

King's Lynn Academy

Queen Mary Road, King's Lynn, PE30 4QG

Inspection dates 21–22 November 2012

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		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

- Standards are low. Weak teaching and leadership and management of English mean that students make less progress in this subject than in mathematics.
- Students in Key Stage 3 are not taught to read and write well enough. Boys do not achieve as well as girls.
- There is not enough good teaching to enable students to achieve well. Teachers do not regularly check the quality and quantity of students' work in lessons, or routinely mark their books, so students do not learn as well as they should.
- Teaching that fails to inspire and ineffective management of behaviour leads to disruption in some lessons. Lateness to lessons and the casual attitudes of some students restricts their learning and progress. Too many are excluded temporarily from the academy.
- The Principal and governors do not hold all teachers and leaders to account for the standards achieved by students. They know who the most effective teachers are but do not use them well enough to show others how to improve.
- The small sixth form is inadequate because too many students underachieve.

The school has the following strengths

- The Principal is driving improvement. Standards and attendance have risen, and the academy is a much safer place to be.
- Students' progress in mathematics is good.
- Data is being used more effectively to spot those at risk of underachieving.
- The vast majority of students gain work-related qualifications suitable for the next stage of their education, training or the workplace.
- Links with other schools, the local college and with parents and carers are improving.
- Governors are managing the building of new academy facilities to widen opportunities for students and for the local community.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 lessons, of which six were carried out jointly with senior staff. In addition, inspectors also made short visits to seminar sessions and walked the school with two Year 9 students.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Board, and three groups of students.
- Prior to the inspection, there were no responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). During the inspection, inspectors took account of the 43 responses. The lead inspector looked at questionnaires returned by 18 staff.
- The inspection team observed the school's work, scrutinised the school's data about students' achievement, examined records relating to behaviour and attendance, looked at documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the school's work and scrutinised students' books.

Inspection team

John Mitcheson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jonathan Stewart

Additional Inspector

Ian Middleton

Her Majesty's Inspector

Hermione Horn

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- King's Lynn Academy opened in September 2010. Its predecessor school, The Park High School had been placed in special measures following its Ofsted inspection in 2009. The academy is sponsored by The College of West Anglia and Norfolk County Council.
- The academy shares sixth form provision with the college. A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 attend alternative provision at the college.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (extra government funding to support particular groups of pupils) is above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is above that found nationally. The proportion of students supported through school action, school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of students who join or leave the academy other than at the usual transfer times is higher than in most secondary schools.
- The academy has specialist status in mathematics and business and enterprise.
- The academy meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to at least good by:
 - implementing all of the improvements recommended at the time of the academy's first monitoring inspection
 - making sure that teachers check students' work and monitor their progress during lessons, and evaluating what impact this has on students' learning
 - using good teachers to show others how to plan and teach lessons that stimulate students' interest, and to watch them in lessons to see if they improve
 - marking books regularly so students know exactly how well they are doing and what they need to do to achieve a higher grade.
- Raise students' achievement by:
 - improving provision in English
 - extending the good support provided for individual students in mathematics in Key Stage 4 into other subjects, especially English
 - raising teachers' expectations of what all students can do and making sure that boys achieve equally as well as girls
 - providing students in Key Stage 3 with more opportunities for guided reading and reading for pleasure, and monitoring the quality and quantity of their writing
 - making better use of seminar time during tutor groups to improve students' reading and writing skills.
- Improve students' behaviour by:
 - insisting that all teachers manage behaviour effectively in lessons
 - rewarding students' hard effort and promoting pride in their work
 - challenging lateness to lessons and rewarding those who arrive on time
 - introducing ways of keeping challenging students involved in learning rather than

excluding them temporarily.

- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - checking that teachers and managers of English make rapid improvements and holding them properly to account for the standards achieved by students
 - observing lessons in which students regularly underachieve and taking swift action to correct this
 - making sure that all staff apply the academy's policies and procedures routinely and consistently
 - convincing students of what the academy is trying to do for them and gaining their full support in achieving these aims
 - linking particular governors to each subject so that they have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and standards achieved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics when they join the academy are below average. Older pupils who transferred from the predecessor school have significant gaps in their learning, especially in English and mathematics.
- The proportion of students attaining five A* to C grades including English and mathematics improved sharply in the academy's first year but this has not been sustained. Students do well in mathematics but not in English. In 2012, the marking of examination papers in English contributed to lower overall results. Recent changes in staffing have weakened the quality of teaching in English and not enough action has been taken to strengthen it so that students achieve well enough.
- The academy has focused its resources on its specialism in mathematics. Standards have improved over the past two years and are now broadly average due to good teaching and support provided for those students who need it. Based on their low starting points on entry, this represents good progress. Most students sit mathematics examinations early in Year 11 enabling them to attain at least a C grade. Students are expected to re-sit examinations until they make the progress expected of them.
- Many more girls than boys attain five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics in 2012. This gap is much larger than found nationally and shows no sign of narrowing. Boys' casual attitudes to learning, some misbehaviour and a lack of thorough checking by teachers of how hard they are learning in lessons, contribute towards this.
- Students eligible for pupil premium are benefitting from the extra help this brings. Their achievement in English and mathematics, measured by average points scores, remains lower than that of other students. However, this gap is closing at a faster rate than found nationally.
- The large majority of Year 11 students, including those that are disabled or have special educational needs, attain vocational qualifications in science, information and communication technology (ICT), design technology and in sport. Alternative arrangements made for a small proportion of students to learn skills at the local college in construction, vehicle maintenance and hairdressing work effectively. Teachers check that they attain other qualifications including GCSE English and mathematics so they are suitably prepared for the next stage of their training or the workplace.
- Most students in the sixth form underachieve. Too many students fail to build on the qualifications achieved in Year 11. Results in AS and A level courses in Years 12 and 13 are low and only a small proportion of students continue with their learning after Year 12.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The academy's first monitoring inspection in 2011 made clear what actions senior leaders needed to take to improve teaching, but this has not been done. Teachers' low expectations are seen in the quality, quantity and presentation of students' work. There is not enough pace and challenge in some lessons. Students of different abilities are taught the same activities, so tasks are often too easy or difficult. Teachers do not mark students' books regularly.

- The quality of teaching varies widely and not enough of it is good. Inspectors found good or better teaching in only one in four lessons and noted some inadequate teaching. Out of six English lessons seen in the inspection, teaching was good in only one of them.
- Teaching, additional revision and one-to-one support have enabled students in Year 11 capable of attaining GCSE and other qualifications to do so. However, teaching in Key Stage 3 is less effective because it is not showing students how to read fluently and write well. The shortfalls in students' basic reading skills are not being filled through regular guided reading or time for them to read regularly by themselves. The library is under-used.
- Thirty minutes of 'seminar time' three days a week is not used effectively to support reading. In these tutorial sessions, students of all ages meet together but do very little work. Students' written work in most subjects contains common spelling errors and unfinished work. This is rarely challenged by teachers.
- Most teachers have good subject knowledge. Their lesson planning is detailed but they spend too long talking about what is to be learnt rather than letting students get on with it. When this happens, students' interest drifts, behaviour deteriorates and learning slows. Teaching assistants are present in most subjects but not all of them are used effectively by teachers to help individuals or small groups of students with their learning.
- Students learn well in practical activities in science, physical education and drama, and enjoy group-work. Learning slows when they are given tasks that are either too hard or easy for them. Teachers do not regularly check what students are learning. They do not walk around the class to see what they are writing down in their books, or make sure that everyone, especially boys, are working hard enough.
- Where teaching is good, teachers know their students well. They make sure that students of different abilities are fully involved in learning by providing challenging tasks for the most able and supporting slower learners. The pace of learning is swift and regular checks are made to see if all students understand and are ready to move on. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the teacher's clear explanation and demonstration on an interactive whiteboard showed less-able students the step-by-step actions they needed to take to solve number patterns. This gave them the confidence to complete tasks by themselves because they understood fully what to do.
- There is little good-quality teaching in the sixth form. Class numbers are very small. There are few opportunities for students to interact and engage with others, so they have to research learning by themselves. Teachers share good relations with students but guidance they provide for them lacks detail and clarity.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- In lessons, not all students arrive on time, reflecting some casual attitudes towards learning. Students are not eager to share their ideas and will sit back and let others answer questions for them. A lack of pride in their work is reflected in the poor presentation of their books.
- Disruptive behaviour is not always dealt with effectively. Lesson observations confirmed the views of students that some teachers manage behaviour well and others do not. The behaviour management policy is not being applied consistently across the academy.
- Outside of lessons, students are generally helpful but are too noisy, particularly outside of

classrooms where other students are busy learning during lunchtimes. They are respectful in assemblies and enjoy good relations with most staff. Students of all ages mix well together in seminar time, but older students are not used well enough to lead and mentor younger pupils, or help them to adopt positive attitudes towards behaviour and learning.

- The number of students excluded temporarily is falling but remains too high. The gap between student detentions and temporary exclusion is too wide. Senior leaders have recognised that interim steps are needed to keep students with the most challenging behaviour involved in learning in the academy, and plans are in place to improve this.
- A concerted drive to target students persistently absent from school has led to a notable improvement. Improved relations with parents and carers are encouraging more students back into the academy. Overall attendance is much better than it was but more needs to be done to match attendance figures nationally.
- Improvements in students' behaviour over time are reflected in the positive views shared by the majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View. Students also recognise the improvements made since becoming an academy and told inspectors that they feel much safer than in the past. However, the academy's own monitoring information and the concerns expressed by staff in questionnaires show that behaviour is not good and requires improvement.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- There is not enough good teaching to raise standards quickly and some teaching is inadequate. The Principal and governors have acted decisively to tackle some of the weak teaching but they are not holding all teachers and other staff with leadership responsibilities fully to account for the standards achieved or the behaviour of students.
- Mathematics is leading the way by driving improvements and showing what students are capable of achieving. Other subjects, especially English, need to step up to the mark and do the same. A new teacher has recently joined the English department to bolster leadership and management and raise achievement in Key Stage 4, but the quality of teaching in English also needs strengthening. Students in Year 11 are concerned that in the absence of their regular teacher of information technology and business studies they are not receiving enough support.
- The current arrangements for monitoring teacher's performance are not strong enough. Senior leaders regularly observe lessons but these observations are not done accurately. Consequently, leaders' view of the overall quality of teaching is too generous. Currently, very little of it is good, too much requires improvement and some is inadequate. This is reflected in the low results achieved by students in a range of subjects.
- Senior leaders know who the most effective teachers are but are not using them well enough to model good practice and mentor colleagues needing support. Subject leaders do not watch their colleagues teach often enough, so are unable to share their specialist knowledge with them or rectify technical weaknesses in teaching.
- Detailed improvement plans focus on securing improvements in all aspects of the academy. They are raising achievement in mathematics, but not in all subjects. Some priorities lack clear, measurable targets to hold staff to account and to gauge what improvements have been made.

- Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is not good enough. Discussions with students confirmed their limited understanding of the lives of others from different social and cultural backgrounds. Most of them know right from wrong but this does not prevent some pupils from misbehaving.
- Pupil premium is being used effectively. The academy has appointed an achievement coordinator charged with monitoring the progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and a teaching assistant to provide them with additional reading, writing and mathematics tuition.
- In a short period of time, the Principal has shared his vision for the future of the academy and enlisted the full support of staff and the governing board. Students say that he is making a difference and recognise what he has done to make the academy a much safer and enjoyable place to be. However, he has not gained the full support of all students in helping him to achieve his aims or in developing the right ethos in the academy. More needs to be done to generate respect amongst students and build pride in what they achieve.
- Both of the academy's sponsors have provided effective support for the teaching of mathematics, which has improved the quality of teaching and the standards achieved by students. They have not provided enough support or challenged the academy to improve the teaching of English. The Principal has valued the support provided by the local authority to increase students' attendance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing board makes sure that teachers do not progress up the salary scale until it knows that teachers can teach well. Governors have supported the Principal in resolving inadequate teaching but are not challenging him well enough to quickly eradicate the remaining weak teaching and avoid dips in performance such as in English this year. Training for governors has given them an understanding of some but not all of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy. They lack a thorough understanding of students' achievement and the performance of all teachers because particular governors are not directly linked to each subject. They make sure that students are kept safe but are not checking that the single central record is up to date. Nevertheless, the arrangements for safeguarding are managed effectively by senior staff and meet the current regulatory requirements. The governing board does provide the academy with a clear, strategic direction and governors use their expertise in education to forge local partnerships, manage finances and oversee the development of new facilities. They check that pupil premium is spent on helping disadvantaged students to catch up. To avoid further underachievement in the sixth form, governor's plan that in the future all sixth form courses will be taught and managed by the local college.

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	136202
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	399815

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-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	694
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	48
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Pomfret
Principal	Craig Morrison
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01553 774671
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Email address	office@kingslynnacademy.co.uk

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