

The John Wallis Church of England Academy

Millbank Road, Ashford, Kent, TN23 3HG

Inspection dates

9– 10 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	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.

- The inspirational Principal has an ambitious vision of continual improvement for the academy. He is ably supported by his senior team, his staff and the governors,
- Teaching is improving rapidly. Most is now at least good; some is outstanding.
- In all key stages, progress over time is good and the proportion of students achieving five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, has improved significantly.
- All groups of students are achieving well and gaps in attainment are closing. This is because of the school's determination to ensure that no student is left behind.
- Students behave well and they feel safe. They are proud of the academy and older students refer with pride to the improvements that have taken place, and the academy's growing popularity.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are making good progress because of the quality of care and support offered.
- The primary sector, which has been in operation for just four terms, is now flourishing because of high-quality leadership and the establishment of a stable and committed staff.
- The embryonic sixth form is developing well. Teaching is good, standards are rising and improved support and guidance is enabling many students to meet their ambitious career plans.
- The governing body is very effective. Ambitious plans to create a vibrant and successful all-through academy in an area that faces many challenges are already meeting with success. Governors keenly support the Principal and his staff, but are appropriately questioning and demanding. They are committed to securing further improvements in their quest to take the academy to even higher levels of performance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a minority of lessons, the work planned does not sufficiently motivate, enthuse and challenge all students. As a consequence, the progress made in those lessons, and over time, is less than it could be.
- A small number of sixth formers are given the opportunity to study courses for which they might not have met the minimum entry criteria, leading to disappointing results at the end of Year 12.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 53 lessons taught by 51 different teachers. Approximately a quarter of lessons were jointly observed with senior staff members.
- Meetings were held with the governors, including the chair, who represented sponsors of the academy, and with the local authority. Meetings were held with six different student groups and with many different staff, including the Principal, the head of the primary school and other leaders.
- Inspectors took account of 36 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View in planning the inspection. The responses to 74 staff questionnaires were also considered.
- Inspectors looked at samples of students' past and present work and scrutinised various documents. These included the academy's checks on how well it is doing, and planning and extensive information on students' academic progress and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors evaluated the impact of additional funding such as sports funding in the primary school and the pupil premium.

Inspection team

Bill Stoneham, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Jennifer Bray	Additional inspector
Jane Ladner	Additional inspector
Josephine Lewis	Additional inspector
Cliff Mainey	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy opened as an 11–16 school in 2010. A sixth form was created in September 2011. In September 2012, a primary sector was opened making the school an all-through provider for pupils and students aged 3–19. Both the predecessor secondary and primary school had previously been in special measures.
- The academy is sponsored by the Diocese of Canterbury, Benenden School, Canterbury Christ Church University and Kent County Council.
- It is larger than the average-sized school.
- There are similar numbers of boys and girls attending the school in the age range 3–16, but boys outnumber girls in the sixth form.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government to help nationally underperforming groups such as students eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after) is considerably above the national average.
- Close to 80% of students are of a White British heritage. While the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below average, the proportion who speaks English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is well above average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also well above average.
- A very small number of Key Stage 4 students receive part of their education off-site through The North School, a neighbouring secondary school, and K College, a local further education provider.
- In the 2012–13 academic year, the academy's secondary school met the current government floor standard, which determines the minimum expectations for attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4. The floor standard was not met in the primary sector.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise standards in all subjects in all key stages by ensuring that:
 - remaining inconsistencies that exist in the quality of teaching, including the promotion of writing, are eliminated so that an even higher proportion of lessons provide good and outstanding learning experiences for the pupils and students.
- Ensure that all students in the sixth form progress well and achieve highly by refining:
 - the processes whereby all students are enrolled on to appropriate courses
 - assessment procedures, especially in Year 12, so that 'U' grades are totally eliminated in advanced subsidiary examinations.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The proportion of students gaining five A* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, has improved significantly since the academy's inception. Though outcomes remain below average, students' achievements are good given their very low starting points.
- The academy assumed responsibility for the primary sector in 2012. Outcomes in the summer of 2013 were well below average. Since this time, the new primary leadership team has been established and the majority of teaching staff are new. Work seen in lessons and in pupils' books shows that progress over time is good. From their well-below-average starting points, primary-aged pupils are achieving well.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills which are well below the levels typically found for their age. Consistently good and thorough teaching allied to the consistent support that is now provided ensures that achievement and progress over time are good. Progress is checked carefully and regularly, and good gains are made in phonics (the sounds that letters make) and in social development.
- Money received through the primary school sport funding programme is used effectively. It is used to employ an on-site sports specialist who works with a nurture group to improve behaviour and promote responsibility, runs a number of after-school clubs and is providing specialist physical education teaching for every class. Participation in sporting activities has risen appreciably and greater emphasis is now placed on developing healthy lifestyles.
- Students supported by the Year 7 catch-up premium achieve well. Funds have been spent to help students to improve their work in literacy and numeracy. Detailed academy data indicates that the vast majority have made significant progress since the start of the current academic year in English and mathematics.
- The progress and attainment of students supported by the pupil premium, generally, and specifically in English and mathematics, are good,. Intensive support work and individual tuition are effective in raising skills and confidence in numeracy and literacy, especially reading and speaking, although inconsistencies exist in the encouragement given to students to write formally and for different audiences. In 2013, the gap between these students and their peers who did not benefit from pupil premium funding was approximately one GCSE grade. Based on the academy's own detailed tracking systems, the gap is now approximately half a GCSE grade. In the primary school the gap was approximately two sub-grades, but this has now been significantly reduced.
- The progress made by other groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs and the significant minority who speak English as an additional language, is good in all key stages. Higher-attaining students make good progress and the recent introduction of an academy sixth form offers them further incentives to do well.
- The academy's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination is illustrated by work undertaken with physically disabled students. These students make good progress and have access to the full curriculum, including physical education. The academy has been Kent boccia champions for the last four years.
- A carefully designed curriculum is boosting outcomes. Students, in both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, following vocational courses as diverse as health and social care, beauty therapy and construction trades, make at least good progress. Some of the sixth form work is outstanding. The progress of the small number of students attending courses off-site is tracked and monitored carefully to ensure good progress and achievement.
- In 2013 the academy entered students for A-level and equivalent examinations for the first time. The prior attainment of this group was well below average but their outcomes were well in excess of expectations; their achievements were good. Advanced subsidiary examination results in 2013 were an improvement on those gained in 2012, but some did not successfully complete their courses of study. Recruitment and monitoring arrangements are improving but procedures need refining to ensure that everyone who begins A level and equivalent courses makes at least

good progress.

- The academy has entered students early for GCSE mathematics. Outcomes are mixed and the benefits are few. The academy has decided to discontinue this policy.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Most teaching across all key stages, including the sixth form is good, with some that is outstanding. Where teaching is good or better, teachers have high expectations of their students and challenge them to do well.
- The quality of teaching is improving well. This is because monitoring procedures are detailed and effective. The academy has had a high turnover of staff and great care has been taken to recruit high-calibre staff. This is illustrated well in the primary sector where a new staff team was only established for the start of the current academic year. Teaching in this sector is already good, is constantly improving, and is directly responsible for the rapid improvements in standards.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, a lively, attractive and stimulating working environment has been established. This fosters good teaching and children make good progress because they feel happy in their learning.
- In most lessons, pupils and students make at least good progress because work is planned well to suit the needs of different groups. Staff use assessment information to help their planning and the work set is appropriate, and challenging. Where teaching is especially effective, staff are aware of the needs of many pupils and students to improve their skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics, and provision is made to ensure that these skills are developed.
- Based on prior attainment information, the academy has comparatively few higher-attaining students. However, staff are aware of who these students are and, in most lessons, work is appropriately pitched to meet their needs.
- Overall, teaching is good rather than outstanding because some inconsistencies remain. Where teaching is deemed to require improvement, it is often because students are not offered sufficient scope to develop their skills in writing, including writing in different forms and for different audiences.
- On other occasions where teaching is less effective, teachers' planning lacks sharpness. This means that the work covered does not fully secure the students' attention and does not enthuse them sufficiently. In such cases, students learn too slowly. In a very small minority of cases, behaviour slips because the students move off task and are not able to see the relevance of the work set.
- Outstanding teaching was seen in a Year 6 guided reading lesson with a lower-ability group. The teacher used different strategies with different pupils to encourage them to explain the meaning of what they had read. The pupils were also encouraged to write about their learning. All were challenged and all made rapid progress because the teacher successfully encouraged resilience, confidence and self-reliance. These same qualities were successfully developed in an outstanding Year 12 child development lesson. The class was split into small groups; each group had to deliver an oral presentation on aspects of Piaget's work on child development. It was impressive to witness how confidence and determination to succeed blossomed as the lesson developed.
- Good progress was evident where teachers worked well with teaching assistants to provide additional help and support to those who required it. Occasionally, teaching assistants had not been adequately briefed, and supported students made less progress in such cases. In the majority of cases, however, teaching assistants' roles were clear and those provided with extra support during the lesson made at least good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Older students said that this had not always been so but it was now the norm. The well-above-average short-term exclusion rates which characterised the early years of the academy have been significantly reduced. The behaviour code is understood by all and is largely adhered to.
- Students' good and sensible behaviour contributes significantly to the calmness and friendliness of the academy. Students are now proud of their academy and like making guests feel welcome. They treat their working environment with respect. The large site was mainly devoid of litter. This reflects well on the students' behaviour and on the site team.
- Behaviour in most lessons is at least good and the students are keen to learn. Students cooperate well with staff and have positive attitudes to learning. This was especially so in the primary academy where the pupils have reacted most positively to the new teaching team, resulting in rapid progress.
- In a very small minority of lessons in the secondary academy, standards of behaviour slip because the set work does not engage the students sufficiently. Most remain quiet, but are passive and fail to engage; a minority resort to silly behaviour such as calling out and off-task chatter. Such instances, however, are rare.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Risk assessment for practical activities in school, or for off-site visits, is detailed and appropriate.
- Across all key stages, students are clear about what constitutes bullying, including cyber bullying and aggressive attitudes towards individuals' beliefs, ethnic and cultural background, lifestyle or sexuality. Students from all years told inspectors about the many improvements that had taken place. All said that they felt safe, often adding that examples of anti-social behaviour are rare. Students also reported that if anything untoward did happen, they knew who to approach and that they had considerable faith in their staff to deal with anything that might be deemed unsavoury.
- Attendance has improved rapidly since the academy was established and continues to do so. Attendance in the sixth form mirrors that of the academy overall, and the attendance and behaviour of the few students working off-site are carefully monitored.
- In all years students are given responsibilities that help to unify the academy and ensure its smooth operation. Older students, for example, appreciate the opportunities given for them to help younger students. These factors contribute well to promoting the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The leadership and management are good

- Strongly supported by the sponsors and governors, the academy's visionary Principal has fostered positive attitudes to achievement, raised staff and student self-esteem and demonstrated through his own approach to all aspects of academy life that everyone deserves respect.
- Staff morale is high and while very few parents answered the inspection questionnaire, it is clear that the academy is improving rapidly and growing in popularity. The staff team and governors is determined that attending The John Wallis Academy will be a life-changing experience. As one of the first ever sixth-form leavers told the inspectors: 'My life changed following the appointment of the Principal. When he arrived telling us about all his rules, I laughed. Now, I can only applaud and thank him for all his work. I am so proud of what I have achieved.'
- There is an unstinting focus on driving standards and to ensure that progress is both rapid and sustainable. Since the academy's inception, many staff have left, but considerable care has been taken in terms of recruitment and staff professional development. The effective management of teaching and learning is given a high priority. This focus on quality is witnessed by the rapid turnaround in the fortunes of the primary sector. The 2012–13 academic year was a difficult one and outcomes last summer were well below par. Under new leadership and with a new teaching team, the situation has been transformed and standards are rising rapidly.
- Leaders and managers at all levels, including middle leaders, have key roles to play. Middle

managers, many of whom are quite inexperienced, are fully committed to driving improvement and are keen to see the academy succeed.

- The academy's self-evaluation is accurate. All leaders and managers understand fully its strengths and weaknesses and what needs to be done to improve. Staff at all levels work with determination and vigour to ensure that challenging performance targets are met.
- Arrangements for the professional development of staff are rigorous and the set targets are linked to performance management. Such robust procedures play a critical role in improving standards.
- The curriculum has been designed well to help prepare students adequately for their next steps. The academy's vocational provision is a strength of its work and ensures that school leavers have clearly defined pathways to follow.
- The small but growing sixth form is still in its infancy. Some mistakes have been made in terms of recruiting some students to certain courses but the systems for advising, counselling and mentoring sixth formers are improving. The sixth form management team are determined to secure further improvements. They have a clear vision about how the sixth form should develop and they are very pleased that in 2013 a cohort of students left the academy to go to university.
- Much emphasis is placed on developing respect and helping others. A Christian ethos is to the fore in much of the academy's work. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well throughout the academy. Aspects of this are especially strong in the primary school.
- The academy works closely with the local authority. This close cooperation is helping to raise standards.
- The arrangements for safeguarding, including for those students who receive part of their education off-site, are thorough and meet all statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Representatives of the academy's sponsors and other governors bring a wealth of experience and expertise to their role. They share the Principal's long-term vision for the academy to become regarded as a centre of excellence. Governors know about the impact of teaching on students' learning and monitor the relationship between teachers' salaries and their effectiveness very closely, with precise targets being set. They know how the academy is tackling underperformance. They are able to analyse and evaluate information about students' attainment and progress. Governors are rigorous in their monitoring of progress made by all groups of students, including those eligible for additional government funding. They meet their statutory responsibilities and make sure that they undertake relevant training to keep abreast of changes nationally. They have a good grasp of the school's finances and know how well the school is doing in relation to other schools nationally.

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	136197
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	399784

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,429
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	172
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Charles Covell
Headteacher	John McParland
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Telephone number	01233 623465
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Email address	office@thejohnwallisacademy.org

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