

# Knole Academy

Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3LE

<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 November 2015
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an academy that requires improvement

- Pupils by the end of Key Stage 4, especially boys, do not routinely achieve as well as they should.
- Disadvantaged pupils, especially those eligible for free school meals, do not do as well as others.
- Leaders, including governors, do not always plan actions effectively to ensure necessary improvements are secured.
- Sometimes there is a lack of precision or accuracy in the management of important processes. Statutory information is not always published in a timely manner on the website.
- Teaching in mathematics and science particularly does not result in the rapid progress pupils need to make to narrow the gaps in their knowledge, skills or understanding.
- Pupils do not always receive regular and robust feedback about their work which would help them to improve.
- Not all teachers, and many pupils, do not understand the academy’s new assessment system. As a result, many teachers are not sure how well current pupils are doing and the rate at which they are progressing.
- Often, all pupils, no matter what their starting point, receive exactly the same work as everybody else learning a subject. Some find it too easy and some find it too hard.
- The most-able pupils are not consistently provided with challenging targets that inspire them to attain the highest grades.

### The academy has the following strengths

- Leaders have, over time, created a caring and nurturing learning environment. Pupils facing personal challenges are supported well to reduce the impact of these on their learning.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the academy. They are polite and respectful to others and welcome visitors courteously. Most are proud to wear the uniform and do so smartly.
- Pupils following vocational 16–19 study programmes achieve well and complete their studies effectively.
- The academy makes a unique and positive contribution to pupils’ personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are prepared appropriately for life in modern Britain.

## Full report

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

- Increase the rate at which the outcomes for some groups of pupils improves so that:
  - boys consistently do as well as girls
  - the gaps between the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals and other pupils narrow further
  - higher-attaining pupils are stretched and challenged to achieve more.
- Improve teaching further by:
  - providing additional support and training in mathematics and science so that teachers have stronger models and methods to follow
  - ensuring that all teachers know, understand and can operate effectively the academy's new assessment procedure
  - ensuring that teachers provide feedback regularly to pupils which both challenges weak presentation or unfinished work and also helps them to improve it.
- Strengthen leadership and governance by:
  - ensuring all leadership actions are robustly evaluated so that there is a growing understanding of what is effective and what is not
  - improving the academy's action plan so that it is sharply focused and provides a robust framework for the academy to assess accurately its own performance
  - providing regular and high-quality training for governors so that they are better prepared to hold the academy robustly to account.

An external review of governance is recommended.

An external review of the way in which the pupil premium is managed is also recommended.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The long-serving Principal is ambitious for the academy and is proud of its history and place in the town. She is concerned, rightly, that it should be as good as it can be for the pupils. She articulates clearly the local context of secondary education. She is supported, willingly, by her two vice-principals. They work closely as a team.
- Leaders do not, however, critically evaluate their work and that of the academy on a regular basis. Leaders rely too readily on their own assessment of the academy's quality. Occasionally, they ask external advisors to check their judgements. This is not rigorous or regular enough. It does not take into account the increasing expectations about the amount of progress each pupil should make compared to other pupils nationally.
- The most recent systematic evaluation of the academy's work was undertaken in 2014.
- The academy's current action plan is not robust enough to provide a suitable framework to secure rapidly the necessary improvements. Leaders and governors judge rightly that improvements are needed in the teaching of mathematics and science and in the performance of both boys and pupils eligible for free school meals.
- Self-evaluation and action-planning documents do not set out clearly how each of these issues will be tackled and on what timescale.
- Recent changes to the academy's performance management systems have only just begun to secure an upward trajectory in boys' performance. This is because targets for leaders are sharper. Targets are also focused more sharply on eradicating historical underachievement. In the current year, teachers have also been set targets for pupils' progress. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of these changes or gauge how effective they will be.
- Not all training provided to teachers is focused sharply enough. Even this training is not mandatory. Aspects of the academy's training programme are good and have a positive impact on some areas of academy life. However, insufficient attention has been paid in the programme to the priority areas for academy improvement. For example, there has not been sufficient attention paid to improving boys' performance or strategies for closing the gaps for disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders remain convinced that some of the shortcomings in the overall performance of the academy are due to the poor standards in one of the predecessor schools. The two schools were amalgamated prior to the previous inspection in November 2012. Current pupils in Year 11 have been in the academy since it opened.
- Leaders are committed to the success of the pupils at the academy. They are enthusiastic about the 'grammar stream' they have created. This pathway is available for pupils who have attained the appropriate standard in the Kent selection test for entering a grammar school. Evidence suggests that an increasing number of parents are opting for Knole Academy as a positive choice for such pupils.
- Overall standards in the current Year 7 were seen to be better than for other year groups. Some of this is due to the more secure transition arrangements leaders have established recently between the academy and its feeder schools.
- Parents in general are pleased with the progress their sons and daughters make in the academy. Just less than three quarters of the parents who responded to the survey said that they receive valuable information from the academy about their child's progress. Seventy-five per cent said that their child received appropriate homework and 78% said that they thought their child was well taught.
- Leaders work diligently to keep parents informed. They provide a high-quality newsletter, 'Blaze'. They also provide a range of consultation and information evenings.
- Subject leadership at the academy is evolving. There have been recent changes to the leadership of science. Senior leaders are acting decisively to drive improvements for this group of core subject leaders. This is essential if the rate of improvements required is to speed up. For example, at present, not all subject leaders carry out rigorous checks on teachers' performance which drive improvements to rates of progress in lessons and over time. Many are increasingly holding teachers to account for the progress pupils' make, but it is too soon to judge the impact this will have on pupils' outcomes.
- The academy provides a reasonably traditional curriculum with a range of courses available for pupils on the vocational pathway. This extends appropriately into the 16–19 study programmes so that there is good progression for pupils from Level 2 to Level 3 programmes. Pupils have access to an appropriate

range of GCSE courses. Since 2014, they have begun them in Year 9 so that they will have three years to attain the national standards at the end of Key Stage 4. This is because consistently only about half have done so on the more traditional two-year model.

- The formal curriculum is enriched with a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Many pupils take up these opportunities. Disadvantaged pupils are encouraged to join in and are supported to do so appropriately.
- Leaders have created a unique but effective system for ensuring that pupils experience helpful opportunities to develop personally, spiritually, morally and socially. Leaders achieve this through a well-planned blend of assemblies, focus days, a coherent programme of personal, social, health and economic education, citizenship teaching, curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, and tutor time sessions. Inspectors observed a skilful lesson on the life of Mahatma Gandhi which enabled pupils to discuss controversial questions relating to human rights and racism. These were handled in a culturally sensitive manner.
- Evidence of the application of the strong learning in these aspects of school life was found in generous donations to the Nepalese earthquake charity fundraising, support for the advancement of democratic participation among the pupils and good community links between pupils and pupils in feeder schools.
- **The governance of the academy**
  - The governance requires improvement. For example, at the time of the inspection, there was a lack of clarity about the status of some important policies, such as the new assessment, recording and reporting policy. Governors do not always ensure that statutory information is published on the website. For example, statements regarding the forecast spending of pupil premium income for the coming year were absent from the website. Furthermore, no information was available about the impact of additional funding for pupils needing to catch up with their reading, which is a Department for Education requirement.
  - Governors do not always provide robust enough challenge to academy leaders. For example, they know that the performance of boys 'is not good enough'. They are willing to accept the view that this remains a legacy of the historic underachievement in one of the predecessor schools. They have not challenged leaders to take effective action to improve overall boys' life chances since the school became an academy.
  - Governors do not hold senior leaders to account for the weaknesses in the academy's evaluation of its own practice and the precision of its action-planning. Governors are over-reliant for advice on a small number of external consultants who are well known to the academy. They have not commissioned an external review of the effectiveness of the academy for two years. Kent County Council, one of the academy's co-sponsors, is not currently providing challenge and support to the governing body.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The site is secure and well maintained. Leaders ensure that breaktimes are efficiently supervised. As a result, pupils say that they feel safe in school and the vast majority (95%) of parents agree. Of the parents surveyed, 91% said that their child was happy at the academy.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching is inconsistent across the academy. There are some subjects where teaching is exemplary, such as physical education and food technology. In one example, pupils making their own pasta were able to talk clearly about how they can make progress against a clearly set-out framework. They know how well they are doing. In another, a dynamically led theory lesson in physical education, pupils were encouraged to think for themselves in order to speed up their preparation for the examination.
- In mathematics, pupils are sometimes held back because the teaching does not enable them to develop appropriate thinking skills. Similarly, in science lessons observed, not all the teaching was enabling pupils to make rapid progress. Senior leaders are aware of this and have themselves judged aspects of teaching in science to require improvement. In art, in Key Stage 3, all pupils were seen to receive the same work. Some have already developed the skills required and found the tasks uninspiring; others found they needed more help with the technical skills and thus found the work too hard.
- The quality of feedback pupils receive across the academy varies. Some teachers are adept at giving detailed and structured oral feedback. Others use the academy's 'SIT' (Strengths, Improvements, Targets) feedback system in books to encourage pupils to improve their written work. However, many pupils produce work that is not looked at frequently enough and are not given regular advice on how to improve it.

- Some teachers have welcomed the academy's change to a new system of assessing, recording and reporting on pupils' progress. Inspectors saw various interpretations of how it is to be used. Pupils told inspectors that they found it confusing. Teachers were not able to explain clearly and coherently how they are using it. Inspectors did not find evidence of consistent application of the system across the academy.
- The academy ensures that pupils read frequently. One pupil was heard to comment, 'Show respect for the books as not all schools have a library as good as ours'. This was during a planned visit to the library aimed at building support for reading.
- Teachers new to the profession are given considerable training to improve their teaching. There are a significant number of new teachers in mathematics who are very willing to learn. They require robust models and guidance to follow and are now receiving robust coaching and mentoring for improvement on a two-weekly timetable.
- Leaders' assessment of the quality of teaching is generally secure. They provide sensitive and caring support for staff facing challenges. Leaders are aware that teaching requires improvement and are more regularly holding staff to account for their performance. They are increasingly acting decisively when teaching falls short of the academy's expectations. Over time, weaknesses in teaching are being reduced but there is still some way to go.
- Teachers spend much time planning lessons. They prepare activities aimed at keeping pupils on task all the time. Many use information and communications technology as an effective tool to support teaching. The majority take account of what pupils already know, understand and can do. They follow the academy's policy of preparing information about the class. A few tailor the lessons to meet the needs of all their pupils from their particular starting points.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Significant attention is paid to ensuring that pupils leave with a positive sense of their well-being. The vast majority of pupils are ready for the next stage of their life.
- Pupils are generally self-confident and female pupils, particularly, know what it means to be a successful learner.
- The pastoral care system across the academy is well led and managed. Each pupil is known to the team and teachers talk knowledgeably about their needs and challenges.
- Good systems have been built for tracking the impact of pastoral issues on pupils' progress. Leaders have clear information about each pupil when they arrive at the academy. They continue to collect information so they know how best to support pupils.
- The academy has worked hard to eradicate bullying and has been successful. The large majority of pupils believe that bullying happens rarely and that it is dealt with fairly when it does. About three quarters of the parents who responded to the survey said that they felt the academy deals effectively with bullying. The vast majority of staff agree.
- Any incidents of bullying or the use of derogatory language are recorded carefully. This ensures that any patterns can be identified quickly and addressed.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is because the academy has implemented an effective system of rewards which pupils like.
- Pupils conduct themselves appropriately around the academy and are calm and orderly at breaktimes. Pupils are polite and respectful to each other and courteous to visitors. Most wear their uniform with pride and remain smart throughout the day. Pupils do not always take the same care with their work. Often, work in books is presented untidily and inspectors found many instances where tasks were unfinished. In one example, pupils in geography did not draw graphs accurately, and this limited their progress in the lesson.
- Pupils generally behave well in lessons. Low-level disruption is rare. However, when teaching is less effective, pupils wander off task, get distracted or lose concentration.
- Attendance is improving steadily and is currently under review by leaders and governors. The attendance

of disadvantaged pupils, especially those eligible for free school meals, is not as good as it could be.

- The rate at which pupils are excluded from the academy is declining but is still above the national average. Leaders are continually looking for ways to reduce the incidence of exclusion further.

## Outcomes for pupils

## require improvement

- By the end of Key Stage 4, annually and on average, about half of the pupils achieve five GCSE A\* to C passes with English and mathematics. Leaders predict that this level of performance will rise closer to 60% in 2016 for current Year 11 pupils.
- Boys do not do as well as girls. Historically, they have not done as well as other boys nationally. Although leaders recognise this and are attempting to address it, in 2015 they still made less progress than their counterparts.
- Disadvantaged pupils, especially the relatively small numbers eligible for free school meals, do not achieve as well as they should. The gaps are closing but are still about a half a grade or one grade on average behind their classmates.
- Over the last three years, the proportions of pupils making expected progress in English and mathematics have risen steadily to bring them closer to national averages. Leaders predict that these levels will continue to rise. However, information supplied by leaders conversely shows that forecast performance in English will be lower than in unvalidated information for 2015.
- Leaders provided strong evidence that current pupils receiving additional special educational needs support are doing well. In many cases their progress is better than their classmates and other pupils nationally.
- Pupils in Year 7, under the academy's new assessment, recording and reporting system, make better progress on average than pupils in other year groups.
- The relatively small number of pupils receiving extra support for their reading make good progress as a result of the highly skilled teaching they experience in small groups. This is successfully measured by increases in their reading ages. In the sample seen, pupils had caught up on average at least one whole year.
- Pupils enter the academy with levels significantly below that expected at the end of Key Stage 2. Many make broadly average progress by the end of Key Stage 4, but few accelerate their progress and go on to make more than expected progress or attain higher grades. In 2014, only 8% of the most-able pupils made more than expected progress in English and 11% in mathematics.
- Progress is not accelerating as rapidly as the academy states and in some subjects is stalling, most notably in science. This is because the pace of progress in lessons is not always fast enough. This is due to teachers not always having a clear expectation of how much pupils can achieve. As a result, outcomes are not as good as they should be.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## are good

- Learners undertaking vocational qualifications achieve good standards and do well. There are particular strengths in business studies and public services.
- Learners undertaking traditional academic programmes of study make progress broadly in line with national averages and there are strengths in biology, geography and economics. The academy competes with a wider range of provision available to A-level candidates locally than in the vocational sector. Learners, therefore, have greater choice about where to pursue such studies.
- Leaders of the 16–19 study programmes ensure that each learner is on a suitable pathway. They lead the provision well. Leaders know the learners thoroughly and provide good-quality careers information, advice and guidance. This extends the academy's practice which begins in Year 8. All learners are provided with impartial advice and an increasing number are opting positively to continue their post-16 studies at Knole Academy.
- Leaders ensure that any learner who has not achieved a C grade in English or mathematics is enabled to do so during their time on a 16–19 study programme.
- All learners benefit from suitable work experience placements, including those on traditional A-level courses.

- Learners provide good role models for other pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. They take leading roles in many of the extra-curricular activities. Some learners support teachers in the production of musical, theatrical and dance performances which are an important feature of school life.
- Learners develop appropriate attitudes and are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They understand how to keep themselves safe online and recognise the negative impact of bullying. Teachers provide regular opportunities to discuss controversial topics in a manner appropriate to their age.
- The vast majority of learners remain in the provision until they have completed all their studies.
- Very few learners are not in education, employment or training shortly after they leave Year 11. The academy works well with Kent County Council employees to ensure that this is the case.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136128
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10002705

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,311
<b>Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	177
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Miss Anne-Marie Lenehan
<b>Principal</b>	Mrs Mary Boyle
<b>Telephone number</b>	01732 454608
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.knoleacademy.org">www.knoleacademy.org</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:enquiries@knoleacademy.org">enquiries@knoleacademy.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	November 2012

## Information about this academy

- Knole Academy is larger than the average secondary school. It is growing in size and has expanded in the last year, including the numbers of learners on 16–19 study programmes.
- There are more girls than boys in the academy.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British who speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, especially those known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average.
- The academy makes no use of any alternative providers of education. It does not support any off-site provision in partnership with other providers.
- The academy is not supported by either national leaders of education or specialist leaders of education. It does not provide support to any other schools locally.
- The academy meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.



## Information about this inspection

- This inspection started out as a short inspection of a good school under section 8 of the Education Act, 2005. It converted to a full section 5 inspection on day one so that the team could be expanded in order to gather further evidence. The two Her Majesty's Inspectors were joined by five Ofsted Inspectors on day two.
- Inspectors observed learning across a wide range of subjects. On day two of the inspection, three lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors also visited tutor time, assemblies and observed small-group work with pupils needing to catch up with their reading. The lead inspector listened to a few pupils read.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and in pupils' books. They took account of the 67 responses to Ofsted's new survey for pupils. They met with four groups of pupils, including a specially selected group from the 'grammar stream'.
- The lead inspector met with governors twice during the course of the inspection. The lead inspector also spoke by phone with the academy's improvement partner.
- Inspectors took account of the 133 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's confidential online survey.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and the subject leaders for English, mathematics, science and humanities. They also met with a group of four teachers at different stages of their careers. Inspectors also took account of the 57 responses to Ofsted's new online survey for staff, of whom approximately 50% were working at the academy at the time of the last inspection.

## Inspection team

Dr Simon Hughes, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alan Taylor-Bennett	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dr Gary Holden	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Walshe	Ofsted Inspector
Jason Ashley	Ofsted Inspector
Roger Fenwick	Ofsted Inspector
David Smith	Ofsted Inspector

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