

The Voyager Academy

Mountsteven Ave, Peterborough PE4 6HX

Inspection dates

12–13 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Outcomes for pupils

Require improvement

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Improvements to teaching, learning and the use of assessment are inconsistent and as a result pupils' progress is uneven.
- Teaching is not always pitched at the right level for pupils so that some find it either too easy or too hard.
- Teachers do not always follow the academy's policy for providing written feedback to pupils. Pupils are often unclear about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Pupils are not always confident about answering questions or giving their views. Many are somewhat reliant on teachers to help them.
- While narrowing, there are still gaps in the achievement of different groups. In particular, boys are not achieving as well as girls.
- A minority of pupils, especially boys, lose focus towards the end of a lesson or when they find lessons uninteresting or teaching is less effective.
- Not all subject leaders are effective enough in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in their areas. Some senior leaders are very new and still finding their feet.
- The pace of improvement in mathematics has been slower than in other subject areas. Expectations of what pupils can do, and how much work they should produce, are too low.
- The trust has not been effective enough in supporting the academy to recruit teachers.

The school has the following strengths

- The new Principal has established a very positive culture and ethos within which staff are working as a team to improve. Hence, staff morale is high.
- The academy's self-evaluation is precise and accurate. With good systems and processes to support the work of staff, most areas of the academy are improving rapidly.
- Support staff give pupils effective help in lessons.
- The quality of education in the sixth form is good.
- The governing body's scrutiny committee is effective in challenging school leaders to improve.
- Behaviour and attendance are checked rigorously and have improved markedly since the last inspection. Pupils are safe, and feel safe.
- Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds get on with one another well and respect differences.

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?

- Raise achievement and improve outcomes further, particularly in mathematics, by improving the quality of teaching and learning. To do this the academy should ensure that all teachers:
 - pitch work in lessons at the right level for the pupils in the class
 - expect enough of pupils both in terms of the level of work they can tackle and the amount they can complete
 - ask probing questions that are directed at specific pupils and push pupils to extend their answers or answer in full sentences
 - provide work that is interesting enough for all pupils, especially boys, and holds their attention throughout the lesson
 - ensure pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work.
- Develop pupils' confidence, especially that of boys, and their resilience in responding to questions, sticking at the work until it is done, and developing their willingness to give their views and share ideas in lessons.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - developing the roles of all middle leaders so that they are effective in driving improvements, especially in teaching and learning in their areas of work
 - continuing to support senior leaders new to post until they are confident to work independently
 - the trust being more proactive in supporting the academy to recruit well-qualified and competent teachers in subjects where there are shortages, especially mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

require improvement

- The academy has come a long way in improving leadership and management roles. There are many strengths within the current leadership. Under the strong leadership of the new Principal, the pace of improvement has accelerated considerably and the academy has successfully begun to eradicate the weaknesses found in previous Ofsted monitoring inspections.
- Leadership is not yet good because some areas of the academy are not well enough led. Though making good progress, some leaders are still very new and not fully established in their roles. In addition, while robust new systems and processes, such as systems for recording and analysing assessment information, are in place, they are not yet firmly embedded in everyone's day-to-day practice.
- The pace of improvement in mathematics has been slower than in other areas of the academy's work. This is partly due to issues in staffing in the mathematics department. The Comberton Academy Trust, as the academy's sponsor, has not been proactive enough in helping the academy to recruit teachers of mathematics.
- Where leadership is good, for example in the sixth form, modern foreign languages, English and science, the impact on pupils' outcomes is good or improving rapidly. Strong leadership of literacy is leading to a rising number of subjects providing increasingly effective support for reading, writing and speaking and listening.
- Academy leaders, including members of the scrutiny committee, have a very good grasp of the quality of work across the academy and precisely where they need to next focus their attention to continue the journey of improvement. A weekly improvement plan is focused and effective in driving improvements at pace.
- The academy's work is carefully checked to assess its impact on pupils' outcomes. The findings from such checks inform school improvement planning. Thorough checks on the quality of teaching and learning feed into plans for staff training and improving teaching and learning. Teachers receive effective coaching and mentoring as well as face-to-face training to help them to improve their practice.
- Positive approaches in relation to equality of opportunity ensure that there is increasingly better access to learning for different groups of pupils. The curriculum, for example, provides a wide range of courses to match the needs of different groups whether this is in relation to ability or other needs. For example, pupils who join partway through the year and are beginners in English are given induction courses to enable them to learn some basic English before joining mainstream classes. Teachers have undergone training on how best to support pupils learning English as an additional language in their subjects, and further training is planned.
- The curriculum has been carefully designed to take local circumstances and pupils' needs into account. It is evaluated to check that it is helping to improve pupils' learning. Work experience and work-related activities are particularly well developed within vocational options. Work experience placements are sourced for targeted pupils and those following alternative education programmes. A good range of extra-curricular activities are available in sports, media and performing arts.
- The school is following a programme about teaching pupils to respect the rights of others and take responsibility for their own behaviour. This is contributing well to a culture of respect for diversity within which there is no tolerance of any form of discrimination. The programme also contributes well to pupils' understanding of other fundamental British values such as democracy and the rule of law.
- Equality of opportunity is not fully embedded across the school as differences in outcomes, though narrowing, remain. Disadvantaged pupils are being supported well now and the additional funding for them is being used effectively to support their pastoral as well as academic needs. Hence, they are catching up. This is particularly evident lower down the school. However, boys are lagging behind girls.
- The Comberton Academy Trust is providing increasing support to help the academy improve, especially teaching, learning and assessment. A number of outstanding teachers from the other academies in the trust are working with a number of subject areas to help them to embed effective teaching practices. This is having a positive impact on staff and pupils at the academy.
- Pupils are well cared for and looked after. Procedures and processes to identify and follow up any safeguarding issues or concerns are robust. The rigorous approaches to following up pupil absence help to keep pupils safe, as does the improved attendance, as staff know where pupils are. Staff have all had training on safeguarding, including training on radicalisation and child sexual exploitation. A culture of vigilance is evident. Working relationships with other agencies and professionals to keep children safe are well established and staff responsible for safeguarding follow up matters quickly.

■ The governance of the school

- The scrutiny committee, set up after the last Ofsted monitoring visit, is the main governance mechanism for the academy though there is a local governing body to which the scrutiny committee reports. The governing body members on the scrutiny committee are very thorough in seeking and examining information, including assessment information and data on attendance and behaviour. They visit regularly to check on developments for themselves. Consequently, they are well informed about the academy's performance.
- Governors ask challenging questions to ensure that leaders are doing all they can and as quickly as they can to improve the quality of education and outcomes. They are fully involved in setting and reviewing targets for performance, including the performance of the headteacher and teachers. Governors are rigorous in checking how well teachers have performed and only agree a pay award when performance merits it.
- The scrutiny committee members keep the rest of the governing body informed about progress in improving the academy. Other members of the governing body are becoming increasingly involved with the academy's work.
- Governors oversee safeguarding effectively. A governor on the scrutiny committee takes responsibility for safeguarding and checks that procedures and processes, such as background checks for new staff, are working well.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

require improvement

- Teaching is not yet effective enough to secure good achievement for pupils. It is weakest in mathematics.
- Teachers do not always make enough use of assessment information to pitch work at the right level. Insufficient challenge in some lessons results in pupils' progress being held back, especially the more able. At times, teachers do not expect enough from pupils or allow them to work too slowly so that they do not complete enough work.
- Sometimes work is too hard as teachers have overestimated pupils' capabilities. For example, in a geography lesson, pupils were given texts which were too difficult for them to read.
- Questioning of pupils is not always probing enough or directed enough to help them to think more deeply about their work or for teachers to check how well they have understood the subject matter under discussion. In particular, it does not help the learning of pupils with English as an additional language when teachers do not push pupils to use full sentences when answering questions.
- Most staff are following the broad format for written feedback expected by the academy, but pupils do not routinely follow up on comments from teachers. This is largely because written advice or guidance is not usually specific enough to improve subject knowledge, understanding or skills. Consequently, many pupils are unsure about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Most teachers have established good working relationships with pupils and this helps them to maintain a positive atmosphere in their classrooms. It also means that pupils usually respond to teachers' requests and are cooperative.
- Support staff or additional adults are well used in most lessons to help particular pupils or groups of pupils. Consequently, those learning English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs or learning difficulties tend to get on well with their work.
- Where teaching is effective, questioning is used well to help pupils think about their work more deeply. Teachers provide clear explanations and interesting and relevant tasks which engage pupils' interests and help them to practise new skills and develop their knowledge and understanding.
- Expectations of pupils are high and behaviour is well managed where teaching is effective. The 'non-negotiables' imposed by academy leaders are helping to set more consistent expectations of teaching, learning and behaviour.
- Most teachers are paying good attention to developing pupils' subject-specific vocabulary, and this is particularly helpful for those learning English as an additional language and lower attainers. Most teachers correct spelling and pupils are usually good at rewriting to practise the correct spellings. Where teaching is effective, teachers explain key vocabulary and meanings well. Opportunities for discussing work with one another also help to promote pupils' English speaking and listening skills.
- Writing across subjects is developing increasingly well and, in a number of subjects such as English and science, pupils regularly practise and produce a wide range of written work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Aspects of pupils' personal development are well promoted, but the legacy left from the academy's history of underachievement is that many pupils' self-confidence and self-awareness about how to be a successful learner are underdeveloped. For example, at times, some pupils are not confident about volunteering to answer questions or using their initiative to ask teachers what they need to do to improve their work. A notable number of pupils are over-reliant to some extent on teachers or other adults. Boys tend to be more reticent at times to join in during group work or discussions.
- Pupils get on well with one another and new arrivals mid-term soon make friends. One Key Stage 3 pupil enthusiastically talked about having made '14 friends'. Pupils are developing a good understanding of different cultures and religions through their first-hand experiences of mixing with the diverse backgrounds represented in the academy.
- The academy's programme about respecting rights provides good opportunities for pupils to reflect on wider moral and social issues. It also helps to promote a very positive climate of respect for others across the whole academy.
- Pupils are respectful of one another's backgrounds. This means, for example, that if pupils with English as an additional language need to communicate with a bilingual teacher or assistant or another pupil who speaks the same language, they are comfortable doing so.
- Assemblies and citizenship lessons supplement the respecting rights programme to promote effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and fundamental British values. Overall, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- A large, and increasing, majority of pupils have positive attitudes to learning and want to do well.
- The pupils attending alternative provision are making good progress in their work. Their attendance has improved and they now have more positive attitudes to learning.
- Sixth form learners make a good contribution to the positive ethos and culture of the school and help teachers to support younger pupils.
- Pupils are well looked after and their physical and emotional well-being is well checked and managed. Pupils are taught about how to keep healthy and also about how to maintain good emotional health. In a health and social care lesson, pupils were very eager to learn about the amount of added sugar different foods contain. However, in their responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, not all pupils feel they are encouraged enough to look after their health and mental well-being.
- Most pupils say they feel safe. They are taught about how to keep themselves safe, including from all forms of bullying. The vast majority of those who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed that there was an adult they could speak to if something was worrying them.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- While there has been a significant improvement in day-to-day behaviour both in lessons and around the school, there are still instances of low-level misbehaviour. For example, some pupils misbehave when they are unsupervised.
- When teaching is not fully effective, pupils become distracted, lose interest or chat to others. This is especially so for boys. Some pupils do not respond well when lessons are taken by a short-term supply teacher, and new teachers have to invest time in getting to know pupils and establishing behaviour expectations.
- Movement around the academy is calm and orderly. During lesson times, the academy is quiet and pupils are well behaved in most lessons. Indeed, in many lessons pupils are very well focused on their work and when tasks are interesting and well put together they become totally absorbed.
- Behaviour records and logs show that behaviour incidents have reduced significantly, as have exclusions and other sanctions. Bullying incidents, including bullying of a racist nature, have dropped dramatically. The academy has dealt effectively with the few bullying incidents that have occurred. Pupils generally feel confident that the academy is effective in dealing with bullying. They consider racism or racist behaviour to be non-existent in the academy.
- Attendance is now in line with national norms and the differences in the attendance levels of different groups of pupils have closed or narrowed significantly. This is a result of very effective procedures which are followed doggedly and persistently.
- The academy checks the attendance, behaviour and personal development of pupils who attend alternative provision. Checks show that pupils in alternative provision are engaging well, their attendance is regular and their behaviour and attitudes to learning are positive.
- Thorough checks are also carried out to ensure that pupils in alternative provision are safe and feel safe.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Attainment on entry to the academy is well below national averages, and very low for pupils in Years 7 and 8.
- Outcomes are not consistently good across the academy though they are improving, and rapidly so in many subjects.
- There has been a history of low attainment. The significant improvements that are now being made to pupils' learning came too late to have an impact on pupils leaving the academy last summer. GCSE results last year were low, including in English and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who gained at least five GCSEs including English and mathematics at grades A* to C was well below the national average. Too few pupils made expected progress in English or mathematics, including more-able pupils.
- Last year the gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school narrowed, although it widened when compared to others nationally. Boys, disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities performed particularly poorly.
- Assessment information, pupils' books and visits to lessons indicate that pupils' progress in mathematics remains slower than in other subjects. In particular, more-able pupils are not being challenged enough.
- As more-able pupils are challenged more appropriately, their achievement is improving but there are still times when they are not given work that is hard enough for them.
- Outcomes for pupils in the academy are improving at a good pace within most subjects, reflecting improvements in teaching. Gaps in the progress being made by different groups are narrowing or closing. Disadvantaged pupils are making better progress than in the past, especially across Key Stage 3 where the gaps between their achievement and that of others has closed or almost closed.
- Current Year 11 pupils are on track to achieve significantly better results this year. Their progress in English is broadly in line with national expectations.
- While the proportions making expected or more than expected progress are lower in mathematics than in English, they are much closer to national averages than last year. Pupils have already made better progress at this stage of the year in mathematics than last year's Year 11 had made by the end of the academic year. Pupils' performance in vocational courses was better with results being in line with, or better, than pupils nationally.
- The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving and in lessons they are now well supported. Their progress is improving.
- The academy's focus on literacy across the curriculum is having a positive impact on pupils' skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- Pupils who have English as an additional language are benefiting from teachers pointing out and explaining key words. Most of these pupils are doing well in developing their English language skills and have the opportunity to take GCSEs in their first or home language where appropriate.
- Numeracy across the curriculum is developing and the use of tutor time to focus on number work is having a positive impact on pupils' basic numeracy skills.
- Pupils who join late are now assessed quickly and placed in the right sets or classes. Consequently, they begin to make progress soon after arrival. Often these pupils have gaps in learning or are recent arrivals from abroad. The quicker assessment processes mean that they do not lose more time before getting on with their learning.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The sixth form at the academy is popular and the numbers in the sixth form are increasing.
- Learners begin their sixth form studies with starting points that are significantly lower than national averages. They generally make good progress from their starting points.
- Results in post-16 courses have been improving year on year and, in 2015, results were good given learners' starting points. Learners' performance was particularly good in vocational subjects.
- The range of courses provided is good and matches the range of needs effectively. The academy has become increasingly good at providing sound advice to pupils on the courses they should be following.
- Learners receive effective guidance and support to help them to progress to the next stage of education and to make sure that they choose a viable career path given their expected qualifications, interests and future aspirations.
- Learners access work experience and work-related learning well in vocational courses. Work experience is more limited for learners who are following AS and A levels. Work-related learning is provided through

the tutorial programme and via visiting speakers or visits away. However, the tutorial programme is not used as well as it could be to support and guide pupils' personal development and preparation for the future.

- Learners are very positive about the sixth form and the help and advice they receive from subject staff and the sixth form team. They feel they are well prepared for their next steps in life.
- The sixth form learners participate well in the main academy and help younger ones, for example through mentoring. They are articulate and thoughtful about their views. Behaviour in the sixth form is exemplary.
- A high proportion of Year 11 pupils choose to remain in the academy's sixth form. While some leave at the end of Year 12, it is very rare for them to have no further education, training or work placement to move on to.
- A number leave after completing Level 2 vocational courses to progress, appropriately, on to Level 3 at a further education college. While some leave because they have not been successful at AS level, they are given good guidance and advice on where and how to continue their education elsewhere. The academy has tightened up its guidance and ongoing support so that the number of learners who do not move smoothly from AS to A level courses is reducing.
- On completion of their courses, all learners move on to higher education, employment or training. An increasing proportion are going to university when they finish and, for the vast majority, they are the first in their family to do so.
- Overall, the academy does well for its sixth form learners given the range and diversity of learners. Teaching is good and teachers deliver well-paced and structured lessons. They question learners effectively and give good support to help them understand how to tackle examination questions.
- The sixth form is well led and managed and learners' progress is effectively checked and supported. Sixth form leaders ensure that learners get the right support to help them with the development of mathematics and English skills.

School details

Unique reference number	137048
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	10008122
This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.	
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1,244
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	354
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Coles
Principal	Scott Hudson
Telephone number	01733 383888
Website	www.thevoyager.co.uk
Email address	info@thevoyager.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	February 2014

Information about this school

- The academy is a larger than most other secondary schools though the number on roll has been falling over the last few years.
- In 2015, the academy did not meet the government's floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A high, and increasing, proportion of pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, and many of these pupils are either beginners in English or at early stages of learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average. The proportion with statements or an education, health and care plan is in line with national norms.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well above average.
- A comparatively high number of pupils leave or join the school partway through their secondary education. Most of these pupils are newly arrived from abroad.
- The academy is sponsored by the Comberton Academy Trust.
- A small number of pupils have placements at alternative provision. Providers include: Vivacity Arts, Style Fencing and Fletton Pupil Referral Unit. Only one pupil is dual registered at the Pupil Referral Unit. The rest are on the school's roll.
- The current Principal took up post shortly before the end of the summer term 2015. Many members of the senior leadership are also new. Staff turnover has been high since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classes across the academy, sampling lessons across different subject areas. A number of these visits were carried out jointly with the Principal and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Principal, other members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders, heads of year and members of the Comberton Academy Trust.
- Members of the inspection team spoke informally to pupils in lessons and around the school as well as holding more formal discussions with a representative group of pupils from each key stage.
- The lead inspector interviewed three members of the scrutiny committee including the Chair of Governors. All three members are also governors.
- In carrying out the inspection, the inspection team took account of the 54 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspection team took account of the responses to Ofsted questionnaires completed by seven members of staff and 142 pupils.
- Members of the team observed the work of the school. They looked at the school's self-evaluation summary, the improvement plan, a range of policies and procedures, documents relating to the work of the governing body and the arrangements for ensuring that pupils are safeguarded. Documentation reviewed included records of data relating to pupils' attainment and progress, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

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David Hutton	Ofsted Inspector
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