

Chatham Grammar School for Boys

Maidstone Road, Holcombe, Chatham, ME4 6JB

Inspection dates 30 September–1 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Achievement is good in all year groups, including in the sixth form. This is because leaders and teachers no longer accept mediocre standards.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Whereas in the past, some were casual in their efforts, students now take their learning more seriously.
- Students say they feel safe in the academy. They care about each other and the staff. A strong sense of 'belonging' permeates the academy.
- Excellent targeted training and support have helped teachers to develop new skills and routinely reflect on practice which works best. As a result, teaching is good and improving.
- The Executive Principal provides exceptional leadership. Her swift actions to address inadequate teaching and leadership have resulted in rapid and sustainable improvements.
- The Principal and senior leaders are highly visible, 'hands on' and known to all. Together, they have raised achievement and improved teaching.
- Interim Management Board members are wise 'lieutenants'. They have been instrumental in securing the necessary rapid improvements, including acting promptly to recover the academy's financial deficit.
- The sixth form is good. Students achieve well across a range of academic subjects. They benefit from study programmes that are well designed and fit for purpose.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers' written feedback to students' is not of a consistently high standard. Not all students routinely respond to marking.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding. Although teaching is developing students' curiosity to learn, a thirst for knowledge is not yet fully apparent.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 21 lessons taught by 21 teachers, of which six were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- In addition, the inspection team looked at samples of students' work in English, history and geography, and spoke to students about their work across a wide range of other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with students in lessons and met with two groups of students. They also met with representatives from the Interim Management Board, and school staff, including senior and other leaders. The lead inspector also met with a group of parents.
- Inspectors took account of 102 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, safeguarding documentation and case studies, minutes of IMB meetings and records of the performance management of staff.

Inspection team

Lesley Farmer, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Raminder Arora

Additional Inspector

Evelyn Riley

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the academy no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- Chatham Grammar School for Boys converted to become an academy in April 2011.
- It is average-sized, with a large, mixed sixth form. About half of the sixth form is made up of students who join at the end of Year 11 from other schools in the area. Girls make up a third of the sixth form.
- When it was last fully inspected in June 2013, the academy was judged to require special measures. Teaching, behaviour and safety, and achievement were judged to require improvement, with leadership judged as inadequate.
- The academy acquired sponsors with effect from October 2013 and is now part of the Thinking School's Academy Trust (TSAT).
- In September 2013, an Executive Principal, a National Leader in Education, was seconded to the leadership of the academy. She is also the Chief Executive of TSAT.
- A new Principal was appointed in the Easter term of 2014.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium funding is much lower than the national average. The academy does not receive Year 7 catch-up funding.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportions that have a statement of special educational needs or who have education, health and care plans are also below average. The main identified needs are autistic spectrum disorder and specific learning difficulties, particularly dyslexia.
- The academy does not provide education or training for students away from school.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- In addition to changes in leadership, there have been significant changes in staffing since the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and achievement to the level of outstanding by ensuring that:
 - teachers continue to build students' resilience and confidence in their potential to excel
 - when teachers mark students' work, they take time to reflect on precisely what they intend from students' responses, so that in turn, when students spend time on this, their learning is properly extended
 - teachers' plans are routinely translated into challenging learning activity for all students, especially the most able and disadvantaged students.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are good. This is because new leaders have quickly and very successfully addressed inadequate leadership and developed the skills of all those in leadership roles. As a result, teaching, behaviour and achievement are now good.
- The Executive Principal and the Principal are unswerving in their determination to ensure that students receive a 'top class' education. They have taken tough, judicious and, at times, unpopular decisions to bring about rapid improvements in teaching and achievement by refusing to accept mediocrity.
- Intelligent systems have quickly been established to monitor and support teachers to improve the quality of their teaching. This has resulted in significant improvements in the proportion of students securing top grades in GCSE and A-level examinations, with progress rates in English and mathematics significantly above national norms.
- Those new to the academy, including to leadership positions, receive tailored support and guidance informed by their previous experience. This wise strategy has enabled new staff to make a positive impact on students' achievement over a relatively short period.
- The Principal checks teaching with a sharp lens. He knows where best practice is located within the academy, and why. Joint observations conducted with inspectors were accurate. Staff, students and parents have been captivated by the clarity of his vision and evident passion for what the academy can achieve.
- Subject and pastoral leaders have a clear understanding of their roles, what they are accountable for and how senior leaders will measure their success. There is now a substantial body of good and outstanding practice at this and at senior level, from which others new to the academy can develop and learn.
- Students are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They are able to access a broad range of subjects, including in the sixth form, well-tailored to their aptitudes and abilities. Changes made to entry requirements to the sixth form and the nature of the study programmes now on offer ensure that students entering the sixth form are well placed for the next steps in their education and employment.
- Leaders are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all students. They maintain a watching brief on the progress of different groups of students and trigger additional support where necessary. The good progress secured by disabled students and those who need extra support provides testimony to the success of this approach.
- The Principal and governors take the performance management of staff seriously. Pay rises, including for senior staff, are not automatic. No teachers received pay awards during 2013. The Principal is currently in the process of aligning pay to individual teachers' performance in 2014, with a view to informing the latest pay and performance management decisions.
- Leaders have evaluated the academy's effectiveness accurately. They are aware of current shortcomings and have already begun to tackle these effectively.
- Systems to keep students safe meet requirements.
- Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because there is not enough outstanding teaching and a few students still fail to meet their full potential.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Interim Management Board members have executed their duties with the utmost efficiency. They have quickly marshalled the necessary support from within the trust to ensure the academy's rapid removal from special measures. They have provided strong challenge to senior leaders and do not accept excuses. Visits to the academy, which have been frequent, have focused on the impact of teaching on learning. Sponsors have ensured that there is considerable expertise within the board to undertake such activity with a discerning and expert eye. An inherited deficit has been effectively halted and leaders are now presenting a balanced budget for the current financial year. Board members have already analysed the impact of pupil premium in relation to the 2014 GCSE and A-level results. They know how well the academy achieves compared to grammar schools nationally. They have set challenging targets for the Principal and are now poised to hand over their leadership to a permanent governing body.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. It has improved since the previous inspection. This is because teaching is stronger and now captures the attention of students more effectively, motivating them to contribute and

to learn.

- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because a few students still lack confidence or resilience and have yet to develop the thirst for learning that outstanding teaching inspires.
- High quality leadership, promoted at all levels, requires students to think for themselves and take responsibility for their learning. Teachers no longer accept second best. For example, incomplete or careless homework results in detention. Students know that teachers' expectations of them are high, and systems are in place to help them to achieve well.
- Attitudes to learning are good. In particular, the academy's learning values of thinking, reasoning and resilience have been instrumental in transforming students' attitudes. For example, one student advised inspectors, 'Teaching is much, much better....I have had three lessons this morning which have been thoroughly interesting. This time last year, however, by now I would have been falling asleep.'
- Leaders have made no permanent exclusions since the last inspection. However, for a very short period, during 2013, the level of temporary exclusions rose, while students adjusted to higher expectations of their work ethic. This pattern has since greatly reduced and is below average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say they feel safe in school and are happy to attend every day. Students have a strong moral code. Equality of opportunity is an important principle. This was evident in conversations with students in which current news items, such as terrorist activity in Iraq, were discussed with reasoned arguments and maturity.
- Parents with whom inspectors met, and the majority of those that responded to the online questionnaire Parent View, feel that their child is safe within the academy.
- Attendance is routinely above average and students are punctual. These data reflect the enthusiasm for the learning students now experience.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well. There are many opportunities for students to learn from, and support, each other, both during the taught day and in clubs and after-school activities.
- Students know about the different types of bullying that exist, including homophobic and cyber bullying, but say that incidents are rare. Discrimination is not tolerated. Inspectors found that leaders record all incidents carefully and deal effectively with these isolated incidents.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Leaders' strategies to improve teaching have resulted in good learning and achievement since the last inspection. Records of meetings, training and discussions with inspectors attest to teachers' willingness to learn from each other and continually improve their practice.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding because a few students do not meet their full potential. Teaching is not fully succeeding in developing all students' resilience or appetite for learning.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support for individuals and small groups, particularly for disabled students and those who have special educational needs, by checking their work carefully and adapting the work where necessary to ensure success.
- Students' work is marked regularly. Most of the marking is both constructive and affirming of what has worked well. However, not all of the marking is challenging enough. Typically, students' responses to teachers' comments are too superficial.
- In discussions with inspectors, students say they are taught well. Parents with whom inspectors met are in agreement. These views are equally reflected by the majority of parents that completed Parent View.
- Checks made by subject leaders of other schools within the academy trust confirm that teachers' assessment judgements are reliable.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers plan and set work which captivates students of all abilities, especially the most able. Teachers' explanations are clear and the trust's philosophy of developing students' thinking skills is being developed well. In some instances the approach is put to excellent use, evidently motivating students to challenge themselves and step outside of their comfort zones.
- In a Year 10 Spanish lesson, students worked in groups responding to a proposal to hold the next Olympic Games in Medway. Each group was offered a 'De Bono' hat and required to consider the proposal in accordance with the 'hat' which they had been assigned. This resulted in well-considered responses, ably expressed in Spanish. All students engaged fully and the learning was both challenging and motivational.

The achievement of pupils is good

- From starting points higher than most schools nationally, current students make good progress and achieve well across all subjects and in the sixth form. Improvements secured in leadership and teaching, since the academy was judged to require special measures in 2013, have resulted in much improved GCSE and A-level results in 2014.
- Achievement is not yet outstanding because a very few of the most-able or disadvantaged students do not meet their full potential. Leaders are aware of this and plans reflect how this is being addressed.
- The most-able students now achieve well across most subjects and in English and in mathematics. In the past their progress in mathematics was far better than in English. However, in 2014, the percentage of students securing the top grades in GCSE English significantly improved. This is attributable to the evident improvements in teaching noted by inspectors, students, senior leaders and parents.
- Leaders have correctly prioritised the development of students' literacy skills, and to good effect. There is strong evidence in lessons across all subjects of teachers tackling literacy development effectively, for example through providing sufficient time in lessons for writing. In addition, targeted students in Year 7 receive tailored provision until such time as their writing is of a good enough standard.
- Students for whom English is an additional language achieve well. Support for their learning is effective and teachers show a good awareness of their needs.
- Disabled students or those who need extra help with their learning benefit from good teaching and make good progress from their starting points. A dedicated resource area with well-qualified staff ensures that one-to-one support is aligned to individual needs. Parents and students, with whom inspectors met, spoke highly of the support that they receive.
- No students attend off-site provision.
- Almost all students eligible for free school meals achieve well. They secure far higher standards and make much better progress from their starting points than their peers nationally in both English and mathematics.
- These same students achieve slightly less well overall than their peers within the academy. In 2014, eligible students gained better results than their peers in GCSE mathematics, with all securing a good pass and a quarter of them securing the top grades of A* or A. In GCSE English, almost all secured good passes, with half of them securing the top grades.
- Leaders no longer typically enter students early for either mathematics or English. However, in 2014, a few students were entered for each subject to build confidence and resilience. This strategy has proved successful with all students meeting their target grades.

The sixth form provision is good

- Students are happy and feel well supported to succeed. Leaders have correctly analysed the impact of the curriculum on achievement, and adjustments made to the study programmes on offer have proved successful. As a result, 2014 results at A level significantly improved. Students' progress during their time in the sixth form is typically good.
- The head of sixth form sets demanding targets and closely monitors students' progress, triggering support where necessary. Consequently, most students meet, and some exceed, their target grades.
- Advice and guidance on what study programmes to pursue are externally provided to ensure impartiality. Leaders also ensure that all sixth form students gain access to work experience. As a result, students leave well equipped for the next steps in their education or employment.
- Behaviour and safety within the sixth form are good. Students attend regularly and contribute well to their learning. In conversations with inspectors they demonstrated a mature awareness of risk.
- Leaders know about the quality of teaching in the sixth form and where best practice resides. Teachers' subject knowledge is a strength. Students benefit from good quality planning and challenge, coupled with high expectations of what they can achieve.
- Leaders set strict entry requirements to academic programmes of study. Where re-sits are required, to gain a top grade in English or mathematics, good teaching has ensured success.
- The sixth form is not yet outstanding because there is some variability in subject performance and, as elsewhere in the academy, teaching is not yet outstanding.

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	136594
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	441732

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	907
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	200
Appropriate authority	Interim Management board
Chair	Simon Beamish
Principal	Stuart Gardner
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 June 2013
Telephone number	01634830083
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