

Kepier

Houghton Le Spring, Tyne and Wear , DH4 5BH

Inspection dates

1–2 October 2013

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

- Achievement requires improvement. In English and mathematics too few students make better than expected progress and some groups of students do less well than they should.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs, and students eligible for the pupil premium, do not reach the standards they should. These students achieve less well than other students in the academy and less well than similar students nationally. Pupil premium funding is not always used effectively to support these students.
- The quality of teaching requires improvement because not enough is good or better and it varies too much within and across subjects.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of the progress students make and so do not set work at the right level of difficulty for individual students. This slows their progress.
- Teachers' marking does not always put enough emphasis on improving students' spelling, punctuation and grammar to ensure that their writing skills develop rapidly enough.
- Leaders and managers do not check teaching and the progress made by students in lessons closely enough to raise achievement and teaching consistently across subjects.
- When planning for improvement, leaders and managers do not always focus their actions where they are most needed and do not check the impact on students' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- There are some subjects, including history and geography, in which teaching is consistently good or better. In these subjects students make good or better progress.
- Behaviour is good because relationships between staff and students are generally positive and supportive. Students feel safe.
- Leaders and managers have strong ambition to improve the achievement of students. They understand where improvement is needed and are taking steps to bring this about.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 34 lessons. Five of these were done jointly with the Principal and with other senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with students, governors and school staff.
- The inspectors took account of the 32 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the views of three parents who contacted inspectors directly. The inspectors also took account of 35 questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at documents including improvement plans, data on students' past and current progress, planning and monitoring files, minutes of the governing body meetings and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Mick Hill, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
James Bradley	Additional Inspector
Brian Hill	Additional Inspector
Shirley Fall	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Kepier is an average-sized secondary school. It converted to become an academy in August 2011.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after) is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Nearly all students are of White British heritage. A very low number of students are of minority ethnic heritage and very few speak English as an additional language.
- A small number of students attend off-site provision delivered by Springboard, Sunderland Local Authority and the City of Sunderland College.
- The academy meets the current floor standard, which sets the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching for all groups of students, especially disabled students and those who have special educational needs and those eligible for the pupil premium, so that they make good progress, especially in English and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring there are high expectations of the progress all students should make
 - setting work at the right level of difficulty for individual students
 - placing greater emphasis on the marking and improvement of spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - strengthening the monitoring of teaching and sharing more widely the good practice already present in the academy.
- Strengthen leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - leaders and managers check teaching and the progress of all students in lessons closely to secure consistency in the quality of teaching and achievement across subjects
 - when planning for improvement, leaders and managers focus their actions where they are most needed and check that changes have a positive impact on students' achievement
 - the pupil premium is being used as effectively as possible to accelerate the progress of the students eligible for this funding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Expectations of the progress students should make are not high enough and overall achievement requires improvement. Although students in Key Stages 3 and 4 make the progress that could be expected of them in English and mathematics given their individual starting points in Year 7 too few students exceed this rate of progress. Some groups of students do less well than they should and the academy is not yet fully effective in promoting equality of opportunity.
- The standards students achieve when they join the academy are below national averages. Typically, they start secondary school three months behind their peers nationally.
- When students leave the academy they have generally achieved standards that are close to average. Despite a dip in GCSE results in 2013, overall standards in English and mathematics are also close to average. Achievement in reading is improving as a result of whole academy initiatives, such as accelerated reading sessions.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, do not make as much progress in English and mathematics as other students. In 2013, the gap in attainment between these students and others in English was equivalent to one and a third grades at GCSE. In mathematics, the gap was one and a quarter grades. The gap is narrowing for these students lower down the school but not yet fast enough for the older students to attain the level expected.
- Achievement for disabled students and those who have special educational needs, especially those supported at school action plus, requires improvement. The newly established inclusion unit is part of the academy's response to this concern. Support is improving progress but it is too early to see an impact on the progress of this group of students over time.
- The achievement of the more able has been a cause for concern because too few students achieve the top GCSE grades. Although not enough students consistently exceed the progress expected of them, attainment in the 2013 examinations show actions have led to an increase in students achieving the top grades.
- Students eligible for the catch-up premium in Year 7 improve their reading ability and make better progress in English and mathematics because they are given specific support focused on their needs, for example through the summer school programme.
- The academy has an early entry policy in GCSE mathematics. The proportion of those achieving higher grades in 2013 increased and is closer to that seen nationally because these more-able students are ready to take the exam.
- A small number of students follow courses, for part of their time, which are delivered off-site by other organisations. The quality of this provision is checked regularly and these students achieve well because the courses are well matched to their needs and aspirations.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is too variable within and across subjects and, although improving, it requires further improvement because not enough is good or better. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of the progress some students should make. As a result disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and students eligible for the pupil premium, are not always pushed sufficiently to tackle work that ensures they make the progress they should.
- The match of work to students' ability is not always correct to enable students, including the more able, to make as much progress as possible.
- Teaching is consistently good in history, modern foreign languages, physical education and geography, but less consistently so in English, mathematics and design technology. Students spoken to during inspection agree that the quality of teaching is variable and that this sometimes holds back their progress. As yet, the school does not fully share best practice

between teachers.

- Where teaching is good or better, teachers have good subject knowledge and a passion for their subject. They have high expectations of what students can achieve. In a GCSE photography lesson about focal length, for example, expert subject knowledge and skilful questioning engaged and challenged students of all abilities to achieve well.
- The teaching of reading is improving skills as a result of whole academy initiatives, such as accelerated reading. However, the writing skills of students are often less developed. This is partly because too little emphasis is placed by some teachers in their marking on the correction and improvement of spelling, punctuation and grammar in students' written work.
- The teaching of mathematics requires improvement because the quality is inconsistent and not enough of the teaching is good or better.
- Lessons are generally characterised by a calm and purposeful environment for learning, because relationships between staff and students are positive and supportive. This provides a solid base for further improvement in the standard of teaching.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- There has been a steady reduction in the proportion of persistent absentees over the last three years as a result of concerted efforts by the academy, including the appointment of an attendance officer. Consequently, overall attendance has improved and now compares favourably with the national average.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the academy is good, although the sometimes congested corridors mean that movement between lessons requires supervision. They display positive attitudes towards learning and enjoy good relationships with staff; as a result there is little disruption of learning because of indiscipline.
- Students, parents and staff are confident that bullying is dealt with promptly and effectively. Incidences of bullying are not high and are reducing. Students are taught about responsible use of digital media, through assemblies about cyber-bullying for example, and are alert to the threats of racism and homophobic bullying and how to respond to these.
- Rates of exclusion have fallen in the past year. Fixed-term exclusions are lower than national figures because of effective initiatives such as the new behaviour policy and the creation of an on-site isolation unit for students at risk of exclusion.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. Students work together cooperatively and study other cultures and value systems in lessons, and through a full and varied calendar of activities and experiences. The academy's involvement in the International Schools programme increases these opportunities further.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The effective Principal has secured improvements in behaviour, attendance and achievement in several subjects. However, actions to ensure consistency in progress in English and mathematics for all pupils and to raise the quality of teaching have not yet been secured. Nevertheless, there is a strong ambition to improve students' achievement and an accurate understanding of where improvement is needed, which is clearly communicated to all. The school has capacity to improve.
- Monitoring of teaching is regular and observations lead to detailed feedback to staff. This is leading to effective training and teachers report this has helped improve their practice. This is reflected in the better teaching seen during the inspection. However, observations do not always give enough attention to the impact of teaching on students' progress in lessons. As a result the observations have reduced the amount of weaker teaching, but have not ensured it is consistently good.
- The Principal strictly applies criteria against which the performance of teachers is judged and

pay increases are awarded. Underperformance is tackled robustly and good teaching is rewarded. This has contributed to a general improvement in the teaching since the previous inspection.

- Tracking of students' progress is improving, as can be seen by a rise in progress for the more able. However, this is not used as effectively to ensure that all groups of pupils make as much progress as possible. When planning for improvement, leaders and managers do not always use all of the information now available to focus their actions where they are most needed. As the plan is implemented, leaders tend to tick off the completion of actions rather than checking the impact of those actions on achievement.
- Pupil premium funding has been used in a number of ways, including reducing class sizes and a range of interventions, for example around attendance. However, senior leaders have not, until very recently, given sufficient attention to how effective spending has been on raising the achievement of students eligible for this funding. As a result the gap in achievement between those students eligible for the funding and all other students has narrowed for younger students but not fast enough for older students.
- The curriculum provides an effective bridge between key stages and on to further education, training and employment. There is a good range of courses leading mainly to GCSE qualifications. The curriculum is kept under review to ensure courses continue to match the needs and aspirations of students.
- The academy's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- Parents and staff support the school's leadership and express generally very positive views about the education provided.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are experienced and well informed about the overall performance of the academy. As a result of training they challenge more effectively about areas of underperformance and actions to secure improvement. They are increasingly confident in interpreting external reports about the academy, including examination results.
 - Governors manage finances effectively but until recently have placed insufficient emphasis on the impact of the pupils premium on students' progress. They have not held senior leaders to account for the performance of disabled students and those who have special educational needs and of students eligible for the pupil premium.
 - Governors support the Principal's robust approach to the performance management of teachers. They are well informed about the quality of teaching and are not afraid to take decisive action to tackle poor performance.

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	137262
Local authority	Not applicable
Inspection number	425887

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

Type of school	Academy convertor
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,038
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Collins
Principal	Nicola Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 2012
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