

Huish Episcopi Academy

Wincanton Road, Langport, Somerset, TA10 9SS

Inspection dates 12–13 September 2012

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 principal and his team have been successful in establishing a culture and ethos of high expectation and aspiration through striving for excellence.
- Students make good progress in the main school to achieve good academic outcomes, regardless of ability, starting point or special educational needs.
- Equality of opportunity sits at the heart of the academy's work. Students develop well, both academically and as rounded individuals, suitably prepared for their future lives.
- Students' behaviour is positive and welcoming. Students are confident and happy, both around the academy and in lessons, and are emphatic that they feel safe and well cared for.
- Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses and a clear plan is in place to drive improvement. Staff performance is managed effectively and the governing body supports the academy well.
- Targeted professional development, the introduction of a programme to improve literacy skills across the curriculum and the development of classroom practice are used well to drive further improvements in teaching.
- The sixth form is now firmly established as an important aspect of the academy's provision and is helping to raise students' aspirations further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is too much variation in achievement across sixth form subjects which requires improvement. However, good leadership and management are securing a strong and steady rate of improvement, appropriate to its stage of development.
- The good quality of teaching is not sufficiently and consistently strong over time for it to be judged as outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 39 lessons, of which 12 were jointly observed with a member of the academy’s leadership team. In addition, one inspector undertook a learning walk, which comprised a number of short visits to lessons to look at provision for lower ability students and students with special educational needs.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body, one other governor and academy staff, including senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors took account of the 107 responses to the on-line Parent View survey during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work, and looked at a number of documents, including the academy’s own data on students’ current progress, self-evaluation, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, documents relating to safeguarding, and students’ work.

Inspection team

Karl Sampson, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
David Townsend	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Marcia Headon	Additional inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional inspector
Raye Allison-Smith	Additional inspector
Phil Taylor	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Huish Episcopi Academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- It converted to an academy on 1 September 2010. When last inspected in March 2007, Huish Episcopi School was judged to be an outstanding school.
- Sixth form provision was added on 1 September 2010.
- The academy serves a large rural area with a designated 'catchment area' of over 200 square miles.
- Most students are of White British heritage and almost all speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well below that found nationally.
- The proportion of students at school action and the proportion supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs are well below the national average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build upon the effective foundations already in place to raise students' aspirations in the sixth form and improve achievement further by:
 - eliminating the variability in progress and attainment between sixth form subjects so that all students are consistently challenged and supported to reach the highest grades.
- Strengthen the overall quality of teaching, to achieve greater consistency of good or outstanding practice by:
 - using assessment data so that learning activities are closely aligned to meet individual needs accurately and stretch and challenge students regardless of their starting point
 - extending the use of effective questioning and dialogue to all lessons to stimulate more active participation from students, so that their ideas and contributions have a greater capacity to shape lines of enquiry and drive learning forward
 - ensuring that all students are supported to use key vocabulary to articulate their ideas so that more students can access the highest levels through the development of extended writing skills
 - ensuring consistency in the use of high-quality subject-specific verbal and written feedback and providing routine opportunities for students to respond to teachers' comments and engage in a dialogue about learning and assessment.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The very large majority of parents and carers are pleased with the progress made by their children and a wide range of inspection evidence confirms the accuracy of this view.
- GCSE examination results are significantly above those found nationally across a range of attainment indicators and for a number of key subjects. An analysis of students' achievement over time shows that almost all groups of students make better progress than their peers nationally.
- Although good, overall progress in mathematics is not as strong as in English and science, especially for lower and some middle ability students. As a result of more sophisticated use of assessment information, targeted support is helping to reduce the gaps in achievement.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve at least as well as their peers. The curriculum and teaching are focused precisely on students' emerging needs and revised accordingly.
- In the large majority of lessons, students apply skills well to a range of learning activities and work effectively together in pairs and groups. Learning and progress are maximised when tasks are planned to develop their communication and literacy skills, whatever the subject content.
- In the past, the progress made by a few students known to be eligible for free school meals has been less rapid than that of their peers. However, precisely targeted and creative use of the pupil premium funding has enriched provision across all year groups. Analysis of assessment information and work in lessons demonstrates accelerated rates of progress for these students in English and mathematics.
- The sixth form has established itself well in its first two years of operation. The first cohort achieved a 100% pass rate at A level and there were outstanding results in the BTEC National physical education course. However, school leaders recognise that there is too much variation across subjects. While some students make good progress, the proportion attaining the best grades is not yet high enough.
- Good leadership has resulted in better systems for matching students to courses and more assiduous use of assessment information to monitor student and subject performance and to coordinate academic support for individual students.
- A concerted focus on the development of high-quality sixth form teaching is accelerating the rate at which students are making progress over time, although it is too early for the impact of these improvements to be seen fully in public examinations.

The quality of teaching is good

- The overall quality of teaching across the academy is good, and improving over time. Students, parents and carers rightly express confidence in the quality of teaching overall.
- Expectations of students' capabilities have been raised through more stringent use of assessment data to set challenging targets and inform teachers' planning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations for students' achievement. Lessons are usually well paced. The best quality learning was observed where teachers' questioning was probing and challenged students to think issues through for themselves and engage with a variety of interesting and stimulating activities.
- The most effective teachers know exactly where students are in their learning, understand when they are ready to take the next steps and convey clearly how this can best be achieved. They are skilled in tailoring activities that stretch and challenge all learners regardless of their starting point, so that their progress is consistently good or better. For example, in an outstanding Year 11 physics lesson, students enjoyed being challenged to think and were extremely comfortable in sharing their barriers to learning when calculating equations. They delighted in working together and with the teacher to solve each problem,

and the engagement of all students was exemplary.

- In the small minority of lessons where teaching was less effective, there was a tendency for teachers to over-direct proceedings. Consequently, opportunities to stretch and challenge all learners within the lessons were limited and progress was slowed.
- Students' learning and progress were palpable when students used key vocabulary to articulate ideas fluently and then applied them confidently to produce high-quality extended writing. When students are not routinely required to turn short oral answers into full sentences, they find it harder to convey the depth of their thinking and understanding necessary to achieve the highest levels.
- Evidence gathered from a review of some of the students' assessed work across a range of subjects showed some variation in the quality of marking and feedback. Exemplary use of assessment was seen in English, physical education, music and art and design, where students confidently used assessment criteria to engage in a dialogue of assessment with their peers and the teacher. As a result, they made excellent progress and inspectors could clearly identify how students had been able to improve their work so that it became increasingly sophisticated over time.
- Where teachers opt for encouraging, but general, comments that lack clarity to precisely identify next steps, and where students are not expected to respond routinely to written feedback and/or engage in a dialogue of learning, the impact on progress is diminished.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Good relationships and behaviour in classrooms add to an atmosphere conducive to learning. Lessons typically proceed well and, as students said, there are few interruptions to learning. However, they also indicated that on the rare occasion that low-level disruption occurs in lessons, it is, in almost all cases, a response to less engaging teaching and often where there have been supply teachers. Most parents, carers and students agree that standards of behaviour are good.
- Students are welcoming and show respect and courtesy to each other, staff and visitors. Students usually behave with consideration to each other in the long, relatively narrow corridors of the older buildings. Attendance is above average and students are punctual.
- Academy records show that incidents and exclusions are relatively low. This is due to effective behaviour systems that are consistently applied across the academy; the 'six golden rules' set high expectations and clear consequences so that any inappropriate behaviour is swiftly dealt with.
- Effective steps are taken to ensure that students understand their role in tackling prejudice and bullying of all kinds and they speak knowledgeably about contemporary issues with respect to homophobic and cyber bullying. Students say that there is some low-level bullying in the form of name calling but that it is almost always resolved quickly if reported to staff.
- An analysis of the academy's behaviour tracking data confirms the effectiveness of the academy's support programme for the small number of students whose behaviour might otherwise exclude them from education and examination success. The work of the student support base, and the Student Guidance and Learning Centre (SGLC) in creating a positive and nurturing atmosphere in which previously disaffected learners and/or those who are potentially vulnerable can thrive, are valuable aspects of provision.
- Students are keen to take on roles which support and improve school life. For example, the prefect system builds personal responsibility effectively and is much valued by students.

The leadership and management are good

- The principal provides clear, well-focused leadership. His ambition to continually improve the academy and provide a high-quality education for all students is reflected at all levels of management and across the whole academy community.
- Systems for monitoring the performance of students and subjects are good and all leaders are held tightly accountable for students' achievement. In addition, 'focus week' reviews, which evaluate individual subjects and/or aspects of the academy's work such as behaviour management, are important elements in identifying beacons of excellence as well as highlighting any variation in performance.
- Accurate self-evaluation is used well by governors and senior leaders to define priorities in strategic planning, including for staff development. Performance management of teachers is rigorous and is used appropriately to support teacher development and inform salary progression.
- The Teachers' Standards are used innovatively to create a burgeoning and bespoke professional development programme that is having a good impact on improving the quality of teaching. Senior leaders recognise that the impact is not consistent across all departments and are continuing the process of strengthening further teaching quality and sixth form outcomes, as the next significant step on the journey to excellence.
- The curriculum is rich, broad and balanced. It has been carefully reviewed and refined to meet students' needs, raise achievement and support progression beyond Year 11. It is complemented by a good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities that deepen and broaden students' experience and make a good contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The academy works well in partnership with a wide range of local education providers, including partner primary schools. For example, a very successful summer school recently took place for 25 prospective Year 7 pupils to support their transition into secondary education. It was part-funded by the pupil premium and its theme was 'Raising Aspirations and Opening Doors'. One pupil captured its impact when he said, 'It was really good and it helped me to settle into the school and improve my maths and reading.'
- Feedback from parents and carers is very positive; most feel that the academy is well led and managed and that they would recommend it to others. A small minority of parents feel that communication with the academy could be improved. This had already been identified by senior leaders and governors and forms part of the current improvement plan.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - the governing body holds the academy to account effectively and provides leaders and managers with an appropriate level of challenge and support. It works closely with senior leaders to make effective arrangements that ensure students' safety.
 - financial resources are monitored thoroughly and managed well to support improved provision and good achievement overall.

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	136294
Local authority	Non-maintained
Inspection number	395707

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

Type of school	Academy converter
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	1469
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Wright
Principal	Mr Graham Roff
Date of previous school inspection	28 February–1 March 2007
Telephone number	01458 250501
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