

Ringmer Community College

Lewes Road, Ringmer, Lewes, East Sussex BN8 5RB

Inspection dates

11–12 January 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders have not acted effectively to ensure a high quality of education in the school. Standards are too low and improvements since the last inspection are limited and sporadic.
- Pupils make weak progress because teaching does not build closely on prior learning. Teachers do not check pupils' understanding well enough or use what they learn to plan next steps carefully.
- Teachers' expectations for pupils' learning and progress are too low. Subsequently, pupils are not challenged to make rapid progress.
- When learning is not engaging, pupils lose interest in their work. This leads to off-task behaviour which disrupts learning for others.
- Leaders at all levels are not held sufficiently to account for the impact of their work. They do not check to see what difference their actions make. As a result, standards and teaching are not improving as rapidly as they need to.
- Pupils do not attend school often enough. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is very high. Leaders' actions to improve attendance have made little difference.
- Key groups of pupils are not catching up with their peers nationally as quickly as they need to. Pupils with low prior attainment and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities underachieve significantly. Any signs of improvement are fragile.
- Leaders do not use additional funding successfully to support disadvantaged pupils and those arriving at the school needing to catch up in English and mathematics. As a result, these pupils do not make the rapid progress that will enable them to achieve in line with their peers nationally.
- Governors do not hold school leaders sufficiently to account. Governors' systems are not established and therefore do not support school improvement effectively.

The school has the following strengths

- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils feel safe and staff fulfil their responsibilities with diligence.
- Pupils' welfare is at the heart of the school's work. Staff know pupils well and provide effectively for their emotional needs.
- Parents welcome the recent work of the King's Group Academies, which has already improved communication and raised aspirations.
- Personalised pathways help students currently in the sixth form to make sound progress.

Full report

In accordance with sections 44(1) and 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure pupils attend school regularly by:
 - ensuring leaders responsible for attendance are acutely aware of pupils whose attendance is too low, particularly those who are persistently absent
 - continuing recent work to remove barriers that prevent some pupils from attending school regularly
 - checking carefully the impact of leaders' work with poorly attending pupils, to ensure that it is leading to rapid improvements in attendance.
- Improve the effectiveness of teaching across the school so that:
 - pupils make more rapid progress because opportunities for learning are more closely matched to their individual starting points
 - teachers check pupils' understanding in a timely way and use what they find to identify and plan future learning
 - pupils remain engaged in their learning and off-task behaviour is eliminated as a result.
- Strengthen leadership at all levels, so that:
 - leaders evaluate frequently the impact of their work and use what they learn to accelerate improvement and identify future priorities
 - governors hold leaders at all levels rigorously to account over the impact of their actions, to make sure they are making a big enough difference to pupils' achievements
 - the school meets requirements for published information.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders have not acted effectively to ensure a sufficiently high quality of education in the school. Standards remain too low and pupils make limited progress. Many areas for improvement from the previous inspection and the subsequent Ofsted monitoring visit have not been addressed successfully.
- A significant minority of staff lack confidence in the leadership team's capacity to make the school better. Less than half of them agree that leaders do all they can to motivate staff to improve the school. A similar proportion are concerned about how behaviour is managed and how well they are supported in improving their teaching skills.
- During the last academic year, leaders acknowledge that they did not use additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those arriving at the school needing to catch up in English and mathematics carefully enough. As a result, these pupils made limited progress and those completing Year 11 in the summer of 2016 underachieved significantly.
- Despite leaders recognising that literacy is a key barrier to improving outcomes, their work to develop this aspect of learning is limited and is not making a difference quickly enough. Leaders' plans for the additional literacy and numeracy catch-up funding are brief and not closely enough aimed at those who most need to make accelerated progress. Leaders are not able to describe how they knew whether these pupils were catching up or whether the actions being taken are making a difference.
- Pupils' opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding are limited by the variable quality of personal, social and health education lessons. Pupils do not have a clear understanding of life in modern Britain.
- The King's Group Academies (KGA) Trust is committed to the school and determined to make a difference. It provides much needed capacity to the small leadership team. It has secured the confidence of parents and is beginning to raise aspirations and improve communication. The trust's work is in the early stages and has not presently led to a significant improvement in standards.
- Leaders have started work to support teachers to plan lessons that maximise progress for pupils. The more effective teachers in the school are leading this drive towards improvement.
- From the start of the spring term 2017, key staff have been appointed as progress leaders to increase the emphasis on academic achievement and progress. Initial work has been undertaken to identify barriers to progress. As yet, it is too early to see what difference their work is making.
- The newly appointed special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is focused on pupil progress, and has acted swiftly to redirect the work of the department in this direction. As a result, systems and practices now enable the SENCo to evaluate the impact of the special educational needs team's work accurately. This applies to work with high-needs pupils in the specialist resource provision as well as work with pupils in the main school who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- Currently, leaders are being supported well by staff from KGA and the local authority, to ensure that pupil premium funding is used more effectively, particularly to improve disadvantaged pupils' attendance. The pupil premium strategy published on the school website during the inspection suggests leaders now have a more focused approach to tackling priorities for these pupils. School performance information shows limited impact at this early stage.
- Pupils follow a curriculum which is increasingly broad and balanced. More pupils now study languages at key stage 4 than was the case in the past. Vocational qualifications, such as beauty therapy, offer an appropriate alternative for a small number of pupils. Leaders are currently reviewing the curriculum offered, so that it raises aspirations and increases opportunities for all pupils.
- Pupils' wider development is supported well by the OSC@R (organisations, societies, and clubs at Ringmer) programme of extra-curricular activities. Pupils participate in a range of sports, arts and other clubs, some of which are initiated by the pupils.

Governance of the school

- The governing body reformed in December 2016, when the school joined the King's Group Academies Trust. More than half of the governing body, including the chair of governors, are very new in post. At present, the governing body's work is therefore in the early stages and systems to hold leaders to account are underdeveloped.
- Governors have not previously held school leaders effectively to account. Their actions have not challenged leaders successfully to ensure improvements to pupil outcomes through establishing better teaching and learning.
- Governors recognise that most school policies are out of date and not fit for purpose. At the start of the inspection, many requirements for publication of information to parents on the website were not met.
- Governors have been made aware of key issues but are not consistently clear about how their responsibilities have been devolved by the trust. The required scheme of delegation is yet to be ratified.
- Governors have a good range of experience that equips them well for their role. They are aware of the school's priorities for improvement and have plans to address their responsibilities promptly. A programme of policy review is under way, to ensure that the school meets its statutory requirements and that policies support effective practice across the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils report that they feel safe and know who to speak to if they have any concerns. Parents reflect positively about the nurture and support that pupils receive.
- Staff understand their responsibilities with respect to keeping pupils safe, and receive regular training to ensure that their knowledge and understanding is kept up to date. Temporary staff are briefed when they arrive in school, so that they understand clearly the actions they should take if any concerns arise.
- School leaders ensure that the suitability of adults working in the school is checked

carefully during recruitment and meticulous records are kept. Although the safeguarding policy available on the school website at the start of the inspection was not up to date, practice in the school is effective and reflects the latest guidance. The current policy, which meets statutory requirements and mirrors school practice, was updated on the website during the inspection.

- Teachers know pupils well and report any concerns they may have about their safety and welfare. Leaders keep careful records and liaise closely with experts beyond school to access additional support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Pupils do not make strong progress across their range of subjects because teaching does not consistently meet their needs. The quality of teaching across mathematics and science is particularly inconsistent.
- Teachers' expectations for what pupils can achieve are too low. They do not take individual pupils' starting points into account when planning future learning. Consequently, pupils are not challenged sufficiently to make strong progress.
- Teachers do not check frequently or effectively to see how well pupils are learning in their lessons. As a result, learning is not adapted to meet the emerging needs of pupils, and extra help is not directed carefully to make progress more rapid where needed.
- Pupils' positive learning behaviours are not well established, especially where teaching does not engage, stimulate or inspire. This results in them losing focus and becoming passive or distracted. Too many pupils do not take pride in the work they produce and teachers accept this too readily.
- Pupils are not clear about how to improve their work. They lack independence and are over-reliant on the support of their teachers. They do not persevere sufficiently when they 'get stuck'.
- Pupils within the specialist resource provision are supported appropriately in accessing teaching that aids their progress. The SENCo understands their needs and plans a suitable programme of specialist learning to complement pupils' work in mainstream lessons. This is beginning to improve their rates of progress.
- Leaders have developed the school's assessment system to make it more useful. Teachers' periodic assessments of pupils' attainment and progress are increasingly accurate. Leaders work effectively with support from the local authority and multi-academy trust to validate these assessments.
- Where teaching is more effective, such as in the arts, physical education and technology, teachers' planning is more accurately aligned to build on prior learning. Classroom routines are clearly established, and questioning is used effectively to check understanding and challenge thinking. As a result, pupils make stronger progress in these areas over time.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils do not feel appropriately prepared for their next stages in education. Their concerns reflect low aspirations and lack of awareness about future opportunities. They do not feel they have sufficient information to help them make the best choices for their future.
- Staff know pupils well as individuals, and prioritise their welfare. Parents recognise that pastoral care is a relative strength of the school. Parents describe the 'caring and compassionate attitude' of staff, which they and their children appreciate greatly.
- Pupils who attend Plumpton College on a part-time basis find this opportunity highly valuable. They feel well supported as part of their wider curriculum provision. School leaders liaise regularly with the college to ensure that these pupils' learning needs are being met.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, at a level appropriate to their age. They say that staff support them well in dealing with any worries they may have.
- Pupils who are part of the specialist resource base are integrated effectively into the wider life of the school. Leaders ensure that their curriculum is highly personalised to meet their needs. This enables them to feel safe and well supported.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate. Many pupils do not attend school regularly. Almost a fifth of them are persistently absent from school. Leaders' efforts to improve attendance have made little difference.
- Pupils, staff and parents express concerns about the standards of behaviour in the school. Less than half of the staff agree that behaviour is good and almost a quarter of parents feel that the school does not make sure pupils are well behaved.
- When learning is not stimulating or engaging, pupils' behaviour in lessons deteriorates. This sometimes leads to poor behaviour which disrupts the learning of others. Some pupils describe this as 'highly frustrating'.
- Leaders' recent actions to improve behaviour are showing some signs of making a positive difference. An increased focus on rewards is helping to reduce the proportion of incidents of poor behaviour. Fixed-term exclusions remain below the national average and there have been no permanent exclusions this academic year.
- Leaders have effective systems in place to monitor the behaviour and attendance of pupils who attend Plumpton College on a part-time basis as part of their curriculum. Pupils attend the college regularly and behave well.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Outcomes for pupils are inadequate because too many pupils make weak progress from their starting points. This is especially the case in English and science.
- Pupils who completed Year 11 in 2016 made progress that was well below expectations in a broad range of subjects. Disadvantaged pupils, those with low prior attainment and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities all made significantly less progress than they should have.
- Pupils who have low starting points do not make the strong progress they need to in order to catch up with their peers nationally. Their work lacks care and detail and they continue to underachieve significantly.
- Disadvantaged pupils currently in the school do not make good progress. Leaders' plans to tackle this lack rigour and are subsequently not making a big enough difference. While some pupils in key stage 3 are now making stronger progress than their peers in school in some subjects, they are still underperforming significantly compared with other pupils nationally.
- Leaders have identified a group of pupils in Year 11 who need extra support to make more rapid progress by the end of the academic year. They have plans to help these pupils achieve greater success. As yet, this work has not led to accelerated progress for these pupils.
- In some subject areas, such as mathematics, school performance information shows that progress, albeit limited, is more rapid than has been the case in the past. This suggests some early impact of leaders' actions to address underperformance.
- Teachers' professional predictions suggest that the attainment of current Year 11 pupils will be significantly higher than was the case last year. These pupils arrived at the school with higher starting points than were typically the case last year.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who are part of the specialist resource provision, are beginning to make better progress than has been the case in the past. The SENCo monitors their progress carefully and ensures that they receive appropriate extra help as needed.
- Pupils study towards an increasingly broad range of academic qualifications. This is as a result of leaders' evolving emphasis on ensuring the curriculum supports high aspirations. Consequently, all pupils completing Year 11 in 2016 moved onto further education or employment.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The sixth form currently caters for a small number of Year 13 students who are completing their post-16 studies this academic year. It offers a small range of qualifications, most of which are vocational. Provision meets the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programme.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have been unsuccessful in their attempts to increase the number of students joining the sixth form. They made the decision not to recruit students into Year 12 in September 2016. A number of last year's students left the

school at the end of Year 12 to continue their post-16 learning at alternative sixth-form providers.

- Students do not attend as regularly as they should. Although their attendance has improved significantly compared with the last academic year, it remains below the national average.
- Provisional national test results show that students completing their courses in 2016 made below average progress for both academic and vocational qualifications. The progress achieved across A-level subjects declined for the third year in a row. The progress of students following applied courses was well below expectations.
- Provisional national test results show that students retaking their GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics made better progress than was seen nationally. Results for applied general and AS courses showed better progress than in previous years.
- Leaders ensure that the current sixth-form students benefit from a highly personalised curriculum, which has evolved to meet their individual needs. Collaboration with Roedean School provides opportunities for students to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities that enhance their learning.
- Students currently in the sixth form are making better progress because teaching meets their individual needs well. They understand how their learning is building over time and how to improve their work, because of the information teachers share effectively with them.
- Mentors oversee effectively the welfare and progress of students, ensuring they are well supported, academically and pastorally. They meet students regularly to review their progress and attendance, and have clear plans to tackle any issues that arise.
- Students are supported well in preparing for their next steps. Mentors ensure that students are well informed regarding university applications and are guided through the process effectively. As a result, all students who applied for a university place in 2016 were successful, and all students with high needs secured a further education placement.

School details

Unique reference number	137232
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10012255

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	497
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	17
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Denise Kong
Principal	Mr Robert Gibson (acting)
Telephone number	01273 812220
Website	www.ringmeracademy.org.uk
Email address	head@ringmeracademy.org
Date of previous inspection	1–2 April 2014

Information about this school

- Ringmer Community College is a smaller-than-average secondary school. It has been an academy since August 2011.
- King's Group Academies became the school's academy sponsor on 1 December 2016.
- The sixth form caters for a small number of pupils in Year 13. No pupils were admitted to Year 12 in September 2016. The sixth-form provision is supported by a strategic partnership with Roedean School.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is slightly below the

national average.

- Most pupils are from a White British background and there is a very low proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The percentage of pupils in the school who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below the national average.
- The school offers specialist provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Two places are offered each year via the local authority for pupils who are identified as having high needs. The proportion of pupils in the school who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is well above the national average.
- The headteacher who was in post at the time of the previous inspection in April 2014 left the school in May 2016. The school is currently led by an acting principal. A new principal is due to join the school at the end of February 2017 and the chair of governors took up her post in mid-December 2016.
- A small number of pupils in key stage 4 attend Plumpton College on a part-time basis as part of their curriculum provision.
- In 2015, the school met the floor standards for what the government expects pupils to achieve by the end of Year 11.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium funding on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about governors' information and duties, and the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium funding on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 30 lessons, some jointly with school leaders, to look at pupils' books and learning, and to talk to pupils about their work. Inspectors also visited mentor sessions and attended an assembly.
- Inspectors met with a number of senior and middle leaders, a group of teaching and support staff, governors, pupils, and representatives from the local authority and King's Academies Group.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of information provided by the school, including its self-evaluation and raising attainment plan, records of checks on the quality of teaching and learning, and pupil progress information. They also considered the school website, governor and local authority documents, behaviour and attendance records and a range of school policies.
- Inspectors evaluated safeguarding arrangements, including the safeguarding policy, the central record of staff recruitment checks, and staff training.
- Inspectors took into account 84 pupil responses and 19 staff responses to the online surveys. They also considered 82 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, including 75 free-text comments, and additional parental comments provided via email.

Inspection team

Kathryn Moles, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Simon Beamish	Ofsted Inspector
Charles Joseph	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

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, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

© Crown copyright 2017