

The Leigh Technology Academy

Green Street Green Road, Dartford, DA1 1QE

Inspection dates 09–10 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress overall, and outstanding progress in English, mathematics and some other subjects, because teaching is good.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they have positive attitudes to work.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They say that bullying is very rare and that when it does occur, staff deal with it swiftly and effectively.
- The school provides exceptionally good care for its pupils.
- The principals, other senior leaders and governors, provide outstanding leadership. They work successfully with other leaders and governors to raise standards and improve pupils' progress.
- Leaders work determinedly to improve teaching and subject leadership skills, and provide effective training to improve the quality of teaching.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress because teaching is consistently of a high quality.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Work is sometimes not matched to the specific learning needs of pupils.
- Teachers' questioning does not always make sure that all pupils have opportunities to discuss their work so that they improve their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers do not always mark pupils' work often enough, make sure that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work, or make sure that they follow any guidance they are given.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 53 teachers in 56 lessons or parts of lessons. Nine of these were observed jointly with senior leaders to determine how accurately they evaluate teaching.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils, parents and governors. The lead inspector also met with a representative of The Leigh Academies Trust.
- Inspectors examined documents about the school’s work, including information about the achievement of pupils, development planning and the school’s own judgements on its strengths and weaknesses.
- They took account of 82 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, and the school’s own survey of parental views.

Inspection team

Edward Wheatley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Roger Waddingham

Additional Inspector

Angela Podmore

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Kevin Morris

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Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than most secondary schools. It is in an area served by several grammar schools.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average, and no pupils are at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well below average, and the proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. This is additional government funding for children looked after by the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those whose families are in the armed services.
- A small number of sixth form students are partly educated at other academies within The Leigh Academies Trust to provide them with opportunities to gain work-related qualifications, or to study on 'A' level courses not provided at this academy.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school takes students from other schools into its sixth form, and currently about ten percent of students come from other schools. A similar proportion of students leave at the end of Year 11 to go to other schools or colleges to follow sixth form courses.
- The school is divided into four colleges internally, and younger students experience many of their lessons within their college rather than as part of the whole school. The principals of colleges rotate the role of lead principal.
- The school has a local authority funded unit for pupils with hearing impairment. It can take up to 25 pupils, but currently has seven, and numbers are falling.
- The school has experienced significant changes in staffing in some areas in recent years.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement to outstanding by making sure that:
 - work is demanding for all students, whatever their abilities
 - teachers help improve students' learning by making sure their questioning involves all students in discussing their knowledge and understanding
 - teachers mark students' work frequently, tell students how well they are doing and how they can improve their work, and check that they follow the guidance they are given.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards are well above average by the end of Year 11, and are rising. In English and mathematics especially, and also in business, design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), and physical education, standards are high. GCSE results were above average in 2012, and students did particularly well when taking their best eight subjects into account.
- Standards in science, modern foreign languages are above average and are rising after a period of below average results. Results in these subjects are not as high as they should be, but the school is successful in its efforts to make sure standards rise.
- The standards reached represent good progress overall, and outstanding progress in English and mathematics from below average attainment on entry to the school. Students' progress in business, design and technology, ICT and physical education is also outstanding. Progress is improving throughout the school, and rapidly in those subjects where there has been past underachievement.
- Students read well. The lowest ability students link sounds and letters together well to help them read effectively. Most students speak confidently and clearly, and explain their ideas well. As a rule, and in most subjects, students' writing is good, and shows that they express themselves as well in writing as they do in speech.
- Students' mathematical skills are above average. They have good skills in basic mathematical processes and apply and practise them well in most subjects. They use graphs and interpret numerical information accurately.
- A small number of students take their mathematics GCSE examinations early. Those who obtain good results then take additional mathematics, which prepares them well for mathematics in the sixth form. Students who do not so well continue with the GCSE course in order to obtain better grades at the end of Year 11. This is good practice.
- Students with special educational needs or who are disabled make good and sometimes outstanding progress because they are extremely well supported. They become confident, independent learners who work well with other students.
- Students who start in Year 7 with poor English and mathematics skills make rapid progress, and catch up on other students quickly. The school quickly identifies who these students are and provides effective individual support and guidance to help them catch up.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium funding make good progress. The standards they reached in 2012 were lower than those achieved by other students. Currently, their standards are similar to those of other students in both English and mathematics, and their progress to these points has been more rapid than that of other students.
- Students who are educated at other academies make good and often outstanding progress in the work-related or academic course they follow.
- The small number of students with hearing impairment makes good and often excellent

progress, because they are well supported by specialist support staff.

- Students in the sixth form make good progress from below average starting points. In the A level courses they make good and sometimes outstanding progress and the standards they reach are broadly average. Standards are rising. Progress in AS level courses is good, and standards are rising. The stay-on rate from AS to A level courses is rising, though some students make good use of their AS qualifications to go on to alternative further education or employment.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is usually challenging. In most lessons it is based on accurate assessment of how well students make progress, what their individual learning needs are, and what kinds of activities will best make sure that they learn well.
 - Lessons are 90 minutes long, and in most of them teachers provide a wide range of activities that help students concentrate on their learning, and that encourage them to learn independently. Small group activities are regular features of lessons, and teachers organise these well. They make sure that all students in small groups take active roles in activities, and work together closely, supporting each other so that they all learn well. This promotes students' moral and social development effectively.
 - In most lessons teachers' questioning is demanding, and students are expected to contribute to discussion in order to help them explain their understanding and knowledge clearly and accurately.
 - Teachers provide opportunities in most subjects for students to practise and improve their writing skills. Teachers also ensure that students use mathematical skills where necessary and use computers to enhance their learning. This improves and consolidates students' basic learning skills effectively.
 - Learning support assistants work closely with teachers. They support students with special educational needs well, with subject information and advice on how to learn, but also give students opportunities to work with other students or on their own. This successfully encourages these students to be independent, and to work well with other people.
 - Teachers' marking is frequently good and gives students clear information about how well they are doing and how to improve their work. In the best instances, teachers check that students follow the guidance they are given on how to improve their work. However, the quality of marking varies. Occasionally it is infrequent, gives little information about how well students are performing, or how to improve their work. Teachers do not always check that students follow the guidance they are given.
 - In some lessons work is not carefully enough matched to the needs of students. It is either not demanding enough for able students or suitable for students who learn slowly.
 - Occasionally teachers' questioning is not effective in making sure all students are involved in discussing and explaining what they are learning. This means that sometimes students do not learn as well as they should.
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- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Students' particular needs are identified accurately and teachers provide individual support when it is needed. The range of subjects offered is good, and while there are demanding entry requirements to start sixth form courses, there is also some flexibility where the school feels students would benefit from following a course in the sixth form.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students behave well in lessons and extremely well around the school. Students are keen to learn and for the most part their attitudes are very positive. Occasionally, when work is not demanding enough or suited to their needs, their attention wanders.
- Relationships are very good. Students treat each other extremely well. They work together sensibly in small groups, and collaborate readily over tasks they are expected to do.
- Relationships are enhanced by the college structure. Students say, and inspectors agree, that there is close family feel to being in the smaller college unit, and that students enjoy the school more because of this.
- Students participate readily in the wide range of sports, social, art, music and drama activities that the school provides. Many students attend the after school and weekend revision clubs that staff provide.
- Students have a very good understanding of the different forms of bullying. They say that bullying happens rarely, but that the school deals with it efficiently and sensitively. They would have no hesitation in going to a member of staff if they were worried about anything.
- Students know how to stay safe. In laboratories, workshops and around the school they behave safely, with consideration for the safety of themselves and each other.
- Attendance is above average, and is rising. The school has effective connections with external agencies to support its work in promoting good attendance and reducing absence.
- Students in the sixth form behave extremely well. They have positive attitudes to learning and they set a good example to younger students. Their attendance is good. They are very positive about the opportunities the school provides for them, and the help they receive from the staff who teach them or look after their welfare.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The principals provide excellent direction for the school to improve and they are exceptionally well supported by senior staff. Leaders have accurately identified areas for improvement and are acting with urgency to address them.
- In particular, they have appointed new leaders to those subjects where there has been underachievement. With effective support and training, these new leaders have rapidly laid the foundations for improved teaching. Standards have started to rise and progress is improving.
- Leaders act urgently to appoint staff to fill vacancies, and provide training successfully to help

new staff settle quickly into the school, and to work effectively in the subjects they are attached to.

- Leaders have eliminated inadequate teaching. Teachers have a clear view of the teaching standards expected of them, and the procedures to check on teaching are thorough. Training and support for staff is excellent and is leading to improving teaching. Teachers have targets to help them improve, and these are linked to school priorities, professional development and the progress made by students.
 - The school has exceptionally good links with The Leigh Academies Trust and this provides extremely good training for teachers and subject leaders. For its part, the school provides training and support for other academies within The Trust.
 - The school organises the wide range of subjects it teaches extremely well, and reviews them regularly, adjusting its provision to meet the changing needs of students. The academic and work-related needs of students are well met and supported by this school, and by others in The Leigh Academies Trust.
 - The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, and this is well supported through assemblies, charity work, drama, art, music and literature.
 - The school promotes tolerance and respect for each other and for people from different backgrounds and cultures. Discrimination of all kinds is not tolerated. It is effective in dealing with underachievement and making sure all students make good progress.
 - Standards are rising, teaching is good and improving, students' attendance is above average and rising. These improvements and the determination and speed with which reasons for underachievement are dealt with demonstrate the school's strong capacity for further improvement.
 - Parents are pleased with the school. The school's own survey of parental views, and its openness to suggestions from parents confirm this. Parents met during the inspection were overwhelmingly supportive of the school.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors are extremely well informed and have high ambitions for the school and the success of its students. They challenge the principals about the standards reached and have a very good understanding of how well students perform in relation to each other and to other schools. They monitor how the school spends its money, in particular in spending to promote the progress made by different groups of students, and especially those supported through pupil premium funding. They are well informed about how the school checks on the quality of teaching, and that teachers' progress on salary scales is dependent on students' progress, teachers' professional development and their contributions to the school's priorities for development. They know how leaders deal with inadequate teaching. The governing body (The Leigh Academies Trust) is well trained, and fully meets its responsibilities in regard to safeguarding and in making sure the school thoroughly checks all staff before they take up appointment.
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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	135297
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	413346

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1485
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	259
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Reed
Principals	Pete Finnegan, Maggie Leah-Wilkinson, Jane Rowlands, Sharon Waterman
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2009
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