

The Parker E-ACT Academy

Ashby Road, Daventry, Northamptonshire NN11 0QF

Inspection dates

2–3 December 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies between subjects; teaching in science requires improvement.
- Not all teachers adapt their planning to take sufficient account of pupils' learning needs. The most-able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with special educational needs are not always given sufficient priority.
- The quality of teachers' questioning is variable and does not always help strengthen pupils' understanding.
- Not all pupils have sufficient access to independent, impartial careers advice.
- Pupils' attendance, although improving, is still too low. Disadvantaged pupils are more likely to be regularly absent.
- Pupils' progress in science in Year 11, although improving, is still below national expectations.
- The progress made by disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is variable, particularly in the younger year groups.
- Although improving, disadvantaged pupils achieve less well than other pupils nationally.
- The quality of teaching and learners' achievement in the sixth form require improvement.
- Although outcomes are improving, some pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 do not achieve as highly as they should.

The school has the following strengths

- The Principal has transformed the ethos of the academy. He has the full support of his staff.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is comprehensive.
- The leadership of teaching has improved and is now effective. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving quickly in most subjects.
- Pupils make increasingly good progress in English.
- Governors provide effective support and challenge to school leaders.
- Pupils' levels of literacy are improving.
- The academy's strategies for improving pupils' behaviour are successful.

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that all pupils, especially the most able, those pupils with special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils make the progress of which they are capable by ensuring that:
 - all teachers use available assessment information to meet the learning needs of pupils
 - teachers improve their questioning skills to clarify pupils' misconceptions
 - teachers give priority to accelerating the progress of disadvantaged pupils, the most able and those pupils with special educational needs
 - the quality of teaching in science continues to improve.
- Improve attendance by:
 - taking further action to improve pupils' attendance, including those pupils who are more frequently absent from school, and, especially, disadvantaged pupils.
- Strengthen the provision for pupils' next steps by improving their access to impartial and independent careers advice.
- Improve the achievement of learners in the sixth form by:
 - reducing the variability of teaching across A level subjects
 - providing continued support to pupils who are at risk of underachieving in the sixth form.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The Principal has transformed the ethos of the academy; unity, strength and endeavour are at the heart of everything that he does and says. Pupils credit him with 'putting pupils first'. One member of staff said 'the leadership are brilliant people to work for. It's a joy to come to work here and I'm sure the pupils feel the same way'. Staff and pupils agree that the academy is a 'happy place' in which to work and learn. Teaching, behaviour and pupils' achievement have improved as a result.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is comprehensive. Academy leaders take their responsibilities for equality very seriously and ensure that all pupils are treated equally and with respect. There is a wide range of opportunities to explore British values, respect, cultural differences, personal development and other religions. Teachers are skilled in managing controversial conversations with pupils, including those relating to extremism. As a result, pupils feel confident about engaging in debate.
- Subject leaders have a comprehensive understanding of their role in developing the teaching of their colleagues. The addition of two new subject leaders has considerably strengthened the quality of leadership. Subject leaders carry out regular checking of the assessments provided by teachers and challenge them where appropriate.
- The academy's systems for performance management are robust and relate to the academy improvement priorities. Every member of staff has relevant and appropriate targets that support the drive to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The academy's systems for tracking pupils' progress are increasingly effective. All staff now have easy access to this information. As a result, academy leaders now have an improved view of how well pupils are doing and what can be done to support them further.
- The subjects offered by the academy give pupils the best opportunity to succeed. Many more pupils are now able to access languages, two sciences and a humanities subject. The academy offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including a film club and the opportunity for sports leadership.
- The leadership of teaching is effective. The senior Vice Principal is well supported by a team of coaches, and together they are empowering teachers to try out new ideas in teaching that have proved successful for other staff. Teachers have access to an appropriate variety of training and those who are new to the profession benefit from a strong mentoring system. As a result, teaching is improving rapidly in most subjects.
- The pupil premium funding is spent increasingly wisely. The leader responsible for spending this funding evaluates the impact of any interventions, such as pupils' mentoring, to ensure that money is not wasted. The achievement of eligible pupils is starting to improve.
- School leaders use 'catch-up' funding effectively to support pupils in Year 7 who have low levels of literacy. They use accelerated reading programmes with good effect. Pupils' reading skills have improved as a result.
- The academy's partnership with parents is improving, but attendance at parents' evenings is still too low. The majority of parents are supportive of the school and its leaders, although some express concerns about the quality of teaching. Leaders recognise that more can be done to work with the Friends of Parker Academy (FOPA) to ensure a greater number of parents are fully engaged with the academy.
- The academy is highly inclusive. The coordinator of special educational needs has a comprehensive system to identify and support the additional needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The information relating to these pupils is not always used consistently by teachers and the achievement of these pupils is variable across year groups.
- The leaders of the Academy Trust have an accurate understanding of the improvements at the academy, as they regularly collect information about the academy's progress. Academy leaders value the support given by the trust's system leader, who facilitates communication between the trust and the academy. He has been particularly effective in supporting governors to improve. The menu of support from the trust has rightly reduced over time.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have become increasingly effective. They are aware of the key issues affecting the school and they work seamlessly with school leaders and are quick to challenge where appropriate.
 - New governors have strengthened the skills and expertise of the governing body.

- The academy’s self-evaluation is honest and accurate.
- Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching in the school. Governors use performance management effectively to support or withhold pay progression.
- Governors have an improved understanding of how additional funding is spent and whether it is making a difference for eligible pupils.
- Governors have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, including their understanding of pupils’ performance information and the quality of teaching.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The single central record meets statutory requirements. Academy leaders are extremely diligent in referring pupils to external agencies and in liaising with parents when there are concerns about a child.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, although improving quickly, is variable across subjects. There is strong teaching evident in English, art and design technology; weaker teaching exists in science. As a result, pupils are starting to achieve better in all subjects, but their progress is comparatively lower in science.
- Not all teachers adapt their planning to take sufficient account of pupils’ learning needs or the progress that groups of pupils are making. Where this is done effectively, for example in history, teachers use a range of resources to help deepen the understanding of pupils with different learning needs. In subjects where this is less effective, teachers do not give enough consideration to the academy’s information about disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, disadvantaged pupils and those of different abilities. As a result, some pupils make slower progress than they should.
- Teachers’ use of questioning is variable, but improving. Some teachers use questioning effectively to check pupils’ understanding and clarify misunderstandings. Where questioning is less effective, teachers do not use it well enough to check pupils’ understanding, and their progress is limited.
- School leaders have worked effectively with parents to develop their systems of reporting. School reports are now designed to give parents more user-friendly information about how well their children are progressing.
- Teachers are applying the academy’s marking policy increasingly consistently. The majority of teachers mark work effectively to help pupils to make further progress.
- Pupils’ numeracy skills are improving. In mathematics, teachers are placing emphasis on building pupils’ mastery of mathematics and applying their mathematical skills to different contexts. This assists pupils in reinforcing their knowledge of numeracy in other subjects.
- Pupils’ attitudes to learning are improving. Teachers are applying the behaviour policy consistently and use the ‘Alert system’ to record incidents. Pupils’ off-task behaviour is rare, and when it happens teachers are quick to address it so it does not disturb the learning of others. There is a definite culture of learning in the school. Pupils no longer regard the school as a social club and have a growing sense of aspiration and an ability to learn from their mistakes.
- ‘Lead learners’ are used effectively in a number of subjects to organise group learning and develop the understanding of other pupils. One pupil said ‘I like being a lead learner as it helps me become more confident’. As a result of challenge by their peers, pupils, including the most able, are encouraged to learn from each other and make good progress.
- Pupils’ literacy has a high profile in the academy. All subject areas play a part in developing literacy and there are planned opportunities for pupils to carry out extended writing. Pupils’ literacy is improving as a result.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The academy’s work to promote pupil’s personal development and welfare is good.
- The academy provides an effective nurturing environment for vulnerable pupils, including children who are looked after by the local authority. Academy leaders go to great lengths to address the needs of all pupils who are affected by social, emotional and mental health issues. Vulnerable pupils thrive as a result.
- The academy is a cohesive community. Pupils say that the system of tutoring has served to increase

tolerance and harmony between year groups.

- Pupils are given regular opportunities to discuss the world they live in and ask incredibly perceptive questions to enrich their understanding. One pupil said that pupils 'are taught to be who they want to be', and staff 'are good at getting us where we want to go'.
- Pupils have opportunities for an increasingly wide range of activities to support their future careers. The school is developing effective partnerships with local businesses. One local employer provides pupils with assistance in preparing for job applications. Pupils are increasingly well prepared for their next steps and there are very few not in employment, education or training. However, not all pupils have access to impartial and independent careers advice to ensure that they are effectively guided to make the best choices for their next step in education, employment or training.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' attendance is not consistently good. Historical published information shows that overall pupils' attendance and the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is below national figures. Attendance information provided by the school shows that overall absence has improved for pupils currently at the school. This is due to rigorous follow up by academy staff using the academy's systems of protocols. However, pupils' attendance is still not good enough and disadvantaged pupils are also more likely to be regularly absent.
- Pupils are not always punctual to school. School leaders recognise this issue and are taking effective action to improve it.
- The academy's strategies for improving pupils' behaviour are successful. Published information shows that there was an initial spike in the number of fixed-term exclusions following the arrival of the new Principal. The number of fixed-term exclusions is decreasing rapidly, and there are significantly fewer incidents of repeated misbehaviour.
- Teachers apply the academy's behaviour policy consistently. They make good use of the 'Alert' system for recording incidents of poor behaviour and punctuality. As a result, school leaders are able to better monitor any patterns of behaviour in lessons and provide appropriate support. Information collected by the academy confirms that pupils' behaviour in lessons is improving and inspectors agreed.
- Pupils have a good awareness of all types of bullying, including homophobic and cyber-bullying. Pupils are confident that if an issue of bullying arises, school staff will deal with it effectively. Recorded incidents of bullying are low.
- Pupils conduct themselves in a calm and orderly fashion around the school site. They are polite to visitors. Staff provide appropriate levels of supervision.
- The attendance and behaviour of pupils attending external provision is tracked rigorously. Academy leaders have appropriate systems for communicating with these providers. Non-attendance is reported and followed up immediately.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and inspectors agree that school leaders ensure that they are kept safe.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Historical published information shows that the progress made by pupils in Year 11 in 2015 was below that expected nationally in mathematics and science. However, overall rates of progress of pupils currently in Year 11 are predicted to improve, to be much closer to national levels in 2016. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work confirmed that pupils in mathematics are now making or exceeding the progress required of them.
- Pupils' progress in science in Year 11, although improving, is still below national expectations. This is due to a legacy of poor teaching in science and some previously ineffective decisions about what pupils should be learning. Recent changes to leadership and teaching in science have started to have a positive effect on pupils' progress across all year groups.
- The progress made by disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is variable. In 2015, at the end of Year 11, disabled pupils and those with special education needs achieved well and this is predicted to be similar in 2016. The progress made by these pupils in the lower years is more variable, as a result of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- The most-able pupils did not achieve as well as they should across all subjects in 2015. However, the academy's predictions show that they are likely to achieve much stronger progress in 2016, with all of

them exceeding expectations in both mathematics and English.

- In 2015, the proportion of pupils achieving A* to C GCSE grades in both English and mathematics improved slightly. Information provided by the academy shows that the proportion achieving this measure in 2016 will improve rapidly. Teachers' assessments are supported by a strong system of internal and external moderation.
- The number of pupils who are currently attending alternative provision is too small to comment upon their achievement.
- In 2015, disadvantaged pupils did not make the progress they should have, when compared to other pupils nationally. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is beginning to accelerate and is predicted to improve rapidly in 2016, particularly in the younger year groups, but more can still be done to ensure that they achieve their very best.
- In 2015, the progress made by boys in English at the end of Year 11 was considerably less than the progress made by girls. The academy has introduced single sex classes and has continued to use the most successful method where boys are taught by a male teacher. This is starting to have a positive impact on boys' progress in English and the gap in achievement between boys and girls is now closing.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- Historical information shows that learners did not achieve the standards they should at A level in 2015. This was partly due to their lack of achievement at AS level the previous year. The progress that sixth form learners are making from their starting points is now improving and is broadly average at both A and AS level.
- There is some variability in learners' achievement in different subjects in 2015. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is inconsistent. There are not enough staff who are able to teach their subject to A level standard, so the academy is reliant on a small number of teachers, who teach a range of subjects.
- The academy's systems for enrolling learners onto appropriate courses were previously ineffective. As a consequence, in 2014, a number of learners did not proceed from AS to A level courses. However, the quality of advice and guidance is now more robust and learners are under no illusion about the demands of A level courses. A much greater proportion of learners proceeded onto A level qualifications at the beginning of this academic year.
- The head of sixth form has established a robust system for monitoring the performance of learners who are at risk of underachieving. She works increasingly effectively with subject leaders and mentors to identify the required support. As a result, learners are being identified and supported early.
- There is a comprehensive tutorial programme in place. Learners have a variety of opportunities to consider current contemporary issues and are aware of the risks posed by online activity. Sixth form learners now have a good understanding of the potential risks to their health and well-being.
- The requirements of the sixth form study programme are fully in place, including opportunities for work experience. The school offers a variety of opportunities for wider learning. Last year, learners who re-took GCSE mathematics were not always successful at the first attempt, although learners were successful in English. Academy leaders have sensibly ensured that a planned programme of teaching is used to further support learners' retakes in GCSE mathematics.
- Sixth form learners have a range of opportunities to develop their leadership skills. Many are involved in mentoring and support for other pupils.
- Sixth form learners behave well. They demonstrate high degrees of tolerance and respect. Learners' attendance in the sixth form is improving and is now good.
- Learners receive good advice about the next steps in their education and training. The 'my futures' evening is well attended by learners. Almost all learners who completed A levels last year proceeded to an appropriate apprenticeship or university course.

School details

Unique reference number	138235
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10004083

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Sponsor-led academy
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	677
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jenny Lucas
Principal	Mr Andrew Mackereth
Telephone number	01327 705816
Website	www.theparker.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@theparker.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 January 2014

Information about this school

- The Parker E-ACT Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school with a sixth form. It became an academy in September 2012. Its predecessor school was William Parker School, a Humanities College.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the academy receives the pupil premium is just below average, but gradually increasing. This additional government funding is for pupils in the care of the local authority, and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- A very small number of pupils attend a course offered by Stable Mates, an alternative provider.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4.
- A new Principal took up post in June 2014.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited an assembly, form time, and 25 lessons or parts of lessons.
- An inspector listened to pupils read.
- An inspector had a telephone conversation with the manager of Stable Mates.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, the Principal, senior leaders, the coordinator for special educational needs, the literacy coordinator, the System Leader for the trust, two teachers new to the profession and the head of sixth form.
- Inspectors met with pupils from the pupil senate and a group of sixth form learners. They also spoke with pupils informally in lessons and around the academy.
- Inspectors reviewed a variety of documents, including policies, behaviour records, the single central record, curriculum documents, performance management information, the school improvement plan and performance information for pupils currently at the academy.
- Inspectors scrutinised a sample of work from pupils in English, mathematics and science.
- Inspectors took account of the 30 responses to the Ofsted survey, Parent View. They also evaluated the 30 responses to the electronic staff survey.
- The lead inspector checked the school's website to confirm that the required policies and documents are available, including the academy's safeguarding policy.

Inspection team

Julia Wright, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Simon Hollingsworth	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lynn Cox	Ofsted Inspector
Vondra Mays	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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