

# Stewards Academy

Parnall Road, Harlow, CM18 7NQ

**Inspection dates** 5–6 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- Students achieve well. They reach average standards by the end of Year 11. This represents good progress in relation to their starting points which are below and sometimes well below average. The development of students' literacy skills is particularly good.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good. Students who are in the early stages of learning English also make good progress.
- In an increasing number of lessons, teaching is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations and students respond well to the encouragement provided in lessons.
- The academy makes effective use of the pupil premium to help eligible students. This has narrowed the gap in their attainment with their classmates
- Behaviour is exemplary. Students have very positive attitudes towards learning and each other. They feel safe, attend regularly and are extremely proud to belong to a community they refer to as a family.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. The academy places great importance on this feature of their education. They are articulate, caring and well-adjusted young people who can offer much to British society.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the academy's strengths and remaining needs. Determined actions have improved teaching and raised standards since the academy opened.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Questioning does not challenge all students to think and learn at the highest levels of which they are capable.
- In a few lessons, teachers do not check that all students understand their work and this reduces the progress made by some.
- Sometimes teachers talk for too long and this leaves less time for all students to learn and work as well as they should.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 38 lessons taught by 37 teachers. Six were joint observations carried out with senior leaders.
- Inspectors carried out a number of shorter visits to tutorial periods when literacy and numeracy sessions were observed. They also visited an assembly.
- Meetings were held with students, senior leaders, subject leaders, members of the governing body and the Ethnic Minority Pupil Voice Group.
- Inspectors studied a number of documents including the academy's self-evaluation form, improvement plans, department reviews, policies and assessment information.
- During lesson observations inspectors scrutinised student work.
- Inspectors took account of 73 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Responses to questionnaires completed by 137 staff were studied. Inspectors also received correspondence from a parent and a student.

## Inspection team

David Turner, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Keith Brown	Additional Inspector
Angela Skinner	Additional Inspector
Karen Roche	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Stewards Academy is an average-sized secondary school.
- The school converted to become an academy school in October 2011. When its predecessor school, Stewards School (science specialist college), was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.
- The academy has specialist status for science.
- There has been one set of published examination results for the academy since it opened.
- The great majority of students are of White British heritage while others come from several minority ethnic groups. The number of students who speak English as an additional language is below average but rising, particularly among those who are from Eastern Europe.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. This additional funding is allocated by the government for students looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs receiving support through school action is average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- A very few students are taught in alternative provision away from the academy via the HEC Study Centre, Essex Youth Service, Construction Training Partnership Ltd, Paringdon Sports Club, The Youth Cafe and Green Farm Stables.
- The academy offers a breakfast club which is the responsibility of the governing body.
- The academy meets current government floor standards, which are the minimum expected for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Make more teaching outstanding in order to accelerate student achievement by:
  - using more demanding questions to challenge all students to think more deeply and develop their learning as far as possible.
  - teachers checking that students have understood their work before moving on to the next activity.
  - making the best use of learning time, by teachers avoiding talking for too long.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the academy with knowledge and skills below and sometimes well below average. They make good progress so that by the end of Year 11, their attainment is broadly average. Robust evidence seen at the time of the inspection indicates standards are likely to rise sharply this year.
- Students' progress in English has improved quickly because of the focus on improving literacy standards. They speak, listen and write with increasing success and confidence because they are well supported to do so across different subjects. Reading is taught well and there are opportunities for students to develop good reading habits.
- Students' results in mathematics were below the national average in 2012 but show clear improvement this year. In lessons and tutorial time, teaching has improved pupils' confidence when tackling areas including problem-solving, probabilities and real-life use of mathematics.
- In 2012, the academy entered a small proportion of students early for GCSE mathematics. Around half of them benefited from this policy. Evidence seen by inspectors indicates early entry has not had a negative impact on the most able students.
- Achievement in the sciences (the academy's specialism) is now good. Some results were below average in 2012 but better teaching of scientific concepts, processes and skills has resulted in increased rates of progress.
- Students at the early stages of learning to speak English are making good progress because they are supported to join classes as quickly as possible with high quality language support and well-planned teaching.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar good progress to other students because their needs are carefully assessed and they are closely supported in lessons. Priority has been given to the improvement of their reading and writing skills. As a result, they are more confident learners.
- Progress of Year 7 students eligible for additional help with reading as part of the government's catch-up premium is good and in some cases exceptional. Effective teaching helps them make correct use of phonics (the sounds that letters and words make). They now read more successfully and confidently.
- The achievement of students who are educated off-site in alternative provision is good. Their attendance, progress and welfare are carefully monitored.
- Students supported by pupil-premium funding make good progress because the funding is targeted accurately. They are supported to attend school regularly and teaching is organised into smaller classes. In 2012, the gaps between their attainment and other students was around four terms behind in English and five terms in mathematics. These gaps have narrowed this year.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- Most teaching is good and the proportion which is outstanding has increased. There are few examples of teaching which requires improvement and no inadequate teaching was seen during the inspection. Over time, consistently good teaching is helping students to achieve well.
- Inspectors and senior staff visited a number of lessons together and were in agreement about the quality of teaching seen. The academy's approach to checking the quality of teaching is accurate.
- In the best lessons, positive relationships allow teachers to set demanding expectations for all students, who are encouraged to try their hardest. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use assessment information to plan activities which capture students' interest and are closely matched to their needs. Teachers keep a careful check on how well students understand work before changing activities.
- In most lessons, teachers make good use of time and allow students the opportunity to extend their learning. Questioning is challenging and used to deepen students' understanding. A good example was in a Year 7 history lesson about the slave trade where questioning was clearly matched to the needs of individual students.
- Occasionally, however, teaching is not demanding enough and opportunities are missed to raise the level of thinking through the high quality questioning seen in the best lessons. In a few lessons, teachers talk for too long. This prevents outstanding learning because students have less time to learn actively and apply their knowledge and skills.
- Marking of students' work is consistently helpful and effective. Comments by teachers clearly guide students on how to improve and they are expected to respond to this advice. As a result, students know what their next steps should be and how to take them.
- Teaching of reading and writing is a strength across the academy. Students are encouraged to use a good vocabulary and produce well-written work. In a successful Year 10 English lesson, students used impressive language to compare lead characters from John Steinbeck's novel, 'Of Mice and Men.' In a Year 7 lesson, students made exceptional progress in their understanding of phonics owing to outstanding teaching.
- The quality of teaching for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good because work is set at the correct level and they are closely supported by teaching assistants.
- Students who are in the early stage of learning English are supported by a specialist, well-qualified teacher. As a result they make good progress.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- The attitudes and behaviour of students are exemplary because of the great importance the academy places on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Working with their teachers, they have created an exceptionally safe, caring and supportive community of which they are very proud to belong.
- Students come from a wide range of backgrounds. They are united in their respect for one another and their appreciation of difference. All students refer to the academy as a 'family

community' and they are enthusiastic in their contribution.

- Students take up many leadership roles and older students become outstanding mentors for younger members of the academy, the newly arrived and those from abroad. An outstanding example is the Ethnic Minority Pupil Voice Group which has created an exceptional level of understanding between students of different backgrounds.
- The conduct of students in lessons is exemplary because of the high aspirations and expectations set by all staff. They are punctual, well-equipped, eager to learn and enjoy the responsibilities and demands offered by the best teaching. They work exceptionally well with each other and respect their teachers.
- Behaviour around the academy is also outstanding. Students are very courteous and polite to each other and feel exceptionally safe. There are very few instances of bullying and students are totally confident they will be tackled swiftly. They know that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Parents who responded to Parent View agreed that behaviour and safety are strengths of the school. Inspectors also received additional contact from a parent who recorded their total confidence in the academy.
- Students are punctual and attend well. Since the academy opened, attendance has been above average and lateness has fallen dramatically. Attendance continues to rise and persistent absence has reduced significantly. Very effective procedures are in place to ensure higher attendance. The number of students excluded from school is also below national figures and continues to fall.
- Teachers and other staff lead by example and promote the positive ethos of the academy at all times. This consistent approach means very high expectations are constantly reinforced and drive student motivation.
- The breakfast club provided is well-run and organised. It helps working families and is assisting in the work to improve attendance and punctuality still further.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- Guided by a strong headteacher, leaders have a clear understanding of the education required to help students succeed both academically and personally. A highly co-operative community has been set up with staff and students caring for each other. This is demonstrated by the very strong and supportive 'family' which students refer to and which motivates them to behave so well and enjoy learning so much. The academy's promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional.
- Students are well prepared for life in modern British society. They understand diversity and have links with other students across four different continents. They also have a deep respect for British heritage and remember the sacrifices made for them by others including the armed forces.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have a realistic view of the academy's strengths and areas for development. They are united and determined to improve teaching and continue to raise the achievement of students.

- Leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching is accurate and good quality support and training delivered to staff has ensured no inadequate teaching remains so that most is now good or better.
- The management of staff performance is well planned and carefully set out across each school year. Effective use is made of the Teachers' Standards and there is a clear link between successful performance and progression of pay. Teachers are held to account for student progress and the quality of teaching
- Subject leaders work as an effective team which shares the ambitions of the headteacher and senior staff. They set high expectations for their departments, carry out successful reviews of teaching and carefully check on the progress of students to prevent them falling behind.
- Improvement plans are well matched to the findings of reviews and teaching observations. They are subject to regular checks by leaders who look closely to see how well they are working.
- Since opening, the academy has offered students a broad, balanced and more demanding range of subjects which meet their needs well. Leaders have organised well-matched learning opportunities on different pathways for all students, including new arrivals from abroad, disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Students are also offered a very wide choice of activities before and after school. This promotes equal opportunities extremely well.
- Safeguarding procedures meet all statutory requirements and levels of care and support are important strengths of the school. They have helped make behaviour and safety outstanding.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors play a full role as part of the academy community and this gives them a good understanding of the quality of education students receive. They are involved in reviews of teaching, literacy and regularly check the progress of school improvement work. They also have an effective understanding of performance data. As a result, they have a clear view of what still needs to improve and hold leaders of the academy to account. They are aware of how the academy tackles underperformance and rewards good quality teaching. Governors ensure legal requirements such as students' safeguarding are met fully. They work effectively with leaders to ensure pupil premium funding improves the achievement and attainment of the students it is intended for.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137552
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	413407

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1013
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jeff Tarling
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rhonda Murthar
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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