

Longfield Academy

Main Road, Longfield, DA3 7PH

Inspection dates 10–11 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Leadership is strong across the academy. Senior leaders work well in partnership with Leigh Academy Trust and the governors.
- As a result of leaders taking decisive action, the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has risen significantly over the last three years.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They plan well and motivate students to learn.
- The gap in attainment between students on free school meals and other students has narrowed significantly.
- There is a positive atmosphere that promotes learning throughout the academy. Most students display good attitudes to learning. They behave maturely around the site and show high levels of respect and courtesy towards each other.
- Students say they feel safe. Parents and carers confirm this view.
- The sixth form is good and improving. Students are supported well to make informed choices about their next steps in education, training or employment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers' marking does not always tell students what they need to do to improve, especially in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- A few students in Key Stage 3 lose concentration too easily and do not always show the level of perseverance they need to succeed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 41 lessons or part lessons, seven of which were observed together with senior leaders. A check was also carried out on pupils' work in workbooks.
- Meetings were held with the Principals, senior and subject leaders, students, representatives from Leigh Academy Trust and two members of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered 32 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and responses from parent questionnaires carried out by the academy. They also took note of a letter and a telephone conversation with parents. Inspectors analysed the results from 20 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked at the school's data relating to students' current achievement, the school's evaluation of its work, improvement plans, and records of behaviour, safety, attendance, exclusions and safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed students read in class and talked to them about their reading.

Inspection team

Patricia Hunt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Stephen Hume

Additional Inspector

Gwendoline Simms

Additional Inspector

Sarah Murrell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Longfield Academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school and includes a sixth form.
- The Academy has three Principals who each lead a college within the Academy.
- The Academy opened in September 2008 and is sponsored by Leigh Academy Trust, University of Kent and Kent County Council
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium is below that found nationally. (The pupil premium is funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority).
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below that found nationally, as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have 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 national average.
- The Academy has specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs. It supports 40 students with autistic spectrum disorder.
- A small number of students attend full-time alternative provision organised by North West Kent Alternative Provision Service.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rate of progress made by students so that standards continue to rise, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers' marking matches that of the very best already evident in the school in order to give all students direction about what they need to do to improve, especially their spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - the small number of students, in Key Stage 3, who lose concentration too easily are helped to develop the attitudes they need to persevere and succeed.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- On entry to Year 7, students have below average levels of attainment in English and mathematics. In 2013, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above, including English and mathematics, was above the national average. The school's data shows that students are on track to improve on these results in 2014.
- Academy leaders have tackled the fall in student' attainment and progress in Science in 2013. Current information about students' progress, confirmed by work in their books, shows that they are now making much faster progress this year.
- The proportions of students making and exceeding expected progress in English are well above national figures. This is due to good teaching and a strong focus on timely assessments of students' progress and understanding.
- The proportions of students making expected progress in mathematics was above the national average. However, the proportion making more than expected progress was below average in 2013 but many more pupils are making good progress this year.
- The gap in the performance of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium and others in the academy is narrowing. In 2013, the results of these students were half a grade below those of other students in English and mathematics. More students eligible for pupil premium made the progress expected of them in 2013 compared to previous years. The academy has invested in a number of strategies that, in-school data show, is narrowing the achievement gap.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is being used effectively to ensure students acquire the literacy and numeracy skills they need to be successful. The majority of these students are quickly catching up.
- The most able students are now learning well. The proportions of these students achieving the top GCSE grades were below the national average in 2013 in a number of subjects, including science, English literature, geography, mathematics and languages. Leaders have been proactive in addressing this and, this year, the school's data show a marked improvement.
- Seven students in Key Stage 4 attend alternative provision full time. The attendance, behaviour and progress of these students are closely monitored by the school. They are making similar progress to their peers.
- Achievement in the sixth form is improving rapidly. The academy offers a wide range of academic and vocational courses. At A level, progress has been below the national average. However, as a consequence of more rigorous tracking and monitoring, recent assessment information shows students are on track to achieve much higher grades at A level this year. Students following vocational courses, have over time, made good progress.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is as a result of the strong leadership and the support they receive in lessons and in the Spectrum Centre, the resource unit for students with autistic spectrum disorder. Students in the Spectrum Centre enjoy their time at school, feel safe and achieve well.
- The academy has reduced its use of early entry to examinations significantly. This year, 60 students sat their mathematics GCSE examinations early. However, in the future the academy

does not intend to use early entry as a strategy. This year those students who sat their GCSE early are following a GCSE statistics course to extend the range of qualifications they achieve in mathematics.

- A few students in Key Stage 3 do not always make as much progress as they should because they do not always persevere to complete tasks.

The quality of teaching is good

- Students benefit from teaching that supports and challenges them to achieve their best.
- Teachers have high expectations. Staff know their subjects well, plan structured lessons and make sure that teaching rooms provide a stimulating environment in which to learn. Teachers said that the range of training opportunities available to them is supporting them to improve their teaching. A culture of sharing best practice is developing across the academy.
- Most teaching ensures students gain new knowledge and skills, allowing them to find things out for themselves. The academy's commitment to using technology to support effective learning was evident in a number of lessons where students accessed key information from their tablet computers and used it to deepen their understanding.
- Students respond well to skilful questioning. As a result, they think deeply and use skills such as inference and empathy to move their learning on. Very effective learning was observed in a science lesson in Year 7 where skilful questioning led to students challenging their own thoughts and considering the views of others.
- Students spoke very positively about their experiences in a wide range of subjects. Students know their targets and what they need to do to achieve them.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Students are well supported and commented that teachers go the extra mile to make sure they do well.
- Teaching assistants and other adults are used very effectively to support students' learning, particularly the learning of students from the Spectrum Centre. These students are monitored very closely to ensure that they are making at least good progress. Many of these students talked fondly about the support they receive.
- Teachers mark students' work regularly. At its most effective marking gives students detailed comments about what they need to do to improve and time to act upon this. However, too often the teachers' marking does not provide this detailed support, and does not help students to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Students' behaviour in lessons and around the academy is calm and respectful. They make their way to lessons promptly after break and lunchtime and are well prepared for the lesson.
- Most students have positive attitudes to learning. They cooperate well and are very respectful of each other. Occasionally, a few students in Key Stage 3 lose concentration and do not persevere for long enough to complete the work they have been set.

- The academy has used a raft of strategies to successfully improve attendance and lower the number of pupils who are persistently absent. These strategies have been most successful in improving the attendance of those eligible for the pupil premium. The appointment of a 'pupil premium champion' has been a major factor in this.
- Exclusion rates are falling. Sometimes, the behaviour of a few students falls below the academy's high standards. The academy is dealing with this small minority of students through close monitoring and intervention and, as a result, there has been an improvement in their behaviour over time.
- Students in the sixth form feel valued and supported. During their time in the sixth form, they take on many different responsibilities around the academy, including supporting and mentoring younger pupils.
- Students and parents agree that students are safe at the academy and that this is because of the strong support they receive from the staff. Students have a clear understanding of the different types of bullying. They are aware of how to keep safe using computer technologies, the internet and social media.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. All statutory requirements for safeguarding students are in place. All personnel checks are carried out and safeguarding records kept well. The academy shares its good practice with other schools in the area.
- The academy has strong partnerships with external agencies and those provided by Leigh Academy Trust to give extra support to students whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable.
- The academy successfully promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a wide range of activities within and beyond the daily curriculum. Students are encouraged to take part in sporting, artistic and other events.

The leadership and management are good

- As a result of decisive action by the Principals and senior leaders, students are making good progress and standards are rising. It is clear that, with the support and challenge from governors and the Trust, the academy is pursuing excellence and striving to be outstanding.
- Subject leaders' roles in checking the progress of students have been strengthened. They are held fully accountable for raising achievement through improved teaching and curriculum opportunities. Recent appointments to these roles and good-quality training for subject leaders are having a positive impact on achievement in a number of subjects.
- The academy's development planning is detailed and well considered. The plan is reviewed often, and leaders and managers have remained focused on the main areas for improving achievement further. The leadership team is quite rightly considering how the academy can raise standards further by ensuring students' targets are more challenging so that more students make rapid and sustained progress.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good. There has been an increased focus on the use of information about students' progress to identify those students who need more support. School assessments shows that students are on track to make much better progress this year, particularly in academic subjects.

- The specialist resource base is having a very positive impact on the way students gain a sense of what it means to be inclusive. This is as a direct result of the leadership of this provision. The students from the base respect and value this opportunity to be fully integrated into the life of the academy.
- The choice of subjects offered to students is broad. There is an appropriate balance between academic and vocational subjects in Years 10 and 11. A more academic pathway offers more-able students the challenge to reach their potential.
- Students receive excellent information, advice and guidance, including careers advice. All students leaving the academy go on to further or higher education, employment or training.
- The academy sponsor provides good support. Help and guidance are provided through, for example, the rigorous analysis of the academy's data and holding academy leaders to account. The Trust also provides a number of services, such as educational psychologists and education welfare officers, to support the academy in its work.
- Safeguarding meets all statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the academy extremely well. They have a very good understanding of the quality of teaching in the academy. Governors ensure there is a strong link between the quality of teaching, the achievement of students and teachers' progression through the pay scales. Governors regularly visit the academy to monitor and challenge leaders and managers about the quality of learning.
 - The governors have a clear understanding of how effectively additional funding that supports students known to be eligible for the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up premium is spent. They were able to describe the positive impact on raising students' achievement.
 - Governors have a good understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for development as a result of effective monitoring and frequent updates. They regularly review statutory policies and ensure that all requirements are met, including those relating to students' safety.

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	135630
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	444364

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1050
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeremy Kite
Principal (Joint)	Pete Finnegan
Principal (Joint)	Alex O'Donnell
Principal (Joint)	Anne Davis
Date of previous school inspection	25 May 2011
Telephone number	01474 700700
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