

Oasis Academy Hextable

Egerton Avenue, Hextable, Kent BR8 7LU

Inspection dates 22–23 April 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

- In 2014, less than one third of students attained five good GCSEs including English and mathematics. This was below the minimum expectations for students' achievement.
- In the last two years, students now in Year 11 have not made enough progress to fully overcome their underachievement in the past.
- White British students, particularly boys, and several disabled students or those with special educational needs do not do as well as others.
- Senior leaders, managers and academy councillors did not manage to improve standards and progress in the academy's first year.
- Middle leaders do not always assess students' work accurately. As a result, some students do not all get the extra help they need to make rapid progress.
- Teaching is ineffective in several subjects because the work planned and the quality of marking and the questions teachers pose are not good enough. The development of students' reading and writing, particularly in the sixth form, is also not good enough.
- In both academic and work-related courses, sixth form students did not make enough progress in 2014 and their results were well below average.
- Students' attendance is well below average. This is the key aspect of their behaviour that requires improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Most students are polite and behave well in lessons. They are happy at school, feel safe and are keen to learn.
- In all years, students are making better progress. Examination predictions are accurate this year and indicate that results will be better in 2015.
- Disadvantaged students did almost as well as other students in 2014.
- Students achieve well in science, music, sport, media studies and information and communication technology.
- Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The Principal, senior leaders and academy councillors have not let the closure of the academy in 2016 prevent it from operating normally. They have taken effective action to improve achievement and the quality of teaching this year.
- Teachers use morning tutor times well to broaden students' knowledge of citizenship and to discuss issues related to their personal development.
- Support for students' well-being and safety is good, particularly for those who attend the specialised provision for speech and language needs.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 27 part lessons. A few observations were carried out with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed advisory (tutor) sessions and an assembly.
- Inspectors spoke to many students informally as well as meeting representatives from all years.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Principal, senior leaders and staff with responsibility for subjects and other aspects of the school’s work.
- The lead inspector held telephone calls with the recently appointed Chair of the Academy Council and the Oasis National Academy Improvement Director. The lead inspector met with the Regional Academy Director and the South East Lead Principal.
- Inspectors discussed their observations with teaching staff and examined a range of documents including the school’s self-evaluation, development plan and monitoring records. They also scrutinised information about progress, standards, exclusions, attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors looked at a range of students’ work in lessons.
- Inspectors took into account 30 questionnaires completed by members of staff and 41 responses to Ofsted’s online Parent View questionnaire.

Inspection team

Clare Gillies, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Trisha Jaffe	Additional Inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy, sponsored by the Oasis academy chain, opened in September 2013. It is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school. There are more boys than girls, particularly in the sixth form which is also very small.
- The academy and its predecessor school have had falling rolls for several years. The academy will close in July 2016. Most students in Years 7 to 9 moved to other schools at the end of the spring term but 60 were still in the academy during the inspection. Students in Years 10 and 12 will continue to attend the school in its final academic year to complete their examinations.
- Most students attending the academy are White British. A below average proportion of students are from several different minority ethnic groups including a few Roma Travellers.
- A below average proportion of students speak English as an additional language, of whom only a few are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of students who receive support through the pupil premium is above average. This is additional government funding for disadvantaged, specific groups, including students known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children.
- About one third of Year 7 students receive catch-up funding which is for students who did not attain the nationally expected level in English or mathematics at the end of primary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is high. The academy has 18 places (16 students at present) in a specialised provision for students with speech, language and communication needs.
- The most common special educational needs, apart from those supported in the specialised provision, relate to students with moderate or specific learning needs and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- A few students attend long or short term placements (for Key Stage 4), alongside a range of services to support changes in behaviour and social skills. These take place at sites organised by the North West Kent Alternative Provision Service. A number of sixth form students attend a full-time futsal (football) course in Southend.
- In 2014, the academy did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that GCSE and sixth form results improve in 2015 and 2016 by:
 - raising students' expectations, particularly White British boys and disabled students or those with special educational needs, to give them the skills and confidence to aim for the highest possible grades
 - analysing Year 10 and Year 12 students' individual achievement so that, in September, they all start work that generates rapid progress
 - encouraging students, particularly in the sixth form, to read more
 - intensifying actions to improve attendance.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by checking that all teachers:
 - mark students' work regularly, giving them precise guidance about how they can improve it and providing them with time to absorb and respond to the advice teachers give them
 - explore and discuss subject-specific and unfamiliar words with students to strengthen their vocabulary and writing
 - pose questions which students have to answer in full, grammatically-correct sentences and encourage them to extend their responses
 - plan work that is neither too easy nor too hard, so that all students make rapid progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the impact of the many staffing changes made by the Principal and senior leaders has not fully addressed students' underachievement in the past.
- In 2014 several middle leaders over-predicted their subjects' GCSE results so that students needing support were not identified accurately. Some middle leaders and teachers did not challenge students enough to attain above pass grades. Both these elements have improved this year but remain another reason why leadership and management require improvement.
- The leadership and management of teaching and learning also require improvement. Improvements made last year did not generate better results. The Principal and senior leaders assess the quality of teaching and learning accurately and are arranging high quality training for all staff. This is beginning to improve teaching in some, but not all, areas.
- Two aspects of the Principal's work are particularly respected by staff, students and parents. Despite closure on the horizon, she has maintained an academy which is functioning normally and where students are happy and making progress. The Principal has also successfully liaised with supportive Oasis directors, the local authority and headteachers of schools and academies able to accommodate more students.
- All students have places for their future education, with secure and timely transition arrangements. The values and beliefs of the school continue to generate an expectation of good behaviour and ensure students' pastoral needs are fully met.
- The Principal and senior leaders work tirelessly to encourage the sharing of good teaching practice in order to improve results in English and mathematics. They also continue to foster good relationships and equal opportunities for all. They appreciate that detailed analysis of the achievement of the individual students who will attend school next year could help them to make a flying start in September.
- Staff morale is high. Several of the staff questionnaire responses included comments such as 'the strength of teamwork is exceptional'. One wrote, correctly, about how they have 'pulled together ensuring that students' learning and well-being were at the front of all of our minds and actions'. At the same time, staff leaving at the end of this academic year have much appreciated the Principal's support to secure them alternative positions.
- Middle leaders' leadership skills are improving; they now know they are accountable for their subjects' results. A few, whose students' GCSE results were low in 2014, have taken advice and courses to ensure things improve this year.
- The effective use of pupil premium funds last year is seen in the similar or better progress made by disadvantaged students compared to other students last year – this had not been the case in the predecessor school. Pupil premium and catch-up funds are spent carefully, on reading programmes, one-to-one support and smaller classes, for example in English and mathematics.
- The leadership and management of provision for the well-being and safety of disabled students and those with special educational needs is a strength of the academy's work. Whether registered with the specialist provision or the main school, the quality of care and support for these students is effective, checked regularly and adjusted as their needs change.
- Students attending the specialist provision receive high-quality practical support, particularly speech therapy. The access and inclusion leader and teaching assistants do as much as possible to ensure that these students can participate as fully as possible in lessons. They help them cope with emotional needs knowing that access to local child and adolescent mental health services can take many months.
- There is an overlap between students with special educational needs, with low reading ages and those who are disadvantaged. Many Year 7 students attended a summer school which included literacy, numeracy, computing and sport. The outcomes of this work were evaluated to determine further interventions for students on low levels.
- The academy keeps meticulous records of the actions taken before students are referred prior to the alternative provision arranged through the local authority. Heads of houses check these students' attendance and each half term they collect information on behaviour, attainment and progress. Academy staff attend review meetings and the senior leader for access and inclusion is fully informed about how they are doing. Most students' behaviour and learning improves.
- The curriculum has been altered this year to fully reflect the qualifications which will count alongside English and mathematics in students' five or more GCSEs. The academy delivers worthwhile advisory sessions and focus days which prepare students well for their future lives in modern Britain. Topics range from diversity to democracy or human rights to emotional happiness. Students in Years 7 to 9 have studied the workings of the Houses of Parliament.

- Racial harmony is promoted through a programme of anti-racism sessions delivered by an external organisation. Students study several different religions in Years 7 to 9 and know that discrimination in any form is not tolerated.
- Careers advice is effectively built into advisory (tutor) sessions. All students consider their futures in these vertical tutor groups. Students in Years 8 and 9 have been given realistic advice about the GCSE option subjects offered in their new schools. Those in Year 11 have secured offers in sixth form colleges or schools and know the GCSE grades they need to take them up.
- Parents are sad that the school is closing because they value the personal care and support that students receive. They appreciate the academy's high profile focus on equality of opportunity. They are kept informed about academy life through newsletters and information on the website.
- The local authority continues to be involved with the academy, particularly in its closure and student transfer arrangements. The academy chain is ensuring that the academy gives 2016 students the best possible education. Oasis officials maintain a high profile in their support for the academy's work.
- The school's safeguarding procedures are thorough and effective. They meet all statutory requirements. Staff receive regular training related to child protection. Files about students moving to other schools have been transferred securely.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Several members of the academy council resigned when the closure was announced. A new Chair has been appointed but he has not yet led a meeting. The Oasis Community Learning Board has the ultimate responsibility for the academy; its Regional Academy Director has taken on a 'governor' role alongside the academy council.
 - The Chair of the Council and all senior Oasis personnel involved with the academy know exactly how the academy's results compare with national ones and what the quality of teaching is like. They are fully aware of the support procedures in place for teachers who do not generate good learning.
 - Linked to the Teachers' Standards, teachers' appraisal is carried out meticulously. At the end of the academy's first year, several staff who were eligible to move up pay scales did not, while individuals whose work was exceptionally effective were rewarded.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement because some of them, particularly Roma Travellers, have poor attendance which prevents them from making good progress. A number of students are persistent absentees. Encouragingly, Year 11 students' attendance is over 90%. Attendance in Year 9 is lower.
- Many students behave extremely well around the academy and in lessons, stay focused on learning and are clearly keen to do well. Expectations of behaviour are adhered to strictly which means that students who have emotional challenges or behavioural issues occasionally experience internal or external exclusion. Low-level disruption does happen in a few lessons but most teachers are skilful at stopping it.
- Students attending alternative provision, mainly for respite in Years 7 to 9 and to participate in longer courses in Years 10 and 11, reflect on their behaviour. Most return to the academy and find it easier to behave thoughtfully and with consideration for others.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say that there is hardly any bullying and they are all confident that it is totally unacceptable. The very few parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the academy deals effectively with the rare cases of bullying. Students are fully aware of the different types of bullying and that using the word gay is unacceptable.
- Other elements that ensure students are aware of safety in their lives include assemblies and discussions about e-safety, drugs, trafficking and smoking as well as many other health-related topics.
- Alternative provision is arranged through the local authority which checks that all safeguarding and child protection arrangements are in place. The authority quality-assures the courses offered.
- The content of several subjects and advisory sessions generates good provision for students' personal and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A dance company makes presentations which help students to explore spirituality. The academy develops students' social skills sensitively to help them feel confident at interviews, their next place of education or out in the world of work.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it has not been strong enough to overcome past underachievement. It still does not challenge all students to aim for the highest grades in all subjects, or give them the skills and confidence they need to do this.
- Students learning French last year made relatively good progress because they received helpful written feedback on their work and improved it. Marking in mathematics and a few other subjects did not move students forward as much because it was not linked to grades or clear success measures.
- Marking still requires improvement. It is useful and effective in some subjects but not in all of them. Students do not always take note of advice, learn from their mistakes or improve their work. Nevertheless, particularly in work-related courses such as BTEC music, many teachers do give students excellent verbal guidance and suggestions for improved writing.
- Some teachers are not diligent about widening students' vocabulary and writing by checking that they understand subject-specific words and other vocabulary. On occasions, they miss giving students time to read quietly or aloud or do not stress the importance of reading to their studies. In the best science lessons, students apply their knowledge of mathematics to work but application of numeracy skills do not feature in many other subjects.
- Work is sometimes either too hard or too easy, particularly for the most able. This means that some students complete it quickly while others struggle.
- Senior leaders have encouraged teachers to pose questions that demand students give more than one-word or short answers. Some teachers have acted on this but too often students fail to answer in full, well-structured sentences or are not asked to develop their answers.
- Many teachers prepare stimulating materials for advisory (tutor) lessons and move at a fast pace because lessons are only half an hour long. In a most effective lesson on resilience, students discussed what the word meant, evaluated well-selected examples and debated the concept related to school and outside life. In another lesson on drugs, the words legal and illegal were clarified but 'hallucinogens' was not.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are taught well in courses for their specific needs, for example learning about first aid techniques for life skills qualifications. A nurture group for Years 7 and 8 has some lessons with a primary-trained teacher. These students make good progress mastering basic mathematical and reading skills.
- Teaching assistants offer valuable guidance and encouragement to many students with special educational needs and participate actively where necessary. Occasionally, they are not given advice by teachers on how they can best support students in lessons.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because it has fluctuated over time and is too variable between subjects. Half the students who took GCSE English attained A* to C grades and nearly half did so in mathematics but they were often not the same students. Boys did not do as well as girls in English so several of them did not attain a C grade in both subjects.
- Students, particularly White British boys, did not make enough progress in their final or preceding years leading up to their GCSEs. Results in many GCSE subjects were well below national averages. Work-related courses generated 100% pass rates but students only attained a good percentage of distinctions in music and sport.
- In 2014, half the students without special educational needs attained five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics but overall, less than one third of students attained this measure. Although there is evidence that learning has improved and more students are making good progress this year, some of them will not achieve their full potential in 2015.
- In all years, at least one third of students had well below average standards at the end of primary school. Many have very low reading ages and lack confidence in writing and mathematics.
- Nearly two thirds of the very small number of the most able students attained five good GCSEs including English and mathematics. This was well below the percentage attained by similar students nationally, as was their progress, particularly in mathematics, languages and the humanities. The very few students who speak English as an additional language made better progress overall than others.
- The percentage of disadvantaged students attaining five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics was almost the same as that of other students in 2014. The gap in GCSE results between these students and others was one third of a GCSE grade lower in English but one third of a GCSE grade higher in mathematics. The gap between disadvantaged students and others nationally was over one

GCSE grade lower in English and close to one and a half GCSE grades lower in mathematics.

- Disadvantaged students made almost the same progress overall as other academy students, particularly in English and also in mathematics. The academy opened after the 2013 GCSE results but these results confirm that the gaps between disadvantaged students and others were reduced in 2014, particularly in their progress.
- The academy has intensified its support for disadvantaged students in Years 10 and 11 this year. Although both year groups had much lower starting points than in 2014, they are making progress at a similar rate to other students in the academy.
- Overestimation of predicted GCSE grades in 2014 meant that students who needed extra support did not receive it. Senior leaders have ensured that predictions are accurate this year by seeking external validation of test and mock examination results in English, mathematics and other subjects. The academy does not enter any students early for GCSE examinations.
- The impact of actions taken last year to improve learning for disabled students, those with special educational needs or the most able students is beginning to bear fruit. The academy acknowledges that these students' progress requires significant improvement. The progress of some Roma Travellers is hampered by their poor attendance.
- The emotional and practical needs of many of the disabled and special educational needs students are met effectively. However, this is not the case with regard to the educational needs of some of these students who do not have statements. Half of the students with statements made close to the expected progress in English and their overall progress exceeded that seen by similar students nationally. Those without statements did not do so well except in science.
- Students attending the specialist provision attend most of their lessons with other students. However, the few students who find communication difficult do not attain as well as other students with statements of special educational needs. However, some make good progress following work-related and social skills courses. Overall, their achievement in 2014 was the same as other students with statements who did not attend the specialist provision.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- The sixth form requires improvement because 2014 results were low in both academic and work-related courses and students' progress was weak. Results are set to rise this year but some of them, particularly in Year 13, will still reflect below average achievement over time.
- Drop-out rates were high last year because students did not receive good advice about their subject choices. Advised by the head of sixth form, present Year 12 students have chosen work-related courses or combined them with academic ones in which they have the potential to succeed.
- The BTEC in travel and tourism not only gives students a worthwhile qualification but also broadens their knowledge of the world. The forensic or medical science courses are popular and stimulating.
- Students behave well and work hard in lessons. However, some of them do not attend regularly enough to make rapid progress; attendance requires significant improvement. They feel extremely safe and are happy with their life at the academy, observing that 'the Principal is the best thing'.
- The leadership of the recently appointed head of sixth form is becoming increasingly effective but it is not underpinned by consistently good teaching. The staff teaching the four different A levels this year and the three AS subjects that will continue next year have good subject knowledge and examination technique experience. The quality of learning in work-related courses is better this year but not of the same quality in all subjects.
- Students who need to retake GCSE English and/or mathematics have timetabled lessons but so far the success rate has not been good. A few students proceed to university and most others take up apprenticeships or enter work.
- Students enthusiastically support younger students, help parents run the Christmas Fair or raise money for charity. They have a perceptive understanding about British values and feel they have a good understanding about democracy, as discussed in the context of national elections.
- Students attending the futsal course who complete a BTEC sport along with futsal coaching along with English and mathematics are often employed as football coaches. Their progress, attendance and behaviour are good. They are monitored by visits from the head of sixth form and the senior leader in charge of learning who is also a physical education specialist.

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	139946
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	450190

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	304
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	76
Appropriate authorities	The Oasis Community Learning Board and the Academy Council
Chair	Kevin Wren, Chair of the Academy Council
Principal	Tina Bissett
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01322 668 621
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