

Kesgrave High School

Main Road, Kesgrave, Ipswich, IP5 2PB

Inspection dates 11–12 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Most teaching is good or better. Teachers work hard to make sure that most students achieve higher-than-average GCSE results.
- Leaders and managers, at all levels, undertake their roles with commitment and passion. They are clear about what the school needs to do improve further.
- Governors challenge and support leaders and managers well.
- Students' behave very well and say that they feel very safe and enjoy their time at school.
- The academy provides excellent opportunities for students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- The large outstanding sixth form enables students to make better-than-average progress with a high proportion attaining the highest grades.
- This is a successful school at the heart of the community it serves. It is exceptionally well-supported by parents and carers.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make exceptionally good progress because their needs are evaluated early and support is prompt and effective.
- Managers target extra funding to support those eligible for the pupil premium well. The gap between the achievement of these students and others is closing.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A minority of lessons require improvement because not all students are challenged to achieve their best.
- The proportions of students gaining grades A* to C is too variable between subjects and boys attain standards that are substantially below that for girls.
- Across Key Stages 3 and 4, many boys do not yet make the progress that they are capable of, especially in English.
- The setting of targets for improvement and the monitoring of progress towards them is uneven across the school and is not always checked with sufficient rigour.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 58 part-lessons including six that were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors observed enrichment time, an assembly, and met with students both in formal meetings and informally around the academy at break and meal times.
- Other meetings took place with subject managers, senior leaders, governors and some teaching staff.
- Inspectors noted the views of the 181 parents who responded to the online questionnaire Parent View – an exceptionally high number. In addition, a handful of parents contacted the lead inspector with specific concerns. The results of the academy’s own questionnaires were also examined. Inspectors received 119 completed questionnaires from staff.
- The inspection team carefully scrutinised academy documents and records. These included assessment and monitoring details, performance management documents, the lesson observation system, and academy improvement documents including self-assessments. In addition details of attendance, child protection and safeguarding arrangements, exclusions and the records of governors’ meetings were examined.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the academy’s view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support academy improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Ian Seath, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Isobel Randall	Additional Inspector
Rachel Hobson	Additional Inspector
Sally Lane	Additional Inspector
David Webster	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this academy

- The school converted to an academy in August 2011.
- The academy is much larger than average with a large sixth form.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported by school action or by school action plus, is close to the national average.
- The proportion of students for whom the academy receives pupil premium payments, which includes those known to be eligible for free school meals, is low but increasing.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups or whose first language is not English is much lower than the national average. Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- The academy meets the government's floor standards that define minimum requirements for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all groups of students, especially boys, make rapid progress in all subjects, especially English, by:
 - ensuring that all teaching is consistently good or better
 - using the results of assessments, especially at Key Stage 3, to ensure that lessons are planned to stimulate and challenge students of all abilities and aptitudes
 - improving the consistency with which homework is set and marked across subjects, and the correction of poor grammar and spelling.
- Devise effective management systems, at all levels, to monitor these improvements with precision by:
 - using assessment data more effectively to monitor progress at Key Stage 3, and use this in the management of teachers' performance
 - ensuring that lesson observations place more emphasis on the learning taking place rather than teacher activities
 - making sure that all improvement plans, including those for subjects and individuals, have precise targets and timescales for success that are challenging but achievable, and that they are based on rigorous self-evaluation of the academy's weaknesses
 - ensure that governors monitor progress towards targets and hold staff, at all levels, accountable for reaching them.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the academy with prior attainment that is significantly higher than the national average. In Key Stage 3 the progress that they make in English is around that expected. For mathematics progress is more rapid and students enter Key Stage 4 with a good grounding in this subject.
- GCSE results have risen in the last year, but when English and mathematics are included they have remained static compared to the previous year at a level that is several percentage points above national average. The proportions of students gaining A* to C grades varies widely between subjects. Students make good progress in work-related and applied subjects, for example in science.
- In lessons, most students are exceptionally keen to learn. When they are taught well and challenged they make good progress. Good examples of this were seen throughout the school, and especially in the sixth form. The most-able students are not always challenged sufficiently to achieve their potential however, although the proportion of students attaining the highest GCSE grades A* and A has improved and is now above national average. Students read widely and often, in many instances reading academically challenging documents. This was seen, for example, in some science lessons.
- Students make good progress in mathematics and science although it is slower when all other GCSEs are considered. Students make average progress in English. Boys make less progress than girls during Key Stage 4, and they attain lower standards. This gap increased in the latest 2013 examination results.
- The academy has used the pupil premium to provide extra support and guidance for those for whom this money is intended. In 2012 these students made slower progress than their peers, but this has improved in 2013 as the gap closes. At GCSE they were half a grade behind other students in both English and mathematics. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make exceptionally rapid progress.
- The academy promotes equality of opportunity well. It regularly takes students referred from other schools and has a very broad sixth-form entry policy. It is an inclusive academy.
- The curriculum is designed to cater for all and provides good and appropriate choice in all key stages, but is especially strong in the sixth form and for those with special educational needs or disabilities. Gaps in achievement do exist, notably between boys and girls, but most are closing or transient.
- Students who are supported through the Year 7 catch-up fund make very good progress because they receive intensive and effective support for literacy and numeracy.
- A majority of students progress to the academy's sixth form, though the proportion of boys choosing to do this is lower than girls. They make very good progress in vocational, 'A' level and 'AS' – level subjects. Retention of students is high, and they develop excellent thinking and study skills. Notably, the sixth form has low entry criteria and has excellent success rates particularly for those who retake GCSE English and mathematics.
- The academy does undertake early entry for mathematics. This has been carefully thought

through and no students are disadvantaged by it. It does not prevent students from making the progress that they should or from undertaking mathematics in the sixth form.

The quality of teaching is good

- Almost all parents, carers and students say that teaching is good. A few are concerned that their children are not being challenged sufficiently and inspectors agreed that in some lessons this is the case.
- Inspectors observed a lower proportion of good or better lessons than the academy's own observations indicated. A minority of lessons required improvement. None were inadequate. The Proportion of outstanding teaching is higher in the sixth form. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong.
- Teachers frequently encourage the development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences. For example in one 'AS' class in Religious Education students discussed the philosophical aspects of right and wrong, promoting thoughtful discussions. In another practical vocational science lesson leadership and skills of cooperation and group work were seen to be developing well.
- Students' skills of independent learning develop quickly because many teachers encourage them. For example skills of note-taking are often seen. In the best lessons students ask intelligent and thought-provoking questions because they are stimulated to do so. In these lessons the most inquisitive and able are challenged so that their enthusiasm encourages others in the group. For example in one successful science lesson the teacher, having given the students the basic information to undertake an investigation, then challenged them to do it. Students figured out the answers, sometimes in innovative ways.
- Teaching assistants work well to enhance learning. Often they identify when students have misunderstood or are struggling and successfully give them clues to understand rather than completing the work for them.
- In the less successful lessons teachers pitch the level of what is being taught too low so that not all students learn something new. The results of assessment are not used well in these classes and there is little clear strategy to cope with students' differing levels of understanding and prior knowledge. The more able are not challenged, and often the teacher's use of questioning to check learning is not searching enough so too many students are able to evade it or give yes/no answers instead of explanations. Sometimes, students fail to grasp basic principles before the teacher moves on to more complex work.
- Many teachers set regular and demanding homework, particularly in mathematics, English and science, but this is not consistently done across the whole academy. Managers and teachers have worked hard to embed literacy learning in subjects other than English. Often this is done well, for example in mathematics where new words are written on the board and spelling is corrected. As with homework, this is not done consistently well however. The marking of written work and feedback comments are similarly variable, with very good examples seen in mathematics and science.
- Teachers' assessment of students' attainment is broadly accurate. In all key stages teachers have information that tells them how well students are achieving. Most students know how well they are making progress and what they need to do to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students around the academy, in playgrounds, and during breaks is excellent. They are polite and courteous and displayed a healthy curiosity about inspectors and their work. Those who engaged inspectors in conversation were a credit to their school.
- Students and parents confirmed that poor behaviour is rare. Students told inspectors that they feel very safe in the academy. They are aware of different types of bullying, for example that which is racist or homophobic, and say that it is very rare and is dealt with quickly when reported. Students understand about their own safety, particularly when using computers. New Year 7 students feel welcome, though slightly overwhelmed by the size of the academy.
- Attitudes to learning are strong. Inspectors observed no examples of disruptive behaviour in class. Students' display an appetite for learning, and even in some classes that do not stretch them their attitude to learning remains keen and behaviour remains good. Inspectors observed some students pushing their learning by asking teachers searching and challenging questions at a higher level than was being taught. Students' contributions in class are often excellent, especially in the sixth form where stimulating and challenging discussions often take place.
- Attendance data has been skewed in the recent past because of study leave arrangements prior to GCSE examinations. However when this is taken into account it is clear that attendance levels have been at least at national average and in some years higher. Students attend academy well because they enjoy it. The number of fixed-term exclusions is very low with a declining trend.
- Inspectors observed teachers managing behaviour with consistency and clarity, although a small minority of staff questionnaire responses stated that the management of behaviour was inconsistent at times. Rules are clear and well-understood by students. An effective pastoral system ensures that staff are aware of vulnerable students and know how to support them. A number of very positive parental letters to inspectors confirmed this view.

The leadership and management are good

- Governors, the headteacher, and leadership team give a strong direction and vision for improvement. This view is shared by the majority of staff who completed questionnaires and almost all parents who responded to Parent View. Leaders have successfully ensured that students receive a good standard of education. The expertise and good practice within the academy is extensively shared with other schools and by the training of their staff.
- Despite some overgenerous self-evaluation judgements, the academy does have a good view of its own weaknesses and strengths. These are clearly defined in improvement and development plans. Recent examples of departmental reviews are very detailed, self-critical, and accurate in their conclusions.
- However there is a lack of clarity about the targets for improvement that result from them, their timescales, how progress towards them will be monitored, and who is accountable. This lack of precision is most pronounced at departmental and subject level where, for example, targets for the attainment and progress of students at Key Stage 3 are rarely set.
- The academy has rightly put much effort and resource into the improvement of teaching. The best teaching is effectively identified and shared. Teachers often carry out investigations into their teaching methods and share the results. Managers check teaching often. The process gives a detailed picture of what teachers do but does not always accurately identify how effectively students are learning and whether lessons are pitched at a level that challenges all of them.

Because this is sometimes unrecognised it has contributed to the slower progress that some students make, especially at Key Stage 3.

- The management of teachers' performance is rigorous. Targets for individuals are challenging and precise. The academy can point to examples of weaker teaching that has improved because of the process. Teachers' progression through the salary scale is linked to the meeting of performance targets.
- The academy is a highly inclusive community and provides excellent opportunities for students to explore and develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural abilities. This is done through a very wide range of activities such as team sports, drama and music. The academy's personal and social education programme is thorough and all subjects contribute. Fund raising is a strength through the house system the charities action group.
- Very effective leadership of the sixth form has resulted in an excellent standard of education. Performance is on an improving trend and the quality of teaching and learning is high. Teachers take excellent responsibility for the subjects and courses that they teach and are fully accountable for their students' performance.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and enriching. It meets the needs and interests of all students well. Some students are provided with personalised learning packages that may include home tuition. The quality of this provision is checked carefully. The academy offers a very large range of extra-curricular activities and participation in them is high. These include performances, sport, science and mathematics club, provision for gifted and talented, ethics, and music.
- The provision of advice and guidance is good at all levels. Choices advice for Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is well-developed. The wealth of student experiences together with good careers and university advice encourages students to be ambitious. Consequently the majority of sixth-form students progress to universities that are either top or high on their list of choices.
- Academy leaders make good use of the additional funding provided through the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch up premium. This money is used to pay for tuition, for example in small-group work and intensive literacy and numeracy sessions. The effectiveness of this provision is seen in the very rapid progress made by those students with low prior attainment.
- The academy has been satisfied with the support that it has purchased from the local authority, for example for governance support and clerking. However the local authority has not had a sufficient presence to evaluate the working of the academy or predecessor school with sufficient rigour. Consequently the local authority did not identify the areas that inspectors found to be in need of improvement and did not therefore hold the school to account for them. Improvements that have taken place have been due to initiatives from the headteacher and other staff. The local authority has not challenged the school to improve further.
- **The governance of the academy:**
 - Governors bring many strengths to the school. Their management of performance is sound, and they give good challenge to the headteacher and other senior staff. Governors have received training on school performance and demonstrate an understanding of current school measures of attainment and progress. They ask appropriate and challenging questions of school staff. These questions and answers are noted, but rarely used to set targets for improvement. Sometimes, actions that are agreed are not ascribed to individuals so they are difficult to check. Weaknesses in target setting and monitoring at departmental level mean that governors are not always able to monitor progress towards targets effectively. Governors understand where the best teaching is to be found, but have not been aware that some

evaluations of teaching are overgenerous or do not take sufficient account of learning. They know about the performance management of staff and how the school tackles any underperformance. Governors have ensured that the school meets requirements for child protection and safeguarding, and have received appropriate training. They have overseen the effective use of the pupil premium to ensure that those for whom it is intended benefit and make improving progress.

What inspection judgements mean

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

School details

Unique reference number	136969
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	427231

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1725
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	344
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Darren Johnson
Headteacher	Nigel Burgoyne
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2008
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