

Ipswich Academy

Breziers Wood Road, Ipswich, IP3 0SP

Inspection dates

8–9 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Sixth form provision		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Achievement in all Key Stages is inadequate. Students' literacy skills are weak, and this holds back their learning, particularly at Key Stage 3.
- The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is well below the minimum expectation set by the government. The number attaining A* and A grades is also very low.
- Disabled students, those who have special educational needs and those who arrive after the start of the year are poorly supported and so make inadequate progress.
- The progress of disadvantaged students is inadequate. The gaps in attainment, between this group and other students nationally are widening.
- Teachers do not all have the necessary skills and understanding to teach their subjects. Their expectations of what students can achieve are too low.
- The pace of learning in lessons is often very slow. As a result, some students become distracted, bored or restless, and disrupt the learning of others.
- Attendance is below average and persistent absence is well above average.
- Students' attitudes to learning are inadequate, especially when teaching is poor, which slows their progress.
- There are not enough opportunities to promote student's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- The frequency and quality of teachers' marking is too variable, so students do not always know how well they are doing, or what they need to do to improve.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the achievement of its students are inadequate. Students do not receive good advice before starting the sixth form and too many leave early or fail.
- Systems, for leaders, managers and the governing body, to improve teaching through the management of teachers' performance are insufficiently rigorous.
- School improvement plans do not prioritise the right areas for improvement. Timescales for improvement are unrealistic.
- Senior leaders do not monitor the work of subject managers well enough. Consequently, strategies to improve the planning for, and quality of, teaching have had little impact.
- Governors do not fully understand whether the work carried out by school leaders is effective.

The school has the following strengths

- The new Executive Principal has recently established clear and meaningful systems for holding staff to account for the work they do.
- The academy's work to keep students safe is good. The behaviour and conduct of students while moving around the academy has improved greatly.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 37 lessons including tutorials. Seven lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the Executive Principal, the academy's Chief Executive Officer, senior leaders, subject leaders and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the 40 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and an emailed letter from a parent.
- The inspection team observed the school's work, scrutinised the school's information about students' achievement, including disadvantaged students and those who are disabled or have special educational needs.
- Inspectors looked at the work in students' books and heard them read.
- Inspectors examined records relating to the quality of teaching, behaviour, attendance and exclusions. They also looked at documents used by leaders and governors to check and evaluate the school's work, to plan school improvement and to keep students safe.
- Inspectors took account of 36 staff responses to an Ofsted inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jalil Shaikh, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Ian Starling	Additional Inspector
Margaret Dutton	Additional Inspector
Jeffery Quaye	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.

Information about this school

- The academy is sponsored, together with three other academies, by the Learning Schools Trust and has been operational since March 2011. It is smaller than average in size. Since the last section 5 inspection, the academy moved to a new purpose built site in November 2013.
- The academy has gone through a number of changes since the last section 5 inspection. The Principal of the academy resigned in September 2014 and has been replaced by a new Executive Principal. There has also been a restructure of senior management after four senior leaders left the school.
- In September 2014 the academy moved to a new two-week timetable, extending the length of lessons to 100 minutes.
- The academy's work is coordinated by the Trust's Chief Executive Officer on behalf of the governing body.
- The academy does not use alternative provision.
- The academy does not meet the government's floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and who receive the pupil premium is twice the national average at 51%. The pupil premium is additional government funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, or looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students who are disabled and have special educational needs is about 35%. This is over twice the national average.
- Year 7 students enter the academy with skills and abilities below that expected nationally. In particular, students' literacy skills are weak.
- The number of students joining and leaving the school at different times of the year is well above that usually found.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, including in the sixth form, so that it is at least consistently good, by ensuring all teachers:
 - have strong subject knowledge and the skills to assess students' progress accurately
 - have high expectations of what students can achieve and use assessment information to plan lessons effectively to meet the needs of the different groups of students
 - mark students' work regularly and offer high quality feedback which helps students understand how they can improve their work
 - extend students' understanding of their work by using effective questioning and verbal feedback and by setting appropriate homework
 - develop appropriate strategies in the classroom to increase the confidence and skills of students so they have a thirst for knowledge.
- Improve the rates of students' progress in all Key Stages, including the sixth form, and so raise standards by:
 - speeding up the pace of learning to enable students to make the best possible progress
 - ensuring that all students receive appropriately challenging work, especially the most able
 - making better use of pupil premium funding to close the gaps in students' attainment and progress
 - improving students' levels of literacy in Key Stage 3
 - thoroughly planning all subjects in Key Stage 3 to ensure students can make consistent and even

progress

- reviewing admissions criteria and the advice and guidance given to students in Key Stages 3 and 4 to help them make more appropriate choices for sixth form study.

■ Improve students' behaviour and attitudes to learning by:

- ensuring that low level disruption is rare and that students take pride in the presentation of their work
- establishing thorough and robust systems to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence.

■ Rapidly improve the quality and impact of leadership and management, including governance, by:

- ensuring the academy's improvement plans are thorough, realistic and monitored effectively
- making certain that senior and subject managers have the correct skills and experience to secure rapid improvement in the quality of teaching, behaviour and, in doing so, achievement
- increasing the capacity of governance, at all levels, to ensure it accurately challenges the leaders of the school and is able to hold them to account by independently assessing standards
- developing an effective whole-school approach to raising standards in literacy
- promoting opportunities in the curriculum for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to positively influence students' attitudes to learning
- ensuring appropriate professional development is provided, to teachers and leaders at the academy, through a more thorough and rigorous performance management system.

An external review of governance and the use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leaders and managers at all levels, including governors and the Chief Executive Officer, have not secured rapid enough progress in the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection.
- Senior leaders, who line-manage leaders with subject leadership responsibility, show little understanding of how to check the effectiveness of policies and procedures passed down by the Executive Principal, the Associate Principal and the Chief Executive Officer. This is because they have had little involvement in the decision-making processes. They are inexperienced in their roles and lack the capacity to improve the school without external help. They are unable to keep up with the demands placed on them by the senior leaders above them.
- Although they identify appropriately the academy's weaknesses, improvement plans lack sufficient detail and fail to prioritise actions needed to bring about improvement. The actions and strategies proposed do not always take into account the skills and abilities of those who will be driving them. As a result, timescales are often unrealistic and targets are not being met.
- Leaders at all levels have failed to embed strategies effectively to improve the quality of teaching. This is because they often do not have the understanding or capacity to check their impact on students' achievement. Some commented they have been confused with the large number of changes being implemented in the short period of time since the arrival of the new Executive Principal and as a result have not been able to keep up with the changes.
- Leadership and management of the provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs are inadequate. Leaders have failed to provide accurate assessment data of students' performance and, therefore, are unclear about where there areas of improvement.
- Programmes of study for a number of subjects are not always in place. This contributes to the underachievement of students in Key Stage 3 and the overall inadequate curriculum. Assessments of students' work in Key Stage 4 have been inaccurate and have resulted in an inflated view of how well students are doing. As a result, academy leaders have had an erroneous view of students' performance. This has inhibited their ability to measure the impact of improvement strategies or to adapt them where necessary.
- The academy provides independent and impartial careers advice to students, which results in them making informed decisions about their future career paths. However, the curriculum is not sufficiently broad or balanced to meet individual students' needs. Consequently, there is little impact on student's achievement.
- The academy's work, to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of its students, is inadequate. Although planned opportunities exist for students to develop spiritually and morally in assemblies, there are insufficient opportunities in the curriculum for this to have a strong enough impact to influence students' attitudes to learning. Despite this, students show respect for other religions and cultures and are prepared appropriately for life in modern Britain.
- The academy's work to keep students safe meets statutory requirements.
- The new Executive Principal has, in the short time she has been at the academy, improved systems for accountability and monitoring. She has ensured some of the right actions are now in place to bring about whole-school improvement and therefore improve equality of opportunities and begin to tackle any form of discrimination. However, as this has been very recent, there has, as yet, been very little impact on teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance of the academy is inadequate. Overtime, governors have failed to challenge leaders, well enough, in order to hold them to account for the extremely poor quality of teaching. This has led to weaknesses in students' learning experiences, students' inadequate achievement and their poor behaviour.
- Governors have failed to ensure that the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged students is used effectively to raise the achievement of this group.
- Currently, the structure of the governing body is over-complicated. The governance of the academy is formed from members of the Trust's Board of Directors, who are legally responsible, and the Academy Council, which is not fully developed. The Trust's Board of Directors have little to do with the strategic direction of the academy. Overall, governance does not have a sufficient pool of expertise to fully support the academy's work.
- Governors are involved in the management of staff performance and they ensure performance is matched to the award of staff pay increases.
- Governors have high aspirations for the academy and articulate this clearly. Since September 2014 they have been challenging senior leaders more effectively. They are more aware of how students' achievement in the academy compares with all schools nationally. However, they are still very dependent on external support to ensure the information presented to them is accurate.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is inadequate. Their attitudes to learning are too variable, especially when the quality of teaching is poor and students become disengaged in lessons. This results in much off-task behaviour such as talking, failure to complete work and doodling in books. In many lessons, students fail to respond positively to teachers' instructions. Some do not pay attention while others just quietly stop working. Presentation in students' books is often poor. This inadequate behaviour significantly slows the progress they could make.
- Students' persistent absence has been more than double that found nationally for at least three years and is showing little sign of improvement. Too many students do not attend school regularly enough. Overall attendance is below average and this has a negative impact on students' achievement.
- Fixed term and permanent exclusions, although reducing, are still well above that found nationally. The academy's work, to reduce exclusions and improve attendance, has so far had little impact as strategies for improvement are relatively new. However, students spoken to during the inspection were generally positive about the new behaviour policy introduced.
- The behaviour and conduct of students while moving around the academy has improved greatly. Students behave responsibly in corridors, and in canteen areas during lunch and break. Students take pride in their new building and keep it clean and tidy. The behaviour policy is beginning to have an impact on changing students' attitudes to learning and has reduced the number of behaviour-related incidents.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. All students spoken to during the inspection confirmed they felt safe while attending the academy.
- The academy's policies to keep students safe and the actions carried out to ensure all staff are vetted properly meet statutory requirements. The academy carries out appropriate risk assessments of the premises and for external trips.
- Students know the various forms bullying can take and know what to do if it occurs. They acknowledge there are occasional incidents of bullying but are confident to report it. They say that staff deal with incidents of bullying and poor behaviour effectively and quickly and this helps them to feel safe. Records show appropriate action is taken to address any bullying or racist incidents.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- Inadequate teaching over time has led to the underachievement of most groups of students, including those supported by the pupil premium, those who are disabled and those who have special educational needs. In 2014, inadequate teaching in English, mathematics, science, and most other subjects, contributed to the underachievement of students in Year 11.
- There is not enough good or better teaching at the academy to raise standards rapidly enough. Scrutiny of students' work indicated they do not make enough progress because the quality of teaching and teachers' expectations are too variable.
- Much teaching fails to engage students or to improve their poor attitudes to learning. Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are too low. This means students are not challenged to achieve the grades they are capable of and, therefore, they make inadequate progress.
- Too few teachers plan tasks that are matched well enough to students' abilities, including those who are most-able or who arrive at times other than the start of the year. This means the work that is set is either too easy or too hard. During the inspection, many instances were observed where students had finished their work but were not given any additional tasks or exercises to extend their thinking. These students spent long periods of time doodling in their books. Others, who found the work too difficult, were left struggling with little or no support. In some cases teachers did not respond to direct requests for extra work from students.
- The quality of teachers' questioning is poor. It does not extend students' understanding or encourage them to reflect on new ideas. Teachers' explanations of subjects often do not engage students or encourage them to learn. This is because teachers sometimes have insecure subject knowledge.
- Typically, teaching does not develop students' ability to think for themselves and be confident learners. Inspectors saw too many students rely on their teachers to answer questions for them, rather than explore their own ideas.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make inadequate progress because their needs are not planned for well enough in the classroom. Work set by staff is insufficiently explained or is not set out in the best way to help these students learn new skills.
- Students joining the school at different times of the year make inadequate progress because their needs are not planned for well enough.
- The pace of learning is often very slow. As a result, some students become distracted, bored and restless and they disrupt the learning of others, unchallenged by teachers and other support staff.
- The frequency and quality of teachers' marking of students' work are too variable, so students' do not always know how well they are doing, or what they need to do to improve. Even when books are marked well and good feedback is given, teachers often do not insist on students acting on their improvement advice. The presentation of students' written work is often poor and much poor work remains uncontested.
- Teachers' assessments of students' work are frequently inaccurate and assessment information is not used consistently well to plan for students' better progress in lessons.
- Despite the poor attitudes to learning of many students, some teachers maintain good working relationships with them. These relationships were usually more positive in lessons where the quality of teaching was better and this helped students to make progress at a faster rate.

The achievement of pupils**is inadequate**

- Year 7 students enter the academy with skills and abilities below that expected nationally. In particular, students' literacy skills are weak and this limits their learning. Action to improve literacy at the academy has had little impact. At the end of Key Stage 3, students make too slow progress in literacy and this contributes significantly to their underachievement at both Key Stages 4 and 5.
- Attainment at Key Stage 4 has further declined since 2013 and has been considerably below that expected nationally since the academy opened in 2011. Despite higher predictions of the students' performance by academy leaders in 2014, the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was well below the minimum expectation set by the government. The academy no longer uses early entry for GCSE maths and English.
- Achievement in the sixth form is inadequate. Progress made by students at AS and A level has been consistently poor in a large number of subjects. A high number of students who retake GCSE mathematics and English fail to obtain a grade C or above.
- The achievement of the most-able students at the academy is inadequate. The proportion of these students attaining the highest grades, A* and A, at GCSE was significantly below average. Too often, they are set work that is too easy. This results in much learning time being wasted and inadequate achievement in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science over time.
- The progress of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium is inadequate. Weak teaching and poor attitudes to learning adversely affect their achievement in all year groups and subjects. Their attainment at Key Stage 4 is significantly behind that of other students in the school and nationally. This gap is widening. In 2014, those students supported by the pupil premium attained just over one grade lower than other students in English and mathematics at the academy. Nationally, similar students attained just over two grades lower in English and nearly three grades lower in mathematics compared to other students.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make too little progress across all key stages. At Key Stage 4, this is much lower than similar students nationally in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Limitations in the information the academy holds about students' progress prevents those responsible for this groups' achievement from planning effectively to meet students' learning needs.

The sixth form provision**is inadequate**

- The quality of teaching in the sixth form over time is inadequate. Too many students who are capable of achieving a pass grade at AS and A level do not do so. Students retaking level 2 courses make little progress, including in English and mathematics.
- Teaching in the sixth form does not promote genuine debate, dialogue and reflection. Questions used by staff are insufficiently skilled to deepen students' knowledge, and does not give them enough opportunity to discuss and evaluate their own and others' ideas.
- Although the academy meets the interim minimum standards set by the government, attainment of students at AS and A level is significantly below the national picture and has been for the last three years. Students make inadequate progress in their learning in most subjects. Achievement in vocational subjects remains significantly below average.
- Sixth form leaders have been unsuccessful in improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement of students. Currently, the quality of teaching in the sixth form is not monitored well. Strategies to improve the quality of teaching are not yet fully embedded and are often inconsistently applied.
- Attainment of students at AS and A level is significantly below the national picture and has been for the last three years. Students make inadequate progress in their learning in most subjects. Achievement in

vocational subjects remains significantly below average.

- Advice and guidance for students entering the sixth form are inadequate. As a result, students become demotivated because they find themselves taking courses they are not interested in, or fully prepared for academically. Consequently, a large number of students embarking on level 3 courses are unable to complete them. Retention of students in the sixth form is very low.
- Assessment of students' performance lacks rigour and accuracy. Targets set for students to improve their skills are not sufficiently challenging. Systems for setting these targets are inconsistent and leaders do not check that they are effective in improving students' achievement.
- Although the curriculum includes a range of academic and vocational subjects, it is not sufficiently broad or balanced and so is not adequately linked to students' needs. Careers advice is impartial and helpful. The academy provides students with regular opportunities to improve their personal, social and employability skills through participation in enrichment activities and through work placements in Year 12. The programme of tutorials and assemblies prepares students well for life in modern Britain. A quarter of the students leaving the sixth form go on to study higher education courses at university.
- The behaviour and safety of students in the sixth form requires improvement. Students are usually interested in their lessons and want to learn. However, the quality of teaching often prevents them from being fully engaged so they can explore their ideas and develop their own views.

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	136453
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	453781

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	843
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Hellaur
Principal	Pamela Hutchison
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2013
Telephone number	01473 729222
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