

The High Weald Academy

Anglely Road, Cranbrook, Kent, TN17 2PJ

Inspection dates 3–4 July 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Students' achievement requires improvement across the academy. For example, students' achievement in both English and mathematics has not been good enough since 2012, when the academy opened.
- Students have not always made the progress expected of them and the proportion making better than expected progress has been below average.
- Marking, while improving, is inconsistent across the academy. Students do not always receive the necessary advice on how to improve their work.
- Although levels of progress and achievement in the core subjects are improving each year, in mathematics, students are not yet making expected progress.
- Students' achievement is too variable between subjects and between groups of students. Boys make less progress than girls.
- Changes introduced by academy leaders have not yet led to sustained improvements in achievement in all years.
- Students' attendance is below national levels. Students are not always sufficiently motivated to help ensure their achievement is good. Not all students have met the school's expectations for good behaviour.

The school has the following strengths

- Achievement is improving. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is increasing.
- The principal designate, well supported by other staff, has introduced initiatives that are leading to better teaching.
- Students feel safe in the academy and there is very little bullying.
- The principal, principal designate, managers and governors have a clear understanding of the issues that need tackling to improve students' achievement. They are taking many of the right actions to help improve the school's effectiveness.

Information about this inspection

- By mutual agreement, the inspection process was managed by the principal designate with minimal involvement of the current principal.
- The academy starts the new timetable at the end of June and as a result there were no Year 7 students in the academy. In addition, there was no sixth form teaching because of a planned programme of extra-curricular activities.
- As a result of some buildings being condemned as unfit for purpose, the academy has had to relocate staff, students and subjects in any available classrooms. Consequently, subject departments are scattered around the school site, leading to difficulties in their management.
- Inspectors reviewed many documents, including those relating to students' attainment, progress, behaviour and safeguarding.
- The views of parents were taken into account, including those of 21 parents and carers who completed the Ofsted online Parent View.
- The views of 35 staff who completed a questionnaire were analysed and taken into account.
- Meetings were held with staff, groups of students and members of the Brook Learning Trust and the governing body as well as the local authority representative.

Inspection team

Moazam Parvez, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Anne Turner

Additional Inspector

John McAteer

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy opened in September 2012 and is sponsored by Brook Learning Trust. When its predecessor school, The Angley School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- The current principal is retiring at the end of the year and, through mutual agreement, the principal designate has been co-leading and managing the academy since April 2014 in order to ensure a smooth transition in September.
- The High Weald Academy is smaller than most secondary schools.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds and the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The academy has a working farm on site which contributes to the life of the school as well as the local community.
- The High Weald is in an area where there is selective education at ages 11 and 13, which means some students leave at the end of Year 8 to attend selective schools.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs supported at school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- Student numbers are declining. Key Stage 3 numbers are significantly smaller than in Key Stage 4. As a result, staffing has been reduced due to the falling student roll.
- There are a very small number of students who attend training one day a week with Challenger Troop organised through the Territorial Army.
- There have been many staffing changes since the academy opened, including a restructuring of the senior leadership team.
- Last year, the academy did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve standards of achievement by:
 - ensuring that all groups of students make more rapid progress in mathematics and English by extending the approaches used to improve standards in Key Stage 4 to all years
 - reducing the differences in progress between groups of students and, in particular, increasing the rate of progress being made by boys
 - ensuring that teachers' marking and guidance gives students clear advice on how to improve their work, and that teachers ensure students use this information effectively.
- Promote students' personal development and behaviour by:
 - working closely with the students and their families to develop ways of improving attendance, particularly for girls
 - raising aspirations and embedding recently introduced changes to further promote a desire for learning and good behaviour amongst all students.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students enter Year 7 with well below average attainment in English and mathematics. By the time they leave, the percentage of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grade A* to C including English and mathematics, although improving, remains below average. As a result, students' achievement requires improvement.
- Students' attainment and progress are not consistent. Boys make less progress than girls. There is too much variation in the progress students make in different subjects.
- The proportion of students achieving grades A* and A was well below average in 2013, demonstrating that the achievement of the most able requires improvement. The academy's internal data suggests that this is likely to be the same this year.
- Achievement in the sixth form, although improving, is inconsistent. Students join the sixth form with below average qualifications and attainment at AS level is low. However, students following the vocational courses do better.
- The academy has implemented successful strategies to improve standards in Key Stage 4. Students in the current Year 11 are on course to achieve significantly higher attainment at GCSE level than those who left the academy in 2013. This is supported by results of students entered early for their GCSE examination in mathematics and English. However, these strategies are not yet used in all year groups.
- Recent changes to the academy's checks on students' progress are ensuring that the progress of all groups of students is monitored more closely. This is helping the academy to plan extra support where needed in order to raise achievement.
- Additional funding for students in Years 7 and 8 who need help to catch up with their peers in English and mathematics provides a variety of effective support. As a result, these students are making good progress in their literacy and numeracy, and some are making very rapid progress in reading.
- Students known to be eligible for additional funding were about half a grade lower in English and nearly one and a half grades lower in mathematics than their peers in 2013. Also the proportion achieving five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics was 12% lower than that of other students. However, as a result of additional support, the performance of these students is improving this year.
- Opportunities are provided in the sixth form to retake English and mathematics GCSEs at several points during the course, enabling students to persist until they succeed.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- As a result of recent changes introduced by the principal designate and the Brook Learning Trust, the quality of teaching is improving, but is not consistently good. It is too early for the improvements to have an impact on students' achievement. Teaching therefore requires improvement.
- Teachers' lesson planning usually takes account of what students have already learned and of what is needed to allow them to make continued progress. However, work provided for the most able students does not ensure that they have the level of challenge required to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable.
- The focus on improving the quality of teachers' marking is working, but inconsistencies still exist. Most marking gives students clear advice on how they can improve their work. However, there are occasions when marking is cursory. There is little guidance to students on how they can aim for higher standards in their work.
- Through the introduction of 'grab files', teachers now check the progress of different groups of students more effectively, including those who are eligible for additional funding. This is helping

to increase students' progress.

- In a physical education lesson, students applied their numeracy skills very effectively to work out their average speed over a number of activities and then to work out how many laps of the running track they could complete in a given time.
- The academy monitors closely the small numbers of students who attend off-site provision, to ensure they are making good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. The principal designate, supported by the Brook Learning Trust, has introduced a new behaviour policy to tackle past poor behaviour. It highlights rewards as well as sanctions. Students' behaviour has improved, but this is at an early stage. It has not yet fully influenced students' achievement. Students do not yet have consistently high aspirations or desire for learning.
- Students are usually courteous to each other and towards their teachers. They are helpful and welcoming to visitors to the academy.
- Students are proud of their academy and were clear on the positive impact of changes since the arrival of the principal designate. They described the academy as a 'very, very friendly school', also as 'an amazing school' and as a 'tight-knit community.'
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Parents and staff agree there is little bullying and that any which occurs is dealt with effectively. The students were clear that bullying was not an issue in the academy and the academy's records confirm this. Students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and are aware of how to use the internet safely.
- Students value the opportunities they have to take responsibility, for example as 'reading buddies' and as officials within the house system. They enjoy being in tutor groups in which sixth formers play a significant role supporting tutors and younger students.
- Although improving, attendance is still below average and a small minority of students do not attend regularly. Attendance is particularly low amongst girls and students known to be eligible for additional funded support. Punctuality has improved. Very few students are late to lessons.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Good leadership from the committed and well-informed principal designate, supported by the Brook Learning Trust, has led to significant improvements in the skills and expertise of middle leaders. Staff are now more answerable for their actions and a shared vision is helping to drive improvement.
- However, it is too early to see the full impact of this support. Since the academy opened, students' achievement, the quality of teaching and aspects of students' behaviour have not been typically good. Leadership and management, therefore, require improvement.
- Senior staff assess teachers' performance more rigorously and teachers only progress up the pay scale if they prove to be effective in raising students' achievement. However, it is too early for these measures to impact on students' progress.
- Middle leaders (those responsible for year groups, aspects or subjects) speak positively of the senior leadership team. They know that students' attainment and progress must improve. They believe target setting for teachers is now more robust and that there are better training opportunities for staff at all levels of experience.
- Leaders are working well to improve outcomes for students eligible for additional funding. There are frequent checks on the progress of these students, so ensuring the appropriate provision and support is in place. This is enabling them to catch up with their peers, particularly in the lower years.

- Leadership in the sixth form now places more emphasis on supporting sixth-form students in their subject choices, although students' achievement has not been consistently good. Students have clearer pathways from Year 11 to help support their achievement and progress.
 - Staff say they are proud to work at the academy. They believe it has improved considerably recently due to the effective leadership of the principal designate.
 - The students are also aware of the impact of the recent changes in the academy. One student commented that 'the teachers really care about us and they don't do it just for the money.' Another said, 'This is a great school, teachers do a great job and we get a great education.' Discrimination is not tolerated and all students have equal opportunities to succeed.
 - The range of subjects taught promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the wide range of opportunities on offer in the academy. These include the young farmers club and the gardeners' club as well as the Duke of Edinburgh Award and World Challenge. The academy has a well-established link with a school in Malawi which helps to develop students' multicultural awareness.
 - The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. All required policies and procedures are in place and staff and governors receive regular appropriate training.
 - Although High Weald is a sponsored academy, the local authority still provides it with useful support in seeking ways to help students make better progress and to achieve well.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The trust partners and the governors have developed an accurate view of the academy's strengths and areas for development. Governors and trustees monitor the school's performance information increasingly closely, comparing it to the performance of similar schools nationally and locally. They ensure that the principal, principal designate and senior staff are held to account for their actions. They increasingly support and challenge school leaders to bring about improvement. Governors monitor spending more carefully so that they can be sure that it is leading to improved achievement for students.
 - The governing body has an increasingly better understanding of teachers' performance and of how this is used to determine pay. Governors are now fully involved in the decisions to award pay rises. They fully meet their statutory responsibilities, such as keeping students safe.
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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	138236
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	426385

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	557
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Garner
Principal	Robert Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	21–22 September 2011
Telephone number	01580 712754
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