

Mounts Bay Academy

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136873
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	397482
Inspection dates	27–28 June 2012
Lead inspector	Adrian Lyons HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	906
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robin Webb
Headteacher	Sara Davey
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 January 2007
School address	Boscathnoe Lane Heamoor Penzance TR18 3JT
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

Inspection team

Adrian Lyons	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Bowles	Additional inspector
Sarah Jones	Additional inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors carried out 32 formal lesson observations, supplemented by tours of the school making short visits to a wide range of lessons. Inspectors examined a range of documentation including the academy's development plan and self-evaluation and reports from the School Improvement Partner. Meetings were held with groups of students, members of the governing body, middle and senior leaders and classroom teachers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work and looked at the 283 responses to questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 27 returned by staff and 149 returned by students.

Information about the school

The academy is a little smaller than most secondary schools and is one of two comprehensive schools in the coastal town. The school became an academy in July 2011 and is a centre of excellence for sport and creativity. It has National Healthy Schools status and a number of awards including the International School Award, Artsmark gold, Sportsmark gold and the Prince's Teaching Institute's subject awards in history, English, mathematics and science. It also has Leading Edge status and is a Specialist Schools and Academies Trust consultant school.

The school has been oversubscribed for several years. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is a little below average. Few come from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students supported by school action plus is a little above the national figure and so is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. There are a small number of children who are looked after by the local authority. There are slightly more boys than girls in the school. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school. It has a highly inclusive ethos and outstanding, mutually-beneficial partnerships. The school's specialism in sport and creativity is having a highly positive impact on attainment, as well as improving the health of students. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong, although there is more to be done to develop a wider understanding of modern, multicultural Britain.
- Students' achievement is outstanding and students make excellent progress from their starting points. Arriving in Year 7 with below-average attainment, by the time they leave the proportion gaining five GCSEs at grades A* to C is very high. The proportion gaining five GCSEs including English and mathematics at grades A* to C has risen sharply.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Lessons are characterised by very positive relationships between teachers and students. The large majority of teachers make very good use of the long lesson periods. A good range of resources, particularly the provision of tablet computers, has had an exceptionally positive impact on students' learning. Teachers' marking is helpful but does not always show in sufficient detail how students might improve.
- Students' behaviour and safety are outstanding and arrangements to ensure their safeguarding are very thorough and secure. Inspectors observed no inappropriate behaviour and the highly positive attitudes of students often contribute to the success of lessons. Excellent behaviour around the academy is demonstrated by students' polite and orderly conduct.
- The leadership and management of teaching are outstanding. Leaders have been highly successful in raising attainment, improving the quality of teaching and extending the curriculum. They have often incorporated good practice which they have acquired from England and around the world. The school is highly regarded in the local area. This all provides strong evidence of its excellent capacity to improve further.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- There are no major issues for the academy to address, but to improve students attainment even further, it should:
 - extend the use of teamwork so that the best teachers can help their colleagues improve, especially by helping teachers new to the school plan for, and take full advantage of, the length of lessons
 - ensure that the quality of marking consistently matches that of the best
 - increase students' understanding of life in a modern, multicultural Britain.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Most students reported that they learn a lot in lessons most of the time. The very large majority of parents and carers returning questionnaires believe that their children are making good progress at school. These views were confirmed by inspectors' observations in lessons; the inspection team found that students consistently made at least good progress and in many lessons their progress was outstanding. These observations mirror the school's own observational evidence. Students work hard and show real interest. Opportunities for students to reflect on their learning are integral to all lessons.

The school has conscientiously analysed and addressed variations in the performance of different groups. For example, students with statements of special educational needs make better progress than similar pupils nationally, the progress of boys has now caught up with that of girls and the achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs is strong. Examples of individual success are numerous. There is a very successful 'fun-fit' club, helping students' coordination, and a reading club that has had great success with early readers. Inspectors observed several lessons where students demonstrated their good literacy skills.

Students enter the school with attainment that is below average. In 2011 the overwhelming majority of students attained at least five GCSEs at grades A* to C. A smaller proportion gained five GCSEs at A* to C including English and mathematics, but there is convincing evidence that in the current Year 11 the proportion will be well above average. Students' overall progress has been consistently and significantly above average for many years.

The school works hard to raise aspirations. As a result, the proportion of students leaving Year 11 and not entering employment, education or training is very low. The overwhelming majority of Year 11 students in 2011 took up places at the local tertiary college.

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Quality of teaching

Students benefit from teaching that is rarely less than good and much of the time is outstanding, giving them a consistent level of well-planned, engaging and stimulating lessons each day. Activities are matched well to the abilities, needs and interests of students and there is an effective mix of support and challenge. As one parent wrote, 'My son is dyslexic and he is well catered for at this school. There are lots of creative activities for him and I am delighted with the progress he is making.'

Lessons are characterised by excellent relationships between teachers and students and the imaginative use of resources. The decision six months ago to equip all students with tablet computers has not been universally welcomed by parents and carers, but the positive impact on students' learning is obvious. The computers help students to work independently, they give all students equal access to online resources and they provide an excellent communication tool between teachers and students. A wide range of teaching approaches allows students to continue to make progress through the long lessons, which may last between 100 and 200 minutes. The school's training programme has equipped teachers well to make effective use of these lessons, but some newer staff may have missed the training and students told inspectors that it is the more-experienced teachers who make the best use of the time. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted by teachers, and the long lessons give students plenty of opportunity to reflect on, and discuss, their work.

Teachers very effectively ensure that students know what they should be doing, check their learning with them and show them how they can do better. However, there are some inconsistencies in the quality of marking. While marking is regular, it sometimes lacks precise and clear indication of what students need to do to improve.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students say they feel safe and their parents and carers agree. Instances of bullying or harassment of any type are dealt with promptly and effectively by the school. There have been very few exclusions and attendance is very high. Punctuality is also very good. All procedures to ensure students' safeguarding are thorough, for example the photographs of child protection staff are displayed in classrooms.

Students' attitudes to learning and their conduct in lessons and around the school are outstanding and students display very positive attitudes to different groups. Where necessary, behaviour is managed very well by teachers, other staff and the students themselves. In many lessons, the positive contribution of students is a key ingredient to the success of the lesson. Expectations are very clear. An example of students' moral development is that the current Year 11 have returned all of their tablet computers.

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Leadership and management

Senior and middle leaders communicate a clear vision and high expectations. Senior leaders and governors know the school well and have taken effective actions in response to their analysis of what is working well and their identification of where intervention is needed. This has made a significant contribution to improving students' rates of progress and the quality of teaching. For example, there has been a rapid improvement in both students' achievement and the quality of teaching in mathematics.

There is excellent communication between all levels of leadership, offering challenge and support which foster ambition and drive improvement. The school's professional development programme is comprehensive and continuously adapting to the changing needs of teachers and the school. The performance management of staff is very effective. The school's self-awarded grades matched those of the inspection team and senior leaders' lesson analysis, as moderated in joint observations with inspectors, was secure. The school's self-evaluation is very accurate. All staff returning questionnaires agreed that the school is well led and managed and they said that they were proud to be working there. In fact, staff returning questionnaires were unanimous in their praise for all aspects of the school.

The school engages well with parents and carers. Parents' evenings are well attended and a condition of receipt of a school tablet computer is that parents or carers attended training. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. A typical comment was, 'Mounts Bay Academy is an excellent school and my three children have all benefited greatly from attending.'

The school has used many international projects to seek out the best practice to adopt. It has imported leadership models from Denmark and staff development models from London, and it promotes ideas that work well to other schools in the area. The school works effectively with local partners to promote its students' achievement and well-being. Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. The governing body is a highly passionate, articulate and thoughtful group whose members are not afraid to challenge the school.

The school's curriculum provides a rich and varied experience for students of all abilities. It has been adapted to offer students the best opportunities to gain recognised qualifications, including less traditional academic qualifications such as the International GCSE and AS-level courses. These initiatives have proved successful so that the overwhelming majority of students gain the equivalent of five high grades at GCSE. Because of the extensive range of languages offered, the curriculum also gives wide opportunities to students likely to benefit from the English Baccalaureate. This is an example of the school's successful work to tackle discrimination, promote equality and raise aspirations.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



29 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Mounts Bay Academy, Penzance TR18 3JT

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. Thank you for talking to us about your work, your life in school and all that you do. Some of you completed questionnaires that were very helpful to us in discovering your views. We believe your school is outstanding and here are the reasons.

- Your examination results at the end of Year 11 have been improving. Girls and boys of all abilities make excellent progress, so that the vast majority of you gain five, high-level GCSEs.
- Nearly all teaching is at least good and a lot of it is outstanding. Teachers make really good use of the 100 or 200 minute lessons and your tablet computers are a great help.
- Your behaviour is excellent around the school and in most lessons. You told us that you feel very safe and that if there is any bullying the school deals with it well.
- The school is extremely well led. Some aspects of your school are very special. We think that your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is really strong. While you do a lot to celebrate the Cornish identity and there are excellent international links, we have asked the school to do more to raise your awareness of life 'up country'.

No school is perfect and the leaders of your school are keen for Mounts Bay to be even better. We have asked the school to find ways for teachers to work together more so that the expertise of the best teachers is widely shared. While teachers' marking is very good and helpful, some is better than others. We have asked that all marking becomes as good as the best.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector

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