

The Marsh Academy

Station Road, New Romney, TN28 8BB

Inspection dates 30 April–1 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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 and make good progress from their starting points, including in English and mathematics.
- The academy gives good support for disabled students, students with special educational needs and those entitled to the pupil premium. This support is helping them catch up with the standards reached by other students.
- Consistently good teaching means that students achieve well in class.
- Students feel safe, enjoy the academy and behave well, both in and out of lessons.
- Students say teachers listen to them and help them. They know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- The governing body supports the academy well and has the skills to make sure leaders make the right decisions about improving teaching and achievement.
- Leaders know what the academy is doing well and have improved teaching and achievement since the previous inspection.
- The sixth form is good. Teaching is consistently good and students say they are given good guidance to help them in the future.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not consistently strong enough across all subjects for it to be judged outstanding.
- Students do not read widely and often across all subjects and there are not enough opportunities for reading for pleasure.
- The more-able students do not always make as good progress as other groups of students.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills across all subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 part-lessons, of which seven were joint observations with senior staff. Inspectors observed senior leaders reporting back to teachers on the quality of learning and students’ achievement in lessons.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, one of whom is a local authority representative, senior leaders, heads of subjects, a group of teachers, and four groups of students.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the academy’s improvement plan; the analysis of students’ progress; records of classroom observations conducted by academy leaders; students’ work; and records related to the behaviour and safety of students.
- Inspectors looked at 28 responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Neil Stanley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Edwin Powell	Additional Inspector
Roger Waddingham	Additional Inspector
Jane Ladner	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average secondary school with a sixth form. Since the previous inspection, the numbers of students on roll have decreased because of fewer people living in the area.
- The academy moved into new buildings less than two years ago. An additional inclusion and community facility is currently being built.
- The Principal took up post at the start of the summer term 2013.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care, students eligible for free school meals and those with a parent in the armed services, is well-above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs identified by the school at school action is well-above average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs, or supported at school action plus is high.
- Some sixth form students attend lessons at Folkestone School for Girls and the academy has a motorcycle maintenance facility located off-site.
- The academy is sponsored by Tonbridge School, Microsoft and the local authority.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4.
- The academy provides a breakfast club for students.
- Since the previous inspection, the academy has achieved Kent Safe School and Healthy School awards. It has also gained the Silver Award for Parental Engagement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that, over time, it enables students to, at least, reach and exceed national standards by making sure that:
 - levels of challenge in learning activities are increased, especially for more-able students
 - teachers plan activities that help students to develop as independent learners
 - teachers develop further their use of questioning and discussion to challenge all groups of students to develop their thinking and communication skills
 - reading for pleasure is encouraged so that students become independent and enthusiastic readers.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When students join the academy in Year 7, they are working well below national standards in English and mathematics. In Years 7 and 8, good teaching and support give them the help they need to improve their standards. They go on to attain similar standards to those reached by most students nationally by Year 11, including in English and mathematics, and achieve particularly well in science.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been an impressive increase in the proportion of students achieving five GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics. While this proportion is below the national average, it has risen to be well above floor standards. In 2012 all gained five GCSE A* to G grades.
- The academy regularly checks the progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs. As a result of extra help that meets their differing learning needs, these students are making good progress from their starting points and better progress than similar students nationally. The gap between their attainment and that of others in the academy is closing.
- The academy makes very good use of the pupil premium funding to raise achievement of those students eligible to it. For example, the breakfast club and extra study support are making a difference. Students eligible for the pupil premium are making better progress than similar students nationally. Although these students do not attain as well as others in the academy in English and mathematics, the gap between their attainment and that of others is slowly closing.
- The academy has been successful in helping students improve their literacy skills, particularly students who join with difficulties in reading, who are supported by Year 7 catch-up funding. However, students cannot always tackle work independently in all subjects with confidence.
- There are many opportunities for students to read widely, particularly in the Key Stage 3 project-based learning programme. However, few students say they enjoy reading for pleasure.
- In recent years, more-able students have not made as much progress as other students in the academy. The academy adopted early entry to GCSE English, but did not insist that students who had gained grade C or above re-took the examination to improve their grades. The academy has wisely abandoned the early entry policy and students are, currently, progressing better. However, while more-able students' work shows they are achieving well, they are not always presented with learning challenges to take their achievement to higher levels so they gain the highest grades at GCSE and A level.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress from standards on entry to AS-level courses that are below those typical nationally. Although A- and AS-level results are below average, students' achievement has improved since the previous inspection. Performance in art is particularly good. Students say they receive very good support, guidance and information to help them make choices for the future, and increasing numbers continue to higher education.
- Students taking up the opportunity to study at Folkestone School for Girls achieve well. Those who attend the academy's motorcycle maintenance facility also achieve well.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in most subjects, including English and mathematics, is usually good and often outstanding. This is because teachers plan their lessons carefully, using a mixture of work set for individuals, and opportunities for students to work in pairs and in small groups to help enthuse and inspire. Information communication technology is used to stimulate the students and involve them in sharing their learning.
- Teachers make effective use of information about disabled students and those with special educational needs. Consequently, skilled teaching assistants provide good support for learning in class and in small-group work. This helps students to concentrate and ask questions. As a result, they are making good progress.
- The project-based learning programme in Years 7 and 8 is effective in encouraging students to apply skills across different subject areas. This was seen in the opportunities for extended writing. However, teachers do not regularly encourage reading for pleasure to help students to enhance their reading skills and become more confident, independent learners.
- Teachers create a positive atmosphere for learning in lessons. This situation encourages students to work well together and ask questions if they are not sure about their work. Consequently, their attitudes to their learning are good, with students keen to do well and take part in lessons. For example, in a GCSE music lesson, students shared their ideas in a good-humoured atmosphere of trust and respect.
- Teachers create opportunities to promote students' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. This was particularly effective in a Key Stage 3 project on India, where students were able to reflect on the impact of poverty.
- Students' work is marked regularly and thoroughly using a colour-coded marking scheme. In English, history and religious education, for example, students are given very detailed feedback. As a result, they know what they need to do to improve. In science, students are given the opportunity to respond to the marking and rapid progress can be seen.
- In some subjects, students think for themselves and take charge of their learning. This practice was particularly evident in a Year 9 art lesson, where students worked very well independently. The teacher was able to use timely interventions to ensure all students were making good progress. As a result, the work produced was clearly of a high GCSE standard. However, more-able students do not have enough opportunities for learning independently in most subjects and, consequently, are not always challenged enough to take their learning forward for themselves.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully to make sure all students can achieve. While this is particularly successful with less-able students, more-able learners often lack challenge in lessons from probing questioning. These students often lack the opportunity to communicate their own thinking fully in discussion.
- Sixth form lessons are typically well planned to meet students' different learning needs. Students are given opportunities to develop their understanding through discussion and work in small groups and teachers use questioning effectively to check their progress in lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Typically, behaviour is good. Students behave well and learning is rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. Students, staff and parents agree there has been a marked improvement in behaviour in recent years.
- The academy has a clear approach to managing behaviour and students say they understand the academy's expectations. Inspectors found that low-level disruption tended to occur only in the very few lessons where the quality of teaching was less than good.
- Students are aware of different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, racism and homophobic bullying. They told inspectors that they do not consider bullying to be a problem in this academy. Students feel confident that their teachers will take reports of bullying seriously and deal with them quickly and effectively.
- Students told inspectors that they feel safe in the academy. Feedback from parents shows that almost all agree that their children are safe. Students have good opportunities to think about their own safety, both in the academy and in the local community. One parent wrote, 'We are impressed with the school's attitude, compassion and commitment to children.'
- While attendance is improving, levels of absence are still higher than in schools nationally. However, levels of persistent absence have reduced considerably over time. The academy is working very successfully with external support services and primary schools to reduce levels of absence.
- Levels of permanent exclusion have reduced significantly over time. Students who are, very occasionally, removed from classes and given alternative support continue successfully with their learning.
- Students say the improved building and facilities have made them much more proud of their academy. They say this has led them to behave better out of class and to be more enthusiastic in lessons.
- Students who attend off-site courses are well motivated and attend regularly.

The leadership and management are good

- The recently appointed Principal and the governing body share a passion to improve students' achievement. They have a very good and accurate understanding of the academy's strengths and also what it needs to do to improve.
- The curriculum is good because leaders have taken account of the students' learning needs. Academy leaders are aware of how the curriculum must change to meet changing requirements. However, although learning activities give more-able students the opportunity to achieve the highest grades, teaching does not yet make the most of this situation. A wide range of clubs and activities extends the students' learning experiences. Helpful guidance gives sixth form students valuable preparation for the future and the world of work.
- Leaders make sure that off-site courses are well managed, that students benefit from the additional opportunities and that the working situations are safe.

- The academy is aware of the need to give students culturally diverse experience. The annual celebration of Diwali, for example, helps deepen students' understanding of different faith communities and their traditions.
- Excellent links with and support from the sponsor school help raise students' aspirations. The academy recently benefited from support from the sponsor school who provided interim leadership during the appointment of the Principal. The local authority remains interested and supportive.
- The academy works hard to build trust with parents, especially parents who find it difficult to work with schools including over attendance. Teachers often meet with parents in their local communities and this helps parents feel more confident about talking with staff.
- Regular training sessions have been successful in developing and sharing approaches to teaching and learning. Policies to improve literacy have made a difference in encouraging students to write independently and at length in a range of subjects.
- The performance of staff is managed well. The academy has a fair approach to pay progression for staff and provides good support and training to help staff develop their skills in teaching and leadership.
- The academy's leaders are aware of its place within its local community. They are keen to place the academy at the heart of its neighbourhood. This can be seen in the new inclusion building, which is intended to offer services that benefit all local people.
- The needs of disabled students and those with special educational needs are carefully identified. Strong leadership has resulted in good progress for these students. As a result of strong leadership, academic results for all students have improved.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The academy benefits from a governing body that is experienced and well trained. Governors come from a range of backgrounds and all share a drive to make the academy even better. They challenge the school's leaders through close checks on progress, attendance data, behaviour reviews and regular visits. Governors demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the quality of teaching across the academy. They check decisions on pay awards for teachers and ensure that students' progress justifies better pay and promotion. They fully endorse leaders' actions to tackle underperformance. Financial planning is meticulous and governors have a good understanding of how pupil premium money is being spent and how effective this is in improving progress and achievement. Governors ensure that procedures for safeguarding meet requirements, especially regarding the appointment of staff and the safety of students.

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	135290
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	402683

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
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	815
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Haynes
Principal	Shaun Simmons
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2010
Telephone number	01797 364593
Fax number	01797 367315
Email address	info@marshacademy.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

