective. Some leaders have an insecure grasp of how to make sure their teams are using progress data well in the classroom, leading to variability in students' achievement across different subjects. The recently appointed coordinator for provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs has begun to make promising improvements to their support. He has rightly identified the need to offer more training to teaching assistants. It is too early to assess the impact of this work.
- Historical deficiencies in the curriculum offered to students have been swiftly addressed by the headteacher. Students now have access to a balanced curriculum, although some students in Years 9 and 10 have missed out on opportunities to learn music, art, drama and languages.
- The academy offers a wide range of additional enrichment activities which are highly regarded by students. However, leaders do not yet evaluate how well different groups of students participate in these activities. The range of vocational subjects meets students' needs well; students achieve well in these areas, especially in the sixth form.
- Helpful advice is provided to students about their options, career choices and the transition into further education. Nevertheless, advice about university choices is not yet aspirational enough.
- Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is promoted well in most areas. Students are encouraged to participate in activities such as Community Volunteers and visiting local senior citizens' centres. Students were keen to describe the new Prospect Parliament which they feel enables them to make a real contribution to the running of the academy. Given the rich ethnic diversity of the academy, however, some opportunities are missed to fully prepare students for life in modern Britain.
- The academy's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements and are rightly a high priority for all leaders.
- Leaders monitor the attendance, behaviour and achievement of students attending alternative provision well. There is regular, recorded contact with providers and students are supported diligently.
- The academy makes positive efforts to work with all parents and carers and seek their views, particularly where students need additional support. Most parents and carers are supportive of the academy.
- **The governance of the academy:**
The governors do not yet offer sufficient challenge to senior leaders, although this is improving. They do not insist on firm evidence to support the assertions of leaders about how well the academy is doing and have expectations of achievement that are too low. They are aware of the quality of teaching and have supported the headteacher as he has robustly tackled inadequate teaching. Governors have a good understanding of the way staff performance is linked to salary progression. Several teachers did not progress this year after a rigorous evaluation process. Governors do not track the way in which the pupil

premium grant is spent thoroughly enough. They are not clear about how well disadvantaged students are progressing and how this is linked to the use of this resource. Governors have positive links to the local community and are strongly committed to the improvement of the academy.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- Behaviour requires improvement.
- Behaviour is not good because students' attitudes to learning are inconsistent. Students report that low-level disruption occurs regularly in some lessons and subjects where teachers are less adept at using the academy's behaviour management strategies.
- Students do not always take pride in their work and presentation in books is often messy and hinders learning. This reflects low expectations from some teachers.
- Inappropriate behaviour and the number of fixed-term exclusions are reducing as a result of effective work by the academy's pastoral leaders. In addition, levels of attendance are rising and are now in line with the national average. Work with disabled students and those with special educational needs to improve their attendance is starting to have a positive impact.
- The attendance and behaviour of those students who attend alternative provision is checked weekly. Reports show positive improvements for these students.
- Students generally comment positively on improvements in behaviour since the arrival of the new headteacher. Around the academy, students are polite and well behaved and treat each other and visitors with respect. Incidents of bullying are low and reducing as a result of the academy's work, and when they do happen staff deal with them effectively. Students from a wide range of backgrounds and ethnic heritages interact well in a harmonious atmosphere. The academy environment is tidy and litter-free.
- The majority of parents and carers report that they are happy with behaviour, although some disagree.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Tutors and leaders know students well and intervene swiftly if a student needs support. The academy's designated child protection officer is assiduous in pursuing external agencies when child protection issues arise. Staff complete regular online training so that they know what to do if they have concerns about safeguarding issues. New staff receive training when they join the academy.
- Students feel safe in the academy. They understand risks and how to keep themselves safe. The academy's work on internet safety in tutor times and assemblies has had a positive effect on students' awareness of how to behave online.
- There are good procedures for keeping the academy secure, including checking visitors to the academy.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good across all subjects or within some subject areas such as science. Although improving in some areas such as English, students' progress in several subjects, including mathematics, is inconsistent.
- Many teachers are not making use of information about students' progress to plan effective lessons, and do not have high enough expectations of students. Many lessons lack challenge because students find work uninteresting and too easy. This is particularly the case for more-able students who are not making as much progress as they should. Students are often all given the same work to do, which does not address their different needs.
- Leaders have recently introduced a new system for teachers' marking and how they offer feedback on students' work. This is starting to have an impact on raising standards. Students commented that it has helped them to improve their work in English, for example. However, it is not yet used consistently by all teachers to give students useful feedback. This is resulting in patchy progress.
- Teachers do not focus keenly enough on helping disadvantaged students make more rapid progress so that they catch up with their peers.
- In weaker lessons, poor planning results in uninspiring activities which do not engage students or help them to learn. Students reported a lack of enthusiasm for personal, social and health education and

inspectors saw several examples of ineffective teaching and limited learning in this subject.

- There are pockets of very good practice. In some lessons, students are inspired by well-planned activities and their teachers' good subject knowledge. For example, in a sixth form sociology lesson, students made rapid progress in their understanding of a range of educational philosophies. The teacher skilfully encouraged students to debate with and challenge each other, resulting in good development of their analytical skills.
- The teaching of students with special educational needs, particularly in 'The Bridge' unit, is improving. As a result, students with special educational needs, particularly those supported at academy action plus, are making better progress. The new coordinator for provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs has begun to introduce new, more appropriate courses for these students. The work of teaching assistants is not yet effective in raising the achievement of students with special educational needs. A training plan for teaching assistants is now in place to ensure their work becomes more effective. This has yet to have an impact.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students join Prospect Academy with attainment that is lower than the national average. By the time they reach the end of Year 11, their attainment is still low.
- Overall, students make progress in line with other students nationally. However, this is not the case for disadvantaged students. They achieve less well than their more affluent peers nationally. GCSE results in 2014 showed that disadvantaged students achieved over a grade lower than other students nationally in English, and over one and a half grades lower than other students nationally in mathematics. Although this gap is closing in English when compared to other pupils in the academy, disadvantaged students are not catching up with their peers quickly enough in mathematics or in science.
- The most able students do not achieve as well as they should. In science and in languages, more-able students make significantly less progress than is nationally the case. Too few more-able students make expected progress in English, and fewer make more than expected progress than is the case nationally. More-able students achieve better in mathematics, but do not make more than expected progress. More-able students from disadvantaged backgrounds do not achieve as well as they should in English or mathematics. This reflects the lack of challenge offered to students in lessons, and targets that are too low.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs, including those supported in The Bridge unit, make inconsistent progress and their attendance is too low. Students who have a statement of special educational needs do not make enough progress. Since the appointment of the new coordinator for provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs in September 2014, the academy is meeting the needs of these students more effectively but it is too early to see a significant impact on their achievement.
- The academy uses early entry for students in i-GCSE in English. This is appropriate and successfully motivates students to improve their achievement in further examinations.
- The small number of students who attend alternative provision make reasonable progress overall and some make good progress. For example, one student improved by a whole grade in one term in English and additionally gained a range of other useful qualifications. Frequent and effective liaison between the providers and the academy ensures that students are well monitored.
- Of the 57 responses on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, almost two thirds of parents and carers felt that their children made good progress at Prospect Academy. Responses to the academy's own parent questionnaire were more positive.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- Provision in the sixth form requires improvement because attainment is not good overall. However, there are examples of good provision in the vocational courses offered to students.
- Students enter the sixth form with lower than average attainment and leave with results that are lower than average in academic courses but above average in vocational courses. There are more students studying for vocational qualifications than for AS- or A-level qualifications. Disadvantaged students do not achieve as well as their peers in the sixth form.
- Leaders provide a suitable and improving curriculum which meets the needs of current students. For example, leaders responded quickly to student requests and introduced an A-level qualification in politics

in September.

- The quality of teaching is more effective in the sixth form than in other year groups. However, it is not yet good because it is not consistent across all subject areas. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and most students feel better challenged than younger students.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is universally good. Students have a good awareness of risks to their safety. They report that there have been improvements to the ethos and atmosphere of the academy since the arrival of the new headteacher. Students benefit from good careers support and guidance delivered through a range of activities. Nevertheless, leaders do not encourage students to set ambitious enough future goals for themselves. No students have moved on to Russell Group universities.

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	136876
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	449688

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	1,367
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Barker
Headteacher	Phil Davies
Date of previous school inspection	January 2010
Telephone number	0118 959 0466
Fax number	0118 950 4172
Email address	enquiries@prospect.reading.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

