

# Portsmouth Academy for Girls

St Mary's Road, Portsmouth, PO1 5PF

**Inspection dates** 23–24 April 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		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, the proportion of students achieving five or more good quality GCSEs including English and mathematics was below average.
- Although improving quickly, the quality of teaching has not been good enough over time to ensure students make good progress in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Achievement in mathematics lags behind that in English.
- The work set for students does not consistently stretch and deepen their learning and this slows progress, especially for those who are least advantaged.
- Teachers' marking and feedback do not consistently help students to improve their work.
- Students do not always have secure understanding about what they are learning before the topic changes or they are expected to complete harder work.

### The school has the following strengths:

- The very strong leadership of the Principal is ensuring that all leaders, teachers and governors have high expectations for students' achievement and their behaviour.
- Leadership at all levels has led to significant improvements in the quality of teaching and as a result, students' progress is speeding up.
- For students currently on roll, achievement is now good or better in a range of subjects, including English.
- Students behave well in classrooms and when moving around the academy. They are polite and courteous and show empathy for those facing challenging circumstances.
- Students are keen to do their best. They feel safe and have good attitudes to learning and this is helping them to make better progress in many subjects.
- The governing body has been strengthened. Governors now use their skills, expertise and experience effectively to hold leaders to account for the work of the academy.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 22 lessons, many of which were jointly observed with senior and middle leaders. Inspectors also conducted a number of shorter visits to lessons to observe students' attitudes towards learning. They also scrutinised students' work in their books to check their progress over time.
- Inspectors observed an assembly, visited several tutor periods and observed a range of extra-curricular activities. They also listened to students reading and observed the work of teaching assistants in lessons and when working with small groups of students.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, teachers, governors, representatives of the academy sponsor and groups of students from each year group.
- Inspectors took account of the 59 responses to the staff questionnaire, the 72 responses to the online questionnaire for parents and carers (Parent View) and a letter received during the inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of academy documentation, including: a review of its work; improvement plans; and records relating to the quality of teaching, behaviour, attendance, students' achievement and safeguarding. Inspectors also reviewed a sample of the minutes of meetings of the governing body.

## Inspection team

Caroline Dearden, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Terry Payne	Additional Inspector
Gayle Marshall	Additional Inspector
Una Maria Stevens	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Portsmouth Academy for Girls is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The academy opened in September 2013, and is sponsored by the Thinking Schools Academy Trust. The lead school, Rochester Grammar School, is also a girls' school.
- The academy is working to becoming a fully accredited 'Thinking School'.
- When the predecessor school, City of Portsmouth Girls' School, was last inspected by Ofsted in February 2013, it was judged to require special measures.
- The academy is currently holding a consultation in relation to a proposal to become co-educational from September 2017.
- The Principal took up post in October 2013. The headteacher of the lead school acted as interim principal until the appointment of the substantive principal. All senior leaders and approximately one third of middle have been appointed since October 2013.
- Of the 46 teachers in post, 29 have been appointed since October 2013.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported through the pupil premium is above the national average. This is additional government funding to support students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is lower than that found nationally.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A very small number of students attend the Harbour School for additional support for their behaviour.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that all teachers:
  - make sure that students have thoroughly understood what they are learning before moving on to new topics or harder work
  - provide precise and detailed feedback to students about how to learn from their mistakes and thereby improve their work
  - ensure students act on the advice and guidance they receive about how to improve their work.
- Improve achievement by ensuring that the work is set at the right level so that it strengthens and deepens students' understanding and accelerates progress.
- Close the gap in achievement between disadvantaged students and their classmates, especially in mathematics.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The Principal determinedly leads the academy with passion and a commitment to students' good behaviour and to improving the quality of teaching and raising the standards of students' achievement. She has been effectively mentored by the headteacher of the lead school to enhance her leadership skills. As a result she now has the necessary expertise independently to lead further improvements in the academy.
- The Principal is very well supported by senior leaders. They work effectively as a team to address the legacy of previous underachievement, inadequate teaching and poor behaviour.
- Middle leadership has been strengthened and is improving steadily. The quality of teaching and standards of students' achievement are therefore improving rapidly across a range of subjects. However, not all middle leaders yet have the confidence to work without guidance from senior leaders.
- The academy's self-evaluation reflects the significant improvements made in a short period of time. It also accurately identifies what needs to be done to ensure that all students experience teaching that is consistently good or better. The academy's work is regularly and carefully checked by the sponsor to make sure that actions are either successful or adjusted to ensure greater impact.
- The quality of teaching is very regularly checked by senior and middle leaders. Systems for tracking and monitoring students' achievement have been strengthened and leaders now hold teachers rigorously to account for the progress of the students they teach. Robust systems for setting targets for teachers have enabled leaders to take strong and decisive action to provide support when teaching is not good enough.
- The leadership of teaching is strong and good use has been made of training to help teachers to develop and improve their practice. Good use has been made of the partnership with the lead school to share effective teaching. This has ensured that teachers plan lessons and activities to help students think about what they are learning and to work things out for themselves.
- The curriculum includes all statutory subjects. It meets the needs of students as demonstrated by the improving standards of achievement. The structure of the curriculum enables students to move through Key Stage 3 quickly. However, this means that some do not have opportunity fully to understand what they are learning before they are moved onto Key Stage 4 and GCSE subjects. Academy leaders have recognised the need for curriculum development and a review of current provision.
- Students are prepared well for life in modern Britain. The personal development curriculum includes a rich variety of opportunities for students to learn about how to keep themselves safe, the rule of law and the importance of democracy. Good use has been made of the partnership with police officers from the local 'Prevent' team to teach students about the potential for extremism or radicalisation. Through their religious education lessons students learn about different faiths and cultures and how these contribute to enriching the community.
- Students receive high-quality information and careers advice about the post-16 choices they make. Very high proportions of students move on to education or training when they leave the academy.
- Leaders at all levels, and especially those responsible for the welfare of students, tackle discrimination decisively and ensure that equal opportunities are promoted well. This work underpins the inclusive nature of the academy and the strong relationships between students and their teachers.
- There are good opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in all subjects and the range of extra-curricular activities helps to extend learning beyond the classroom. However, some students spoken to would like the opportunity to participate in trips and visits to foreign countries or places of interest in Britain.
- The additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils is used well to provide extra staff in English and mathematics, to improve attendance and to provide support for those who find it difficult to engage with school. Funding has also been used to provide computers when a lack of internet access at home has been identified as a barrier to learning. The gap between those who are disadvantaged and their classmates is narrowing rapidly, especially at Key Stage 3. However, the pace of improvement is more rapid in English than it is in mathematics.
- Leaders have taken effective action to help students improve their literacy skills. Students read widely and often; many are members of a public library and enjoy reading for pleasure.
- The arrangements for safeguarding students are effective and meet all statutory requirements; recent improvements to the academy site mean that it is safe and secure.
- Regular monitoring and checking of the academy's spending ensure that financial resources are used to improve the quality of teaching and to create a physical environment that is supportive of learning.
- Leaders have been rigorous in evaluating the quality of off-site provision. From September 2015, all

students will be educated on site and additional resources have been allocated to providing care and support for those with emotional, social, behavioural or academic barriers to learning.

- The academy sponsor provides a high level of challenge in holding the academy's leaders to account for students' achievement and for the quality of teaching. It has given very good quality support to the academy by ensuring that teachers' marking and assessment are accurate and, therefore, that tracking of students' progress is robust and reliable.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- The governance of the academy is effective. The local governing body has been restructured and the number of governors has been reduced to improve the way in which governors work together to hold leaders to account. Governors have a range of skills and expertise which they use well to track and monitor the work of the academy. They check the accuracy of reports provided by senior leaders through their own visits to the academy to hold meetings with students, leaders and teachers, to observe teaching, to analyse students' performance data or to review the quality of students' work. Governors therefore have a very good understanding of the improvements that have been made and of the areas requiring further development.
- Governors know that achievement is improving because the quality of teaching has been strengthened. They have supported the Principal when action has been taken to eradicate inadequate teaching. They scrutinise the evidence provided in relation to teachers' pay progression and have good understanding of the link between teachers' pay and the quality of teaching. The management of teachers' performance is rigorously overseen.
- Governors have good understanding of the way in which the pupil premium has been allocated to improve the achievement, attendance and behaviour of those students who are disadvantaged. They know that the gaps are narrowing, particularly in Key Stage 3, and that further work is required to accelerate the progress of older students, especially in mathematics.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- In lessons, students behave well and follow the instructions of their teachers. They work effectively together to talk about what they are learning and are keen to achieve their best. They respond well when teachers have high expectations of them and all students in the current Year 11 have secured a place at college for when they leave the academy.
- Students have excellent manners and are polite and courteous towards each other and adults. They socialise in mixed-race groups at break and lunchtimes. The academy is a calm and orderly place in which to work.
- The site is litter free and there is no evidence of graffiti. Students are smart; they wear their uniforms with pride and are proud to wear badges that denote positions of responsibility such as head girl or peer mentor.
- Students spoken to said that behaviour has improved and that there is now very little bullying or unkind behaviour. This view is substantiated by the academy's behaviour records which show a significant reduction in fixed-term exclusions and removal from lessons. However, some students spoken to said that the poor behaviour of a very small number of students sometimes disrupts learning in lessons.
- The behaviour and attendance of students attending lessons off site is carefully tracked and monitored. The academy initiates action, including referral to the education welfare officer and to legal proceedings, when attendance is not good.
- Students have been proactive in working to support charities such as Stella's Voice. This work has enabled them to develop strong empathy for those who face challenging circumstances. Students have very good understanding of difference and the way in which different faiths and religions enrich their community. Discrimination of any type is not accepted.
- Attendance is rising and is now average. The absence rate for students who find attending school difficult has been significantly reduced and is now average.

### Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- The arrangements for safeguarding students, including child protection procedures, are robust. These include the measures taken to recruit new staff and for ensuring that the academy site is safe and secure.

- Students feel safe at the academy and this view is endorsed by parents, carers and staff. Pastoral care is strong and students know who to go to if they have any concerns or problems. Peer mentors are available every break and lunchtime; they listen to students' worries or concerns and help them to achieve resolution or speak to a member of staff when the situation needs adult intervention.
- Students say that when bullying does occur it is quickly dealt with by staff. However, a few students said that reporting of incidents can sometimes lead to a continuation of problems in the community.
- The academy's records of behaviour show that racism or prejudiced behaviour are extremely rare. This was confirmed during the inspection through the observation of very strong social relationships between students of mixed cultures and faiths.
- Students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations including use of the internet and social media. They are confident that they would be able to recognise potential grooming or child sexual exploitation. Effective use is made of personal development lessons to teach students about sexual health and the consequences of substance misuse.
- All staff have been trained to recognise the signs of extremism and radicalisation. Key staff have been trained to recognise signs of enforced marriage or female genital mutilation.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching over time has not been consistently good enough to enable students to make good progress and achieve well. However, effective action is being taken to improve the quality of teaching and to eradicate any that is inadequate. Students currently on roll now make good progress in a range of subjects, including English.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and this means that many are able to question students effectively to stimulate their interest and engage them in learning. Where learning is stronger, students are enthusiastic about what they are doing and have the confidence to work without continuous guidance from the teacher. For example, in a Year 9 geography session, students really enjoyed their learning because the teacher made the learning relevant and the activities were fun to engage with. This was also the case in a Year 9 history lesson.
- Mathematics teaching has improved but is not yet consistently good. The leadership of mathematics has not been consistently strong enough to develop and embed effective practice. However, new appointments have been made and teachers' subject knowledge is now secure. This is leading to improved planning and work that is more closely matched to the needs of students. Work is underway to develop teaching which will cultivate students' mastery of mathematics. However, this has yet to impact on deepening students' understanding and accelerating their progress.
- The teaching of literacy, reading and mathematics across the school is developing; students' ability to understand and answer examination questions with confidence is improving.
- Teachers' marking and feedback are inconsistent and do not always help students to improve their work or deepen their thinking. In some cases, despite teachers' careful correction of spelling and grammar, students make repeated errors and this means that their work is not of as high a standard as it could be. However, some teachers help students to work at high standards by providing precise and detailed guidance to help them learn from their mistakes and improve their work.
- Some teaching does not take enough account of students' understanding. This means that students move on to study new topics or work at a higher level before they are ready or confident to do so, and this slows progress.
- Teachers do not always set work at the right level. This means that activities do not always stretch and challenge them to do their best or deepen their understanding.
- Teaching assistants provide high-quality support for students with additional needs. They skilfully circulate during lessons to ensure that all those needing extra help are quickly supported.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students enter the academy with levels of attainment that are well below average. In 2014, the proportion of students who achieved five good quality GCSEs, including English and mathematics, was below average. However, achievement over time is influenced by the legacy of underachievement in the predecessor school which affected outcomes in 2014 and which continues to work its way through the academy.
- In 2014, the proportion of students making good progress in English and mathematics was lower than

the national average. However, achievement is improving quickly because strong action has been taken to improve the quality of teaching, raise aspirations and improve students' attitudes towards learning.

- The proportions of students making reasonable progress in English and mathematics are increasing rapidly. However, the improvements are larger and more rapid in English than in mathematics.
- The systems for tracking and monitoring students' achievement have been strengthened. Teachers' assessments of the standards currently being achieved by students are routinely verified through external moderation. The school's predictions for 2015 show that students are likely to make good progress from their starting points, with similar proportions to those found nationally achieving five or more good quality GCSE grades, including English and mathematics. Academy tracking information indicates that for Year 10 and Year 9, achievement is set to improve further.
- In 2014, disadvantaged students did not make as much progress or achieve as well as their classmates. On average, they were one and a half grades behind in English and one grade behind in mathematics. When compared to other students nationally, they were one and a half grades behind in English and mathematics.
- The academy is now using the pupil premium more effectively to provide additional teaching in English and mathematics and to improve the attendance and behaviour of these students. Information provided by the academy shows that the progress of disadvantaged students is accelerating. The gap between their achievement and that of their classmates is closing rapidly at Key Stage 3 and in English. However, although narrowing, the gap in achievement in mathematics is not closing as rapidly.
- The most-able students now make good progress to achieve high grades in a range of subjects. High expectations and aspirations of these students have been fostered through the introduction of opportunities to study Level 3 courses during Key Stage 4. However, the number of students entering the academy with prior attainment of Level 5a in English and mathematics is very small.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are supported well. Teaching assistants provide effective support and are successful in helping students to think about their work and to work things out for themselves. The leader of special educational needs has implemented a range of strategies, including small-group and one-to-one teaching, which are now helping to accelerate students' progress. The achievement of these students is improving steadily.
- Students entering the academy in Year 7 with low literacy and numeracy skills receive additional support funded by the 'catch-up' premium. This includes small-group work in mathematics and help to improve confidence when reading. By the end of Year 7, most of these students work securely within Level 4 in both English and mathematics.
- Students who speak English as an additional language make good progress. There is no difference between their achievement and that of other groups in the academy.
- Students are not entered early for examinations.
- Students attending off-site training do not make as much progress as students who receive all of their education at the academy.



## What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139714
<b>Local authority</b>	Portsmouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	450149

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	612
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mark Smith
<b>Principal</b>	Natalie Sheppard
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected as an academy
<b>Telephone number</b>	02392 812822
<b>Fax number</b>	02392 872022
<b>Email address</b>	pafg@pafg.org.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](http://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](mailto: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](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2014

