

Wilmington Academy

Common Lane, Wilmington, DA2 7DR

Inspection dates

21–22 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	N/A
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The outstanding leadership of the two principals and senior leaders, including governors, has been instrumental in significantly raising students' achievement from very low to good.
- The gap between the performance of students who may be vulnerable and others has reduced.
- The majority of teachers are confident and skilled in their subject knowledge. They use this skill to inspire students to become confident learners.
- Staff are very proud about the impact of their work and the quality of the support they receive.
- A personalised approach to the curriculum, together with a range of engaging subjects and teaching that is securely good, means that students are making good progress in their learning. Challenging targets have been met and even higher targets set.
- Students' aspirations, attitudes and self-esteem are positive. They feel safe, behave well throughout the academy and get on well with each other and with their teachers.
- The management of teaching is rigorous; the quality of teaching is regularly and accurately checked by senior leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some more able students, particularly those in the sixth form, do not achieve as well as they should.
- Some students do not have the skills to study independently.
- Sixth form students are making much more rapid progress than last year because of good teaching and a more appropriate curriculum, but the sixth form still requires improvement because standards are not yet high enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons or part-lessons. A small number were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised the work in students’ books as well as listening to some students read.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, staff, including senior and middle managers, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Chief Executive Officer of the Leigh Academies Trust.
- Inspectors took account of the 21 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also scrutinised the 47 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documentation which included: the academy’s self-evaluation and plans for improvement; evidence about how teachers are set targets to improve students’ progress and records of observations of the quality of teaching; minutes of meetings of the governing body; the academy’s information about students’ progress over time; and records relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Kekshan Salaria, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Gill Whalley

Additional Inspector

Stephen Williams

Additional Inspector

Michael Elson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Wilmington Academy opened in September 2010. It is smaller than an average-sized secondary school.
- The Academy consists of two small schools, each with their own principal and assistant principals. The specialist subjects are business and enterprise and vocational studies. The academy is open six days a week. The construction of a new building is well under way and it is anticipated that it will open in November this year. The academy is sponsored by The Leigh Academies Trust, Kent County Council and the University of Greenwich. Sixth form education is provided in collaboration with The Leigh Technology Academy and Longfield Academy. The academy is non-selective, but operates in an area with grammar schools.
- Most students are of White British origin. A small number speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium and those eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible to free school meals, in the care of the local authority or from service families) is in line with the national average.
- A fifth of all students are disabled or have special educational needs, which is higher than seen nationally. The proportion of students supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also high.
- A small proportion of students attend alternative provision at MB Tree Care and Priory Mews Care Home to gain vocational qualifications.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enrich students' learning experience by:
 - ensuring that all teaching is consistently good
 - enable students to take more responsibility for their own learning by engaging them more in discussions and making them think for themselves more often
 - raising the level of challenge for more able students, particularly in the sixth form.
- Raise students' achievement in the sixth form so that significantly more students gain the higher grades at A-level.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the academy in Year 7 with attainment that is significantly below the national average. They achieve well during their time at the academy. The proportion of students achieving five GCSEs, including English and mathematics at grade C or above, has risen significantly since the academy opened and is broadly average.
- Many Year 11 students have already taken a number of examinations in English and mathematics; the results suggest that the academy is on track to exceed last year's results.
- The levels of attainment and progress of students who are supported by the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up premium funding are below those of their peers. Their average point scores are lower than those of other students in English; however, in 2012 this group of students achieved better in mathematics than their peers did nationally.
- The proportion of students achieving at the highest levels has risen, although senior leaders have correctly identified that there is further room for improvement, particularly in the sixth form, for example in the number of more able students gaining A*/A grades.
- Higher proportions of students make expected progress in English and mathematics than is the case nationally. The academy's information suggests shows that students in all year groups, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, those who receive their tuition via alternative providers and those who are learning English, are currently making good progress.
- The academy enters students early for some examinations, for example in mathematics. This is done when senior leaders assesses that it is in the students' best interests and does not depress achievement, particularly for the more able students.
- Sixth form students have varied starting points. Many achieved relatively low GCSE examination scores. In 2012, standards at A-level were below average and a large number of students who started the course in Year 12 did not continue to the full A-level examination. However, the majority of students are now making much better progress, although standards are still below average. The academy's data indicate students' achievement and retention rates have improved significantly as a result of a careful analysis of students' individual needs and by devising specific programmes to meet them. Discussions with students, and the inspection evidence, including scrutiny of students' workbooks, confirm this.
- Students enjoy their lessons and work hard because they are proud to be at the academy and confident that they will get the support they need if they have any difficulty learning. They know that their teachers want them to do well and respond by behaving and working hard. As one student commented, 'Teachers are very guiding; they know how to respond to your needs.'

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is almost always good with a growing amount of outstanding practice. The academy has some inspiring and creative teaching which has been instrumental in raising students' achievement.
- Students' progress is checked regularly by teachers. They use this information to plan work at the right level of difficulty for different ranges of students, allowing them to learn well and make good progress.
- The majority of teachers set short time limits for learning tasks to be completed. This helps students to work at a brisk pace. It also enables teachers to check and review learning before moving on the next stages.
- Teachers make clear what students will be learning in lessons. Teachers routinely draw students' attention to the levels or grades that they are working at and the targets they are aiming towards. Students say that their aspirations have been raised as a result.

- Sometimes, students are not given opportunities to manage their own learning; on these occasions, teachers overly direct lessons, which sometimes slows the pace of learning. As a result, students do not have sufficient time to work on their own, think for themselves and become confident in their learning.
- Some of the more able students are not stimulated enough in their learning because some teachers do not take account of the spread of ability in each class to challenge each student effectively.
- Reading is promoted very well across the academy. Students say they are very pleased with the selection of books they have to choose from and are clear about how much they enjoy reading.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are polite, courteous and very friendly; their behaviour in lessons and around the site does them great credit. Staff and students who have been at the school for some time recognise and appreciate the significant improvement in students' behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Students enjoy being at the academy and appreciate the good relationships they have with staff. Students feel safe and secure and say that incidents of bullying are rare and, when they occur, are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- The majority of the students clearly understand how to identify and manage risk and keep safe, for instance on social networking sites. They are keen to learn. However, where teaching is not strong, students occasionally become inattentive and passive and the pace of learning slows.
- The academy's management of behaviour, including helping students to be more self-disciplined, has resulted in a significant reduction in exclusions. Responses from parents and staff are positive about most aspects of the academy.
- Attendance has been rising since the academy opened and is now broadly in line with the national average. The number of students who miss school regularly has fallen.
- Working relationships between staff and students are supportive and good natured. The atmosphere around the academy is calm and orderly, despite the extensive building work. A high staff presence at breaks and lunchtimes helps to sustain this situation.
- The positive promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a key factor in their improving attendance and good behaviour. Students report that the vertical tutor groups strengthen links between different year groups and help them reflect on topical moral and social issues.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Senior leaders set exceptionally high expectations of both staff and students. The sense of teamwork and pride in the academy is outstanding, with leaders and managers, including governors, continually aiming for excellence.
- Middle leadership is also extremely strong. Departmental and pastoral leaders have a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility.
- The academy takes good steps to promote equality of opportunity appropriately. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated by students or staff. This is reflected in the strong emphasis that senior leaders place on narrowing the achievement gap between vulnerable students and their peers.
- The academy's self-evaluation is accurate and defines appropriate priorities for improvement and gives clear guidance on how to achieve them.
- The academy's management of the quality of teaching is systematic and rigorous. Teaching is regularly and accurately checked by senior leaders, and the results are shared with the governing body. Clear links are made between the quality of teaching and the academy's performance management process, resulting in appropriate targets and relevant training and coaching for staff. The process ensures that student achievement and teachers' pay progression

are inextricably linked.

- Staff feel valued, listened to and able to influence the school's direction. They recognise and appreciate the many opportunities for training and professional development; a number of staff at the start of their careers praised the high quality of their induction.
- The curriculum is broad and reviewed regularly to meet the needs of students. Additional vocational courses have been developed, such as horticulture, leading to increased student enjoyment and participation and strengthening links to the community. Opportunities have been explicitly developed for students to gain experience of further and higher education, including establishing links with institutions such as Hadlow College and nearby universities. This raises students' aspirations, especially for those who may be considering undergraduate studies for the first time. Additionally, students are able to participate in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good, which has led to rapid improvements in teaching. Close collaboration with academies within the chain is ensuring that students in the sixth form have a wide range of courses to choose from.
- There was a low response to the Parent View online survey. However, large numbers of parents and carers attend parents' evenings and senior leaders conduct regular surveys to understand their views and make them feel involved.
- Arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. All staff receive regular safeguarding training appropriate to their levels of responsibility.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors work very closely with senior leaders on the academy's regular self-evaluation of its work. As a result, they have an accurate and insightful view of current strengths and areas for development. They check carefully the management of the academy's performance and ensure there are strong links to both classroom performance and the payment of salaries. Governors regularly update their skills and knowledge and have a clear understanding of performance data. They ensure that additional funding provided through the pupil and Year 7 catch-up premium is used to support students known to be eligible for free school meals and consequently gaps have been narrowed. They check that additional teaching sessions and further learning opportunities for these students successfully close any gaps in their performance when compared to their peers nationally. Governors help make certain that all students do equally well. They carefully monitor arrangements for safeguarding to ensure that statutory requirements are met.

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	136205
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	399798

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	840
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Findlay
Principals	Mark Poulter and Tracey Trusler
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01322 272111
Fax number	N/A
Email address	admin@wilmingtonacademy.org.uk

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