

King's Lynn Academy

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

Inspection dates 18–19 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Students are not yet consistently making good progress, especially the most able, disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- The gap in performance between boys and girls at the end of Year 11 remains too wide, with boys performing less well.
- Although students' progress is improving, this has not yet had enough impact on GCSE examination results in English and mathematics.
- Teachers are not always using data about students' attainment and progress to set work at the right level of difficulty. Students' capabilities, interests and aspirations are not always catered for, especially for the least and most able.
- Teachers' marking is not always helpful in raising standards, and not all teachers are tackling students' weak literacy skills to help them perform better.

The school has the following strengths

- Under the astute and creative leadership of the principal, ably supported by leaders at all levels, the academy is improving at a good pace.
- Governance is good. Governors work effectively with the principal, senior staff and faculty leaders. Their rigorous monitoring systems have proven effective in identifying weaknesses and bringing about improvements in all areas of the academy's work.
- Students are proud of their academy. Behaviour has improved considerably, and most classes are calm and provide a good environment for learning. Students feel safe and their attendance has improved.
- Examination results have improved and more students now make better progress. Support for younger students who have weak literacy and numeracy skills is raising standards.
- Robust systems for checking students' progress, and relevant support and training for staff have led to improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Students' preparation for life in modern Britain is good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made 27 classroom observations, involving 27 different teachers. Many were made jointly with senior staff. In addition, inspectors looked at past and present work, including in-depth scrutinies of students' work in both English and mathematics.
- The inspection team observed many other aspects of the school's work. They scrutinised the academy's data about students' progress; examined records relating to behaviour and attendance; and looked at documents used by senior leaders to monitor and evaluate the academy's work.
- Meetings were held with the principal, the senior management team, a selection of faculty leaders, a cross-section of staff and the special educational needs leader. Inspectors also met with representatives of the sponsors, the governing body and the local authority.
- Inspectors evaluated the impact of additional funding, such as the pupil premium and Year 7 'catch-up' funding.
- Meetings were held with five different groups of students.
- The lead inspector took account of the written comments received from parents and considered the responses to 50 parental questionnaires received through the online Parent View. Inspectors also took into account the 68 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Bill Stoneham, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Diana Fletcher	Additional Inspector
John Mason	Additional Inspector
Jennifer Carpenter	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- King's Lynn Academy opened in September 2010 as an 11–18 school offering education to both boys and girls. In 2012, a decision was taken to close the sixth form. Since September 2014, the academy has functioned as an 11–16 school.
- The academy is sponsored by The College of West Anglia.
- Most students are of White British heritage, with a growing proportion from other European countries, especially from Eastern Europe.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (extra government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority) is broadly average.
- In the last academic year, from a total of 116 students in Year 7, 30 were eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding. This is government funding to help students who did not attain the expected Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of Year 6 in their primary schools.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is average overall, but the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 attend The College of West Anglia to study specialised work-related courses, including engineering and hair and beauty therapy.
- There has been considerable staff turnover since the previous inspection. Many key subject leaders, including in English and mathematics, are new to their posts.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and achievement by ensuring that:
 - staff use performance data to set work that is challenging but achievable, so the most able students are stretched while disabled students and those who have special educational needs get support at the right level
 - consistent strategies are applied to improve students' basic skills, especially in reading and writing
 - all staff follow the academy's marking policy, so that marking clearly informs students about what they have done well and how they can improve their work.
- Raise the performance of boys by ensuring that:
 - boys are consistently encouraged to reflect and comment on their work that has been formally marked and assessed
 - staff consistently set high expectations for the achievement of boys and refuse to accept work that is below the students' capabilities.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Under the astute leadership of its principal, all aspects of the academy's performance are improving. Inadequate teaching has been largely eradicated. This has had a marked impact on students' achievement, behaviour and attendance.
- The principal has established an able and committed team of senior and faculty leaders. Their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, with a strong focus on improving teaching and learning. Many key staff are new to their post. Though they are already having an impact on the quality of teaching, in many cases they have not been in post long enough to secure substantial improvements in examination results.
- Senior staff and governors know the academy well. Self-evaluation is thorough, well organised and accurate. Senior and faculty leaders are fully involved in checking the quality of teaching and quality of students' work.
- Leaders' development planning is rigorous, with clear targets for improvement. This enables the leadership team and governors to check that improvements are being made. The impact of all actions taken is thoroughly evaluated.
- Improved assessment processes are raising students' aspirations. Teachers are expected to follow clear procedures for marking students' work. These include the use of peer assessment and clear comments on students' work with an opportunity for students to reply. These recent developments are beginning to have an impact, though not all teachers are using them effectively.
- Procedures for managing the performance of teachers are based appropriately on the achievement of students, so that teachers are held to account for the progress their students make. These procedures identify the training needs of individual staff, which the academy meets. Consequently, teaching is improving.
- Staff morale is high. Staff praise the academy's 'journey of improvement'. As one member of staff commented: 'The academy has made excellent progress under the leadership team over the last two years. Behaviour has improved noticeably and the children really want to learn now.'
- The academic progress of all students is analysed carefully and thoroughly, so that leaders have a clear understanding of which groups are performing well and where improvements are needed. Some of these diagnostic measures are new and have not yet had a full impact. For this reason, there are still variations in the performance of particular groups, such as boys and girls, and students eligible for pupil premium funding. Senior staff and governors are acutely aware that for the academy's overall effectiveness to be at least good, there must be far less variation in the performance of different groups of students.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is of high quality. The governing body comprises of a number of skilled professional people who are keen for the academy to succeed. They are highly supportive, monitor outcomes closely and are adept at holding staff to account for the overall quality of performance. In association with the principal, they have identified weakness in teaching and at various levels of leadership. A number of staff changes resulted, many of which are quite recent. Partly through governors' critical analysis and interventions, the quality of teaching has improved considerably, with standards rising as a result.
 - The governors make sure that staff are deployed efficiently and all financial resources are used well. Expenditure such as the allocation of government funding through the pupil premium is evaluated. Any enhancements to staff pay are directly linked to improved examination results.
 - The governing body makes sure that the academy's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements. They are thorough, appropriate and well managed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. It has improved markedly since the last inspection. The number of exclusions has fallen significantly and attendance continues to improve; in the first month of the new academic year, it is in line with the national average for 2013.
- The vast majority of students and a clear majority of staff referred to significant improvements in behaviour. Many comments were received about classrooms now being calmer. Students also added that as the quality of teaching has improved, the work set is now more enjoyable and challenging, and this too has promoted better behaviour. Nevertheless, a small number of parents out of the 50 who completed the parental questionnaire expressed some concerns about behaviour.
- Pride is evident at many levels. The large site is well maintained and largely litter-free because of the care taken by students and the concerted efforts of the site team. Books are well presented. Much of the work seen was neat and tidy.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. In the various meetings students had with inspectors, they consistently reported that they feel safe.
- Students have developed a good awareness about keeping themselves safe, including when using mobile phones and the internet. Through assemblies and through work in personal, social and health education lessons, students have developed an understanding of how modern technology can be used sensibly and beneficially. Equally, they are aware of the inherent dangers.
- Students expressed great faith in the academy's staff. Incidents of bullying based on race, religion or sexual orientation are rare, and students are confident that if they reported an incident, the staff would deal with the issue quickly and professionally.
- The academy maintains detailed records of all behavioural issues. Reported incidents are thoroughly investigated. These extensive records clearly show that incidents are decreasing at a rapid pace. This represents further evidence that behaviour is now good, and that students respect one another and the staff.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching has improved. Inadequate teaching has been tackled well and largely eradicated. However, further improvement is needed in order to ensure good learning for all groups of students.
- Teachers' planning is not yet sufficiently effective in ensuring that students are adequately challenged in their work. Too few staff use the data available to them on student's prior attainment to plan learning activities that cater for their abilities and interests. As a consequence, disabled students, those who have special educational needs and the more able are not making as much progress as they should.
- Not all teachers give enough attention to developing students' skills in speaking, reading and writing. Where students make the most progress, correct emphasis is placed on developing subject-specific vocabulary and encouraging students to write formally and for different audiences, but this is not done with sufficient consistency.
- Students' work is marked regularly and the vast majority of staff apply the recently introduced marking and assessment procedures. However, not all teachers offer students clear enough guidance on what has been done well, what needs to be improved or how. Some staff comments, such as 'be tidier', or 'answer all questions' are too general to improve learning. As yet, not enough is being done to reflect higher expectations for boys or encourage them to engage with the process.
- The new assessment system is helping to raise teachers' expectations of what students are capable of

achieving and, where learning is at least good, helping teachers to ensure that work is pitched accurately for their classes.

- Better quality teaching is now evident in both English and mathematics. The deployment of teaching assistants is often good, and where teaching assistants are used well, they make a good contribution to learning. In some cases, however, teaching assistants spend too long with individual students. This limits the scope for students to develop the capability of working unaided, which, in turn, restricts their learning.
- Where learning is slower, students work through the same tasks without support for less able or stretch for the most able. Less able students struggle, whereas some more able students quickly complete the work but have nothing to move on to. They become passive and some of their time is wasted.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers are adept at assessing students' different starting points and skills and setting challenging work so as to increase the amount of learning that takes place. This was apparent in a Year 7 English class, where students had to consider sentence construction and identify how the style of writing added clarity and 'atmosphere' to the text. Students successfully identified how the use of adjectives added to the vividness of the writing.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Although achievement is improving, not all groups are making good progress. The performance of boys lags behind that of girls in all year groups. Students who are disabled or have special educational needs do not yet make good progress.
- More-able students are not consistently making the progress they should. This is because not all teachers are planning work that fully challenges and extends them.
- In 2013, students eligible for support through the pupil premium were the equivalent overall of one GCSE grade behind their peers. In English, the gap was just below one GCSE grade. When compared to national figures, the gap was almost exactly one grade. In mathematics, the gap, both in-school and in national terms, was one and a quarter GCSE grades. Though comparative data are not available for 2014, the academy's monitoring systems show that improvements are being made and gaps in performance are narrowing, but have not yet closed enough.
- Although remaining below average GCSE results are rising. In 2012 only 35% of the students gained five good GCSE grades including mathematics and English. In 2013 this rose to 44%, and unvalidated data for 2014 indicate that this level has been at least maintained. The proportions of students making or exceeding nationally expected rates of progress in English and mathematics are below average, though they have improved.
- Standards at GCSE have improved over the last three years and are forecast to improve further by the end of the current academic year. Most girls are performing well, as too are the growing number of students who speak English as an additional language. Students from an eastern European heritage make especially good progress.
- The learning of a significant minority of students is held back by weak literacy skills. The progress of all groups of students, including those supported by the pupil premium and Year 7 'catch-up' funding, is monitored well. Year 7 'catch-up' support is raising standards in literacy and numeracy at a good pace.
- The academy's information on the progress of current students, and especially those in Year 11, shows that progress is improving. This can be attributed to improved teaching and more rigorous assessment and tracking systems. The academy no longer uses early GCSE entry.
- Students in alternative provision at the College of West Anglia are making good progress in their work-related studies. Their work and attendance are monitored appropriately.

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	Norfolk
Inspection number	442073

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	576
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Arlene Clark
Principal	Craig Morrison
Date of previous school inspection	21 November 2012
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