

The Eastbourne Academy

Brodrick Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN22 9RQ

Inspection dates 21–22 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well. Many join the academy with much lower than average standards; they make good progress and leave with examination results broadly in line with national averages.
- Teaching is good. It encourages students to see the point of their learning. Many teachers understand how students learn best and can make lessons interesting and fun.
- Students behave well in lessons and around the site. There is little disruption and the vast majority want to learn and benefit from all that the academy has to offer. This is a calm and safe place to learn.
- The academy is improving strongly in a number of important ways. Students' achievement is improving and teaching is getting better. The improvements are a direct result of the good leadership and management of the Principal, his senior staff, and the governing body.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teaching is good and more could be outstanding. Not every department has a high proportion of at least good teaching and some that is outstanding.
- Many students have very low levels of literacy and numeracy when they enter the academy. Teachers know this and help students to make good progress in developing these skills, but students' writing, reading and number work could be better still.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 lessons, some jointly with senior staff.
- Meetings took place with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, representatives of the sponsors and students.
- Inspectors scrutinised the academy’s development planning documents and its assessment of how well the school is doing. They also scrutinised safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Inspectors took into account the 22 responses which were on the Parent View website by the end of the inspection.

Inspection team

Alan Taylor-Bennett, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Beverly Dobson	Additional Inspector
Heather Leatt	Additional Inspector
Roger Parry	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Eastbourne Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- It became an academy in September 2010. The lead sponsor is Sussex Downs College, with East Sussex County Council as co-sponsor. This is the academy's first full inspection. There was a monitoring visit in October 2011 when the progress made since becoming an academy was judged as satisfactory.
- The proportions of students supported through school action, and at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, are all higher than average.
- More students than usual join the academy at times other than at the start of Year 7.
- A very large majority of students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students with English as an additional language is near average but is growing.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding) is nearly double that nationally.
- Some students attend courses elsewhere for part of their time or for a short period of time. Local colleges cater for students who wish to take courses in animal care or short courses, particularly for those who require special short courses because of disruption to their schooling.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards which set minimum expectations of students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that all teaching is at least good, and that all departments have some teaching that is outstanding, by:
 - making sure that work is always closely matched to students' needs and abilities
 - ensuring that all teachers continually gauge how well students are doing during a lesson, and use this feedback to make their teaching more effective
 - encouraging more debate about any big and exciting ideas in lessons before addressing the detail, and giving time for students to reflect on their significance
 - capitalising on students' enthusiasm for learning by giving the students opportunities to play an active part in lessons, and in influencing the pace and the style of their learning.
- Strengthen students' literacy and numeracy skills by:
 - training all teachers in ways of obtaining good quality extended writing from students, and how to teach different styles of writing
 - developing a wide range of opportunities in every subject for students to see the point of developing these skills to a high level, and to practise them in real contexts
 - encouraging reading for pleasure in every subject
 - working alongside local primary schools and colleges to foster the strong development of literacy and numeracy skills at every stage of a student's education.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students achieve well across a wide range of subjects. Despite many arriving with Key Stage 2 scores well below average, the proportion who achieved five or more good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, in 2012 was near the national average. Students make good progress as result of generally good teaching.
- Standards are rising throughout the academy. The good examination results in 2012 were a dramatic improvement on 2011 outcomes. Subjects that have always been stronger, such as performing arts, art and drama, have maintained their strengths and others are improving rapidly.
- The progress made by students in English improved over the last year and is now good; the majority of students of all abilities achieved expected outcomes, or better, at GCSE.
- Students' literacy levels are still below average. Good progress is being made in addressing the very weak reading and writing skills of a sizeable minority, but many students are not using these skills fluently in all subjects. Too few read for pleasure.
- Students' progress is now good in mathematics due to better teaching and better leadership of this area than that previously. Some students do not use their numeracy skills confidently outside of mathematics lessons and in new contexts, because not all teachers deliberately reinforce these skills.
- The academy has a clear policy for entering students early for GCSE examinations. It is used sparingly and to support achievement. For example, some students enter examinations in some subjects early to fit in with courses taken elsewhere, or to suit their individual circumstances.
- All groups of students, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs, make good progress. This is because teachers monitor the progress of all groups of students closely and frequently, and intervene when necessary. One student receiving extra help said, 'Teachers always try to get the best out of us.'
- The pupil premium is spent wisely to support the achievement of students who should benefit from it. Those students who may be in danger of underachieving and in most need of support receive it in the form of targeted help with literacy and numeracy skills, individual and small group teaching and the help of a mentor. As a result, more students eligible for the pupil premium obtained five or more good GCSE passes including English and mathematics in 2012 than previously, and every student obtained a qualification. However, the gap between the average point score of those eligible for the pupil premium, and those who are not, widened last year. Throughout the academy there is a very high awareness of the need to improve the standards achieved by this group of students.

The quality of teaching is good

- Much of the teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers expect a lot of the students. They plan lessons to help them to see the point of learning and to enjoy it as much as possible. One student, reflecting on his experiences in science, said, 'The teacher manages to make it fun and, when you get to the end of module and take the test, you suddenly realise how much you've learned. I'm not sure how he does that!'
- Teachers make strong use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning. It makes learning more fun and enables teachers to bring in a wide range of exciting ways to tackle topics. All students at Key Stage 3 have been issued with a tablet computer. These are used very productively in lessons. For example, students video each other's performance in physical education to help them to explain how particular improvements to their friends' throwing or running technique can be made; they work in groups researching issues around genetics in science and assemble the information quickly into a short attractive presentation; and, begin a French lesson by answering a quiz in an app and having their scores

automatically recorded.

- Teachers offer good levels of challenge to different groups of students. They do this by making sure that everyone has the right kind of work to do. Students understand that the work is designed to match their current grade or level and to take them onto the next. Many teachers also continually question and probe how well students understand the key ideas. Not every teacher is good at these important skills, however.
- Teachers across all subjects help to improve students' literacy skills. Some teachers do not know the best ways of obtaining longer pieces of writing from students in their subject, and the point of using different styles and approaches in spoken and written work is not always addressed clearly enough. Numeracy skills are also addressed in many lessons, but with too little consistency to have a very good overall effect.
- Many teachers are good at giving students a sense of the 'big picture' when teaching a topic. Students value this because it helps them to develop their understanding quickly and securely. Sometimes, however, chances to pause and reflect on some important and interesting ideas are missed, and students get a bit lost in the detail.
- The teaching supports students' social, moral and cultural development. There is a wide range of trips and visits, and the academy's strengths in the performing arts and English offer many exciting opportunities.
- The best lessons are those that involve discussion, debate and the active participation of students. Senior staff are aware that these activities are used very effectively in many, but not all, classrooms.
- The very large majority of parents that responded to Parent View felt that their child is taught well. Inspection evidence supports this.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students behave well in lessons and around the site. Poor behaviour is rare because students want to learn. At the time of the inspection there was considerable disruption to the normal life of the academy due to building work. Students took this in their stride and dealt with the inevitable inconveniences maturely and calmly.
- Students' attitudes to learning are very positive. Students are not just willing participants in lessons, but are involved and interested in the work, wanting to understand and make progress. Some do not yet have the confidence to speak up and ask questions as often as they should.
- Students contribute impressively to their academy. Some serve on the student panel, working with students whose behaviour does not meet the high standards expected. Members of the student council work with the senior team planning and carrying out improvements.
- Differences in students' backgrounds, sexual orientation and ethnicity are valued and are not used as the basis for bullying. The great majority of parents feel that the academy makes sure that students are well behaved, but some were unsure how well bullying is dealt with; students say that they feel safe and that the academy is a supportive and friendly place.
- The academy's Centre for Induction and Acceleration (CIA) successfully meets the needs of the relatively high proportion of students who join the academy at times other than the start of Year 7, or have difficult personal circumstances. The centre provides support for basic skills and offers tailored responses to individual students' needs. As a result, students are helped to stay in full-time education and obtain as much benefit from their time in the academy as possible. There is also good support for the growing number of students with English as an additional language.
- Those who travel to colleges and other providers also behave well. The academy ensures that they are safe and well looked after through good communication with the other providers and by checking on how well students are doing.
- Attendance has improved significantly and is now in line with national averages. This is the result of strong messages about its importance, stated in simple terms consistently by all staff, and the success of some innovative and flexible approaches to the circumstances of individuals and groups of students.

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal and his senior staff show passion, determination and great commitment to making the academy serve the needs of students as well as it possibly can. The great majority of parents have confidence in the leadership of the academy.
- Leaders are ambitious for all students and demand the highest standards. Students are encouraged to move onto further education and to undertake further training or go to university. The achievements of past students are continually demonstrated to students who may otherwise not know how high they can aim.
- Many middle leaders relish their role and are good leaders of the teaching and learning in their areas. They feel strongly accountable to senior staff for standards that students achieve. They benefit from regular meetings which check their performance, share good practice and offer support. They are clear about how to make improvements and their priorities reflect their department's individual needs and match the academy's overall priorities.
- There is a strong and successful emphasis on improving the quality of teaching. Leaders monitor teaching closely. They make judgements about its quality based on a wide range of evidence. Individual teachers are supported to develop their classroom skills. Senior staff, who observed teaching alongside inspectors, made good judgements about lessons and showed good insight into the quality of the learning taking place.
- The performance of staff is managed very well. All staff have challenging targets and are supported to reach them through individual help and good training opportunities. Those who do not make sufficient progress in developing their teaching skills to a high level are not given pay increments. About a quarter of teachers are on the pay scale reserved for more experienced and capable staff; given the age profile and the quality of the teaching, this is in line with expectations.
- There is a good range of subjects on offer and they are chosen well to meet students' needs. There is a range of appropriately academic courses and also a number of work-related opportunities, such as the animal care courses and shorter courses for students with specific needs at local colleges. The achievement and welfare of students who attend courses off site are monitored and supported well through a range of strategies.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted very effectively. The performance of all groups of students is checked closely. The academy uses a range of different strategies to ensure that all can achieve well.
- The academy responded very positively and successfully to the recommendations made at the monitoring visit in October 2011. A range of innovative strategies were used to bring about improvements. For example, pupil premium funding is used to fund a minibus to collect students who would otherwise be persistently absent or late. This reduced the absence rate of this group from 28.4% in 2010/11 to 8.6% in 2011/12. Similarly, high levels of support for potentially vulnerable students, including those eligible for the pupil premium, have meant that exclusion rates have dropped, and everyone left with a qualification in 2011 and in 2012. The number of students who are not in education, employment or training after they leave is impressively small.
- The academy's development plan concentrates on exactly the right priorities. For example, it identifies the need to continue the momentum of driving up literacy and numeracy skills. There are strong links with local primary schools and the local college of further education, but the concentration on developing these specific skills consistently and intensively throughout every young person's education is not yet a strong aspect.
- Sussex Downs College, as the main sponsor, supports the work of the academy well. It supports more-able mathematicians at Key Stage 4, and assists with aspects of policy development. Sponsor representatives also play a very active part in the life of the academy by chairing the building development programme group and the curriculum and achievement committee of the governing body.
- **The governance of the academy:**
 - The governing body provides very good levels of challenge and support for senior staff in driving improvements in the academy. Governors are very well informed about the day-to-day

work of the academy, make accurate and perceptive judgements of its strengths and know where improvement needs to happen faster. They use performance data to compare how well the academy is doing relative to other schools locally and nationally. A new governor is already beginning to bring more rigour to this aspect of the governors' work. Governors oversee all performance management processes closely; they know about the quality of teaching in departments and ensure that good teaching is rewarded appropriately. They set challenging targets each year for the Principal and these are monitored regularly. The governing body's oversight of the academy's finances is rigorous and expert. For example, it ensures good value for money in the use of the pupil premium. Governors are just as thorough in ensuring that safeguarding policies and practices are of the highest standards. They undertake regular training as a part of their meetings and through attendance at local authority training courses. Governors know that the academy is providing a good education for its students, but are also well aware that improvements can be made.

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	136106
Local authority	n/a
Inspection number	399802

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	642
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marion Trew
Principal	Keith Pailthorpe
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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