

Cornwallis Academy

Hubbards Lane, Linton, Maidstone, ME17 4HX

Inspection dates

11–12 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 across a range of academic and work-related subjects from below-average starting points in Year 7. There is a strong trend of improvement in GCSE mathematics and science.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress because they are given effective support and are helped to develop confidence in their own abilities.
- Students develop their learning skills well, using information and communication technology with interest and independence.
- Behaviour is good and pupils say that they feel safe and enjoy coming to the academy.
- Teaching is good because pupils are helped well to understand what is expected of them in lessons.
- Senior managers have a clear focus on tracking students' progress, and the importance of this is understood well by staff. This is helping to improve achievement.
- The monitoring of teaching is accurate, training needs are identified clearly and support for staff is well planned.
- The support and challenge offered by the governing body and the Academy Trust is effective and well targeted.
- The sixth form is good. It offers an increasingly wide choice of subjects to its students, who are making good progress. Teaching and learning are good and improving.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes, teachers do not give students time to think about and improve their marked work so that they can make even better progress.
- Teachers do not always ask students challenging questions that make them think harder about their work.
- Some students do not have challenging enough targets in mathematics and science, and the impact of actions to improve their work is not checked closely enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 50 lessons, including joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors made short visits to other lessons, observed school assemblies and scrutinised students' work.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, the Principal and other members of the senior leadership team, heads of subject departments, teachers, members of the governing body, and a representative of the Academy Trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation, school development plans, behaviour records, safeguarding records, governing body documents, and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- Inspectors also considered the views expressed in the 42 questionnaires returned by school staff, together with the 89 responses submitted by parents to the online Parent View survey.

Inspection team

Roger Waddingham, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Helen Neal	Additional Inspector
Joanna Jones	Additional Inspector
Keith Brown	Additional Inspector
Jackie Jackson-Smith	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school moved into new purpose-built accommodation in September 2011.
- It is part of the Future Schools Trust, together with another secondary academy and a primary school.
- The academy is non selective and students come from a wide geographical area.
- Applications to Year 7 are much greater than the school's capacity and the sixth form is also very popular.
- Most students are of White British heritage, with a small proportion from a range of minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below average. This additional funding is allocated by the government for students looked after by the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service personnel.
- The proportion of students receiving extra support through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students by the end of Year 11.
- A very small number of students receive behaviour support at Cedars Pupil Referral Unit, or work-related training at Kingsreach Skills Centre; very few are off-site the whole time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Promote consistently outstanding progress in all lessons is by making sure that teachers regularly:
 - use questions that challenge students to explain their ideas
 - require students to think about and respond to the improvement points made when their written work is marked.
- Further raise standards in mathematics and science by:
 - setting appropriately challenging targets for all students
 - checking carefully the impact of actions to improve students' progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The proportion of students achieving five good passes at GCSE has been average over the past three years. This represents good achievement because students have lower than average starting points on entry to the academy. The academy has well-founded evidence that this year's GCSE results will be above the national average.
- The proportion of students making good progress in English is consistently high. Progress in mathematics and science was below average last year. Actions to improve management and teaching in these subjects have resulted in current students' progress improving rapidly in both Years 10 and 11.
- In previous years, students have been entered early for GCSE examinations in mathematics and science, with lower than expected results, particularly for more-able students. The entry policy has now been altered and only a few carefully selected students are entered early. The progress of these students is good.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress overall and some make outstanding progress. Staff monitor their progress well and match tasks well to their needs in lessons. They receive well-targeted support when they join the academy, developing their confidence in writing very well because of the ready access they have to information and communication technology resources.
- Students supported by the pupil premium make good progress because the academy employs a very good range of specialist staff to monitor and support these students individually. Also, access to clubs and school trips develops their confidence well. At GCSE, the gap in performance for these students and their classmates is narrowing rapidly, and current school tracking shows they are likely to be no more than two terms behind their peers in 2013.
- Students develop their learning skills well, speaking with confidence and explaining their ideas carefully. Pupils with below-average starting points in literacy who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium are monitored closely and helped to make rapid progress in Years 7 and 8, working in smaller classes with staff who know their needs very well.
- Weaker readers are helped to make good progress through the effective teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters and words make). The development of numeracy skills throughout the curriculum is sometimes limited by staff missing opportunities to challenge pupils to apply what they have learnt.
- The achievement of students educated off-site for part of the week is monitored carefully by the academy. Most of these students attend in line with the overall school figures and make at least nationally expected progress.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Pass rates are average, which represents good progress from, in many cases, below-average starting points. Students make good progress in a variety of A-level and AS-level subjects and progress in a number of work-related courses is outstanding. Results in a few AS subjects have been below average in the past because students completed courses in Year 11 rather than Year 12. This early-entry policy has now been changed and school monitoring shows current students are on track to achieve well.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good in all subjects and outstanding in an increasing number of lessons. Staff use their strong subject knowledge well to plan appropriately challenging lessons. They make sure that students understand what is expected of them before they start to work independently, encouraging them to review their progress as lessons proceed. Staff have high expectations for behaviour.
- In the best lessons seen, students made rapid progress because their teachers showed them carefully what they needed to do, gave them time to consider what help they needed and provided support appropriately. Many teachers used their good knowledge of students' individual strengths and weaknesses to direct this support in a timely way to those needing it.
- Teaching in the sixth form leads to good progress overall and is strengthened by the independent learning skills that students have developed earlier in their time at the academy.
- The school's project-based approach to learning is effective in helping students make progress, because they show a good degree of self-reliance. This is particularly true in the case of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, who benefit socially as well as academically from receiving support as part of a larger class with several staff. The Plaza environments are used well as large, flexible teaching spaces.
- Where progress in a few mathematics and science lessons is weaker, this is often linked to teachers setting targets that are not challenging enough or not following up the interventions to improve students' progress.
- The quality of marking of students' work is consistently good, with students being given helpful advice about how to make better progress in their studies. In a few lessons, students are not given the opportunity to reflect upon the advice provided in marked work and make corrections.
- Occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to involve students more actively in questioning, to help them reflect on their work, or to ask questions challenging them to explain their answers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good throughout the school. Students have positive attitudes towards their learning and show a high degree of responsibility in moving throughout the building in a calm and orderly manner. They treat the new facilities with a good degree of care and say that they are proud of their new school.
- In most lessons, behaviour is good. It is sometimes outstanding when students show high levels of concentration and interest in their independent tasks over sustained periods of time.
- Students arrive to lessons promptly and settle to their work, with little time wasted.
- Sixth-form students receive good information, advice and guidance. They contribute actively to the life of the academy, for example as mentors to younger students and through membership of the 'Student Commission' (school council).
- Very positive responses were received from students, staff and parents alike about how well students enjoy being at the academy and the robust approach to bullying and to e-safety.

Students felt that incidents were rare and dealt with swiftly.

- Attendance is improving due to well-targeted actions by the school. Figures for the current year show attendance to be average. Similarly, the school has worked successfully to reduce the levels of persistent absence.
- The effectiveness of the pastoral team in promoting positive attitudes to school is well demonstrated by the fact that fixed-term exclusions have reduced significantly over the past year and remain well below average. There have been no permanent exclusions in the past year.

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal, other senior leaders and the governors have a clear vision for the promotion of high aspirations for students of all abilities and backgrounds. The quality of the support for student welfare and personal development is a strength of the academy.
- Self-evaluation is well established, and the academy summary of findings from internal monitoring is accurate and comprehensive. Leaders at all levels have a clear understanding of the academy development priorities.
- The academy has effective arrangements for monitoring and developing teaching, and staff appreciate the opportunities they are given to improve their skills as teachers and leaders. For example, a detailed training programme on the effective use of the learning resources and spaces in the new building is now helping to improve overall teaching quality.
- The academy is increasingly making student-tracking data available to subject leaders and to class teachers. There is a well-structured system of meetings to hold staff to account for student progress every six weeks.
- The subjects offered have been developed well over the past year in response to some previous weaknesses related to early examination entry, promoting equality of opportunity well. Now all students can study English and mathematics GCSE till the end of Year 11. The three different sixth form options offer a very good range of work-related, AS and A-level subjects for students of all aptitudes.
- There are very good opportunities for students to develop their spiritual and cultural awareness in a wide range of school visits to places of worship and through contacts with students in a number of other countries. Literacy skills are promoted well through good-quality teaching in English and additional small-group support for those who need it.
- The academy has offered good opportunities for parents to visit and view the teaching arrangements in the new building. There is a clear vision to develop further the use of web-based communication with parents and pupils. The academy works closely with other academies and higher education institutions to train new teaching staff and offer further professional development opportunities to all staff.
- The governors and academy managers are very well supported in their work by specialist staff employed by the Trust, particularly in the areas of budget management and leadership consultancy.
- Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and the academy has effective procedures to tackle discrimination.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are skilled and experienced, offering good support and challenge to the academy leadership team. Regular committee meetings and visits to the academy hold staff to account well over student progress and teaching standards. Governors know what the academy is doing to reward good teaching and to tackle any underperformance. They are well informed about the targets that are set for teachers to manage their performance, the arrangements for teaching-staff pay progression and the expenditure of the pupil premium. They make sure that the academy meets its statutory responsibilities, and have an exemplary commitment to safeguarding and child protection.

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	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. 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.

School details

Unique reference number	135371
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	421584

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1584
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	323
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ray Harris
Principal	David Simons
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2010
Telephone number	01622 743152
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