

York Road Junior Academy and Language Unit

York Road, Dartford, Kent, DA1 1SQ

Inspection dates 16–17 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires Improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires Improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires Improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2013 was well below the national average and their progress was slow.
- Although improvements have been made and many pupils are now making better progress, this has not been sustained for a significant period of time.
- There is not enough teaching that is good or outstanding to secure good achievement across the whole school for all pupils.
- Expectations are not always high enough, especially for the most able pupils and so these pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable.
- Where pupils are taught in ability sets, work is often not adjusted to meet the needs of different groups of pupils within each set.
- The marking of pupils' work in Years 3 and 4 does not match the high standard set in Years 5 and 6. This slows the progress of pupils because they do not always know what they need to do to improve.

The school has the following strengths

- The provision for pupils in the language unit is good and pupils make good progress.
- The dynamic principal has taken concerted and effective actions to improve behaviour and promote better progress in lessons. She has been well supported both by senior leaders and the Academy Trust. They have well-formulated plans to make further improvements.
- The principal and other senior leaders have been relentless in their pursuit of good behaviour. As a consequence of their determination, behaviour has dramatically improved and is now good. This improvement is recognised by parents, pupils, staff and members of the Academy Trust.
- Pupils are unfailingly courteous. They are proud to come to school and enjoy their lessons. Safety arrangements are well organised and this helps pupils to feel safe at school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 23 lessons or parts of lessons, including four joint observations with the principal. They observed an assembly, led by the principal. Additionally, inspectors listened to a group of pupils read, talked to pupils about their work and examined work in books.
- Discussions were held with the principal, the assistant principal, other staff with key leadership responsibilities, representatives from the Academy Trust and a group of pupils.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school at lunchtimes and break times and looked at a range of documents, including its own checks on performance, its improvement plan, records of pupils' progress, monitoring information on the quality of teaching and safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors took account of the 17 responses to the online Parent View survey as well as the 117 responses to the survey undertaken by the school in October 2013. The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with one parent. Inspectors also looked at the 19 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Jill Thewlis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kate Robertson

Additional Inspector

Josephine Lewis

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- York Road Junior Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 April 2012. When its predecessor school, York Road Junior School was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate.
- The school is larger than the average sized junior academy. The numbers on roll are increasing.
- There is a specialist unit which caters for pupils with speech and language needs on the school site. This unit admits pupils from Reception up to Year 6 from across North Kent. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, although many other ethnic groups are represented.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action, at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are all above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium, (additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, in the care of the local authority or from service families), is also above the national average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school provides a daily breakfast and after-school club.
- The principal was appointed in September 2013, having previously been head of school under the guidance of an executive headteacher. There have been several changes in staffing since the school converted to an academy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all teaching is consistently good, and more is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that the good marking seen in Year 5 and Year 6 is consistently applied across the whole school so that pupils know what they have to do to improve
 - ensuring that within the setting arrangements, work is planned to match the needs of different groups of pupils, especially the most able.
- Raise standards and ensure that all pupils make rapid progress to catch up by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations for what all pupils can achieve, and especially for those of above average ability, and that their learning is extended through work that is challenging.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because not all pupils and groups of pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups, make enough progress. The attainment of pupils in test results at the end of Year 6 in 2013 was significantly below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- From low starting points at the beginning of Year 3, progress is inconsistent. Senior leaders have acted quickly to improve the progress of pupils currently in the school and the additional support put in place is effective. Work seen in books and assessments by teachers, show that pupils are now making much better progress than before.
- The most able pupils in the school do not make good progress because the work they are given is not hard enough.
- Pupils are developing their skills in reading and are enthusiastic about the progress they are making. They like the new library scheme for borrowing books and this, along with class novels, is helping to raise the profile of reading within the school. Progress in reading is beginning to improve, but as many of the initiatives are relatively new it is too early to see their full impact.
- Pupils in the language unit make good progress from very low starting points because the needs of the pupils are well met.
- Support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is quickly put in place and is sharply focused. Pupils are now making better progress than they did previously but this is not as good as for those in the language unit.
- In the 2013 national tests pupils eligible for pupil premium funding did not do as well as their peers. Results show that they were eight months behind in mathematics, six months behind in writing and less than three months behind in reading. Pupils eligible for pupil premium funding enter York Road at the end of Year 2 with attainment below that of their peers. The progress these pupils are making is now improving because the school's leaders have acted swiftly to put in additional support. As a result, progress is now broadly in line with, and sometimes better than, that of other pupils.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is inconsistent across the school. There is good teaching and some that is outstanding; however, over time, teaching has not been good enough to ensure that achievement is good.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations, especially for the more able pupils. As a result, these pupils do not make rapid progress. Pupils are put into ability sets for English and mathematics. In some of these lessons, not enough account is taken of the range of ability of the pupils. Here, the same work is given to all pupils and as a result some pupils find it too easy while others find it too hard.
- All teachers mark pupils' work, but the quality is inconsistent. The marking in Year 5 and in Year 6 is more detailed than that found in Year 3 and Year 4 and consequently, older pupils are able to speak lucidly about their progress and comment on their understanding. The comparative lack of detail in Years 3 and 4 is holding back progress because pupils are not clear enough about what they need to do to improve their work.
- In the best lessons, for example in a Years 5/6 set, pupils are able to develop skills and understanding in a supportive environment. Teachers motivate and challenge pupils through careful questioning, adapt lesson plans to take account of the progress of the pupils and purposefully intervene when necessary. In these lessons, progress is rapid.
- Teaching in the language unit is good. Appropriate, practical resources are used to support the learning of pupils and teachers use good questioning techniques to promote understanding.

Consequently, pupils in the language unit are making good progress.

- In some lessons, pupils are given opportunities to apply their recently acquired skills. For example, in a writing lesson, pupils wrote instructions before following them to make sandwiches. This helped pupils understand the purpose of the writing and good progress was made.
- Teaching assistants are usually used effectively within classrooms. They have positive relationships with pupils and teachers. In the best lessons, they are given clear guidance by teachers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good both in the main school and in the language unit. It is not yet outstanding because in a few lessons where pupils are not motivated, engaged or challenged, pupils fiddle with equipment, or chat. Behaviour is good because senior leaders have introduced a behaviour code which is rigorously applied by all staff. As a result, behaviour is now good. Pupils are smart, punctual and respectful of the school's behaviour code.
- Pupils with challenging behaviour are well managed. A range of effective strategies have been implemented to support these pupils.
- Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in the improved attendance since September. One pupil said: 'I just like coming to school; it's fun!'
- Behaviour is good in all areas of the school; pupils show equal respect to all members of staff.
- Behaviour in the playground, although boisterous, was good. Pupils were able to play collaboratively, devising their own games.
- Parents are generally positive about the school. Most agree that their children are safe and happy.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure, both in the main school and in the language unit, is good. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and the site is secure.
- Pupils say they feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They know about different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying, and say there is no bullying in school. Pupils know the difference between an argument and sustained bullying.
- Breakfast club provides a safe start to the school day for those who attend.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders have moved rapidly and effectively in beginning to address the weaknesses in the school. The recently appointed principal is well supported by the Academy Trust in her drive to raise standards. Inadequate teaching has now been eradicated and pupils' behaviour has improved considerably. Achievement is also improving, but more time is needed to see the results of the strategies which have been put in place.
- There is a strong focus on improving teaching and learning. The schools within the Trust work well together to provide guidance and support for all teachers. They develop their skills through a mixture of support, coaching and external training. The effectiveness of this is evident in the improved progress seen since September.
- The performance of teaching is rigorously checked and where weaknesses are identified, appropriate and effective support is given. Teachers are fully aware that they are accountable for the progress pupils make and that this is linked to pay and salary progression.
- Leaders recognised that the previous method of tracking pupils' progress was not good enough and have recently introduced a new system which aims to keep a much closer eye on how well pupils are doing.

- Middle leaders are relatively new to the school but they are beginning to have a positive impact, particularly in the more rapid progress seen in Year 5 and Year 6.
 - The language unit is well led and managed by the assistant principal.
 - The school ensures that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum and learn without fear of discrimination. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of enrichment and sporting activities that are popular with pupils.
 - Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. The school has a shared vision, which all subscribe to and which underpins all actions of the school. Assemblies support the curriculum by raising awareness of other cultures.
 - The primary sport funding is well used to increase participation in sport. The funding supports specialist coaches, greater participation in competitive sport, additional equipment and the enhancement of staff skills in the longer term.
 - Senior leaders recognise that not all parents are fully engaged with the work of the school and they have drawn up, and begun to implement, plans to improve this. Members of the Academy Trust and its family of schools provide strong support for the school.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The Academy Trust is committed to the improvement of the school and challenges leaders appropriately. It monitors performance rigorously and is kept well informed about all aspects of the school's work, including teaching quality. Monthly financial reports are submitted and all expenditure is checked. The Trust is clear about the progress of all pupils, including those eligible for the pupil premium and knows that, in the past, pupils have not made the progress they should. Consequently, it is supporting actions to address this. The Trust is aware of how the sport funding has been allocated and the impact it is having on the improved participation in sport. Performance management is rigorous; all staff are clear about the link between their teaching performance and their pay. There are greater expectations for those members of staff on higher pay scales.
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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	118253
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	399909

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	329
Appropriate authority	The Academy Trust Executive Board
Chair	Anne Baritte
Principal	Caroline Sadler
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01322224453
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