

Princes Risborough

Merton Road, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire, HP27 0DT

Inspection dates

12–13 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- The achievement of students requires improvement. Too few of those students who arrive with average attainment make good progress from their starting points.
- The attainment of disadvantaged students in English is not as good as that of others in the school and others nationally. This gap is not closing quickly enough.
- The quality of feedback and marking, although improving, is not yet ensuring that students get clear feedback on how to improve their work.
- Attendance is below average. The proportion of students who are persistently absent is above average.
- Leaders have not ensured that teaching is consistently good over time. The quality of teaching is too variable and this limits the progress of students.
- Over the last three years, leaders have failed to address the below-average progress of students.
- Students' attitudes to learning require improvement. Low-level disruption and off-task activities across subjects limit the progress of students.
- Governors have not held school leaders sufficiently to account for the performance of the school.

The school has the following strengths:

- Relationships between students and teachers are good. Bullying is rare and students indicate they feel safe and well looked after.
- The school's promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and achievement of its students are good. The progress of students in the sixth form is good and they are well prepared for their next steps in education or work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students' learning in 50 lessons across a wide range of subjects to different age groups. Several of the lessons were jointly observed with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors visited tutor periods and an assembly. Inspectors also observed parts of the 'Risky Business' special day for Year 9 students to raise their awareness of illegal substances.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and school staff, including senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors also spoke to students in lessons, during breaks and at lunchtimes.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation including: development plans; the academy's view of its own performance; data relating to students' attainment and progress; information on attendance; documents and records about behaviour and safeguarding; records of the monitoring of teaching and learning; and the performance management of staff.
- Inspectors analysed 47 responses to the questionnaire completed by staff and 77 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Glen Goddard, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Suzanne Richards	Additional Inspector
Tim Body	Additional Inspector
Denis Canty	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Princes Risborough is an average-size non-selective secondary school in a local authority which operates a selective system. Princes Risborough converted to become an academy school on 1 September 2011.
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium (additional funding for students in care and those known to be eligible for free school meals) and Year 7 catch-up funding (additional funding to support year 7 pupils who did not achieve at least level 4 in reading and/or maths at the end of key stage 2) is below the national average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is small, along with the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage.
- The academy incorporates a communications base to support students on the autistic spectrum. The base provides teaching of social communication skills, and opportunities for speech and language therapy to 20 students in Key Stages 3 and 4.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The academy meets the governments' floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A small number of students attend the Wycombe Grange Pupil Referral Unit. This provision provides individual support programmes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good and raise the achievement of students by ensuring that:
 - gaps in attainment between disadvantaged students and others close at a much faster rate
 - students' progress matches or exceeds that of students nationally
 - marking and feedback to students are consistently more effective in helping them improve their work
 - students' numeracy skills are developed across a wider range of subjects
 - all teachers apply the school's behaviour management policy consistently
 - students' attendance improves, including for those who are persistently absent, by continuing to work closely with parents, carers and other partners.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by making sure that:
 - academy and departmental plans prioritise improvements that enable all students to make progress that is good or better compared to schools nationally
 - middle leaders hold their teams fully to account for the quality of teaching and students' progress in their subject areas
 - school self-evaluation is more accurate by taking sufficient account of national benchmarks for the progress of students.
- Increase the effectiveness of governance by ensuring the work of the governing body has a clear impact on the performance of the school and the outcomes of students.

An external review of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the academy has not yet secured sufficient improvement in the progress of all students. Well-intentioned actions taken since the last inspection have not been effective in ensuring the progress of students is good or better than that of students nationally. Many of the concerns raised at the previous inspection remain.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and effectively develops students' literacy skills in Key Stage 3. Students choose from a range of academic and vocational subjects at Key Stage 4. Activity days, along with a range of enrichment activities, contribute towards students' personal, social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Students spoke confidently about the impact of the Risborough Roots for Lifelong Learning and Respect programmes in developing essential learning skills and broadening their knowledge about the diversity of life in modern Britain.
- School leaders ensure that discrimination is not tolerated. The school emphasises the fostering of good relationships between all students.
- Senior leaders and governors have established clear performance management systems. These are used to hold teachers to account for the results achieved by their students and to inform decisions about pay.
- Middle leaders are not yet effective in ensuring students make good or better progress. Their evaluations of the quality of teaching do not lead to improvements in student outcomes.
- The self-evaluation of the school by senior leaders is too generous. There is insufficient account of national benchmarks for the progress of students.
- Whole-school literacy is developed through the work of departments, the literacy policy and the effective use of the Year 7 catch-up premium. This work is beginning to have an impact. However, attention to literacy development is not yet consistent. This limits the impact on the achievement of students.
- Students attending alternative provision are following courses that help them to succeed. The partnership with the Wycombe Grange unit is well established and enables leaders to monitor the progress, attendance and behaviour of students with suitable rigour.
- Careers, advice and guidance are effective and almost all students progress into further and higher education, training or employment.
- Leaders, including governors, ensure arrangements for safeguarding meet all statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed to improving the academy. However, they are too reliant on the senior leadership for information and evaluation of the academy's performance and as a result have been slow to hold senior leaders to account for the impact of efforts to improve the progress of students.
 - Governors have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching in the school. However, they are not fully aware the school has placed too much emphasis on the examination performance of students at the expense of their progress. Consequently, they have not effectively challenged senior leaders on securing good or better progress of students.
 - Governors know how the pupil premium funding is used and are aware there is still work to be done in closing attainment gaps between disadvantaged students and others. It is too early to assess recent actions to improve outcomes for disadvantaged students supported by governors.
 - Governors ensure the academy keeps students safe and meet statutory requirements and that procedures for child protection referrals are closely followed.
 - Governors effectively monitor the finances of the academy.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement.
- In those lessons where teaching is less effective, students pay less attention and as a result make limited progress. Additionally, off-task activities and discussions further limit learning and progress of students.
- The management of behaviour and attitudes in lessons are not consistent. Some teachers do not use the academy's systems to manage poor behaviour. Where this occurs, less than positive learning attitudes persist.
- Students do not always show respect and pride in their work. A number of books considered were messy

and uncared for. This slows the progress students make.

- Students move around the school in an orderly manner and generally arrive to lessons on time.
- Most students have respect for the school environment. This is reflected by the overall litter- and graffiti-free nature of the academy.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Attendance, including of those who are persistently absent, is below the national average but improving. The attendance of some key groups, such as the disadvantaged students and students who have special educational needs, is also below the national average.
- Effective procedures are in place to make sure students are safe, both in school and when they attend off-site provision.
- The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View indicated that their children feel safe in school and are well looked after.
- Students say they feel safe at school and know how to keep safe and secure. They understand potential dangers when using the internet. Students note that instances of homophobia and racism are not tolerated.

The quality of teaching

is requires improvement

- There is not enough good or better teaching to address the underachievement of students. Scrutiny of students' work reflects the variable quality of teaching. As a result, students do not make sufficient progress.
- The variable quality of teaching has not produced good achievement in literacy and mathematics, where standards are not yet high enough.
- The quality of marking and feedback to students is not sufficiently consistent across the academy and within subjects. As a result, students often do not know how to improve their work.
- Some teaching fails to engage students effectively or to improve learning attitudes. In these lessons, students are not always challenged to achieve and their progress is limited.
- Evidence of well-planned learning activities in some subjects, such as English and mathematics, promotes high expectations and helps improve literacy skills. The development of numeracy is less established in most subjects.
- Additional support by teachers for disadvantaged students has yet to be successful in ensuring these students make the progress they should.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good despite the mixed attitudes to learning of some students. Students spoken to during the inspection expressed confidence and support for their teachers in helping them to be successful.
- The quality of teachers' questioning is generally good. The best examples develop students' understanding and effectively engage students in learning.
- Students in the communications base and other students with special educational needs are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants. These students make progress that is in line with that of other students nationally because support is tailored effectively to help them.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In 2014, the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was broadly in line with national averages. However, the progress of all students remained below national averages given their starting points.
- The proportions of disadvantaged students making and exceeding expected progress in English and mathematics are below the proportions of others nationally. Gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged students in English and mathematics and the attainment of other students have increased over time. In English, the in-school and national gap is just over two thirds of a GCSE grade. In mathematics, the national gap is currently one and two thirds of a GCSE grade. The in-school gap is one and one third of a GCSE grade.
- In 2014, students performed well in art and design, food technology, core science, business studies and English certificate. Attainment was at or above the national average for grades C and above. In a small number of subjects, attainment was significantly below the national average, including higher grades of A* and A. These subjects include additional science and geography.

- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, including those in the additional resource base, is in line with that of other students nationally because of the very effective support they receive which ensure their needs are well met. Work set is well explained and helps students develop skills and make progress.
- The achievement of the most-able students is broadly in line with that of other students nationally. However, these students are not yet achieving as well as they could.
- The academy has in the past provided opportunities for students to sit mathematics examinations early to secure better grades. A high proportion of those students who took the examination for a second time increased their grade.
- Students attending alternative provision at the Wycombe Grange pupil referral unit benefit from the range of courses offered and make similar rates of progress as other students in the academy.
- Students supported by the catch-up premium in Year 7 made good gains in English, with over half working within National Curriculum Level 4.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The attainment of sixth form students is broadly average. They arrive in Year 12 with results in previous examinations that are below the national average. Given the below average starting points, progress in the sixth form is good.
- Teaching in the sixth form is of better quality than in the rest of the academy. As a result, achievement in the sixth form is good.
- The sixth form provides a range of courses, including BTEC, AS and A level and combinations of both. Students are expected to continue to study GCSE English or mathematics if they do not gain at least grade C by the end of Year 11. The curriculum offer meets the needs of students who are able to achieve well.
- Information and guidance for sixth form students, along with a range of enrichment opportunities, are good. Regular assemblies and tutorials ensure students are well prepared for life beyond school and in modern Britain.
- Leadership of the sixth form is focused on the achievement of students. As a result, the academy meets the interim minimum standards set by the government. Attainment at AS and A level is broadly in line with the national picture. Achievement in vocational subjects is below average.
- The behaviour and safety of students in the sixth form are good. Students enjoy their lessons and as a result are engaged and display positive learning attitudes. Students in the sixth form say they feel safe and are well looked after.

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	137372
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	442437

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy alternative provision 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	957
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	119
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marylin Antrobus
Headteacher	Peter Rowe
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 May 2013
Telephone number	01844 345496
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