

Hertswood Academy

Cowley Hill, Borehamwood, WD6 5LG

Inspection dates 16–17 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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 school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' achievement by the end of Key Stage 4 has not been good enough for some time. It is better in some subjects than others.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve less well than other students in the academy.
- A small proportion of teachers do not fully meet the needs of all students in their lessons. This means that some students find the work too hard, and for some it is too easy.
- A few teachers talk too much in lessons. This limits the amount of time students have to learn and to work on their own.
- Variation in the quality of teachers' marking means that some students are not always clear as to how they can do better.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and her team are passionate about raising standards; they are driving up achievement.
- Students are making good progress in developing their literacy skills across all subjects.
- The range of subjects on offer meets the needs of different students.
- Improving the quality of teaching is given a very high priority. Because this is well managed teaching is getting better quickly.
- Students behave well, feel safe in the academy and have positive attitudes to learning.
- The sixth form is good. Students achieve well, and many go on to study at university.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 31 lessons. The headteacher, deputy headteachers and other senior leaders accompanied inspectors to some of these lessons. In addition, the lead inspector went into a few lessons to look at students’ work and to check on the progress of students who need extra support.
- Inspectors held meetings with members the senior leadership team, heads of subjects, groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at some of the academy’s documentation, including academy improvement plans, performance data and records on behaviour and attendance. They also examined the academy’s central record of the recruitment checks on staff.
- Inspectors considered 26 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). The lead inspector received two letters from parents and carers. Inspectors also took account of the views of staff, including those expressed in 98 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

John Daniell, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Hugh Betterton

Additional Inspector

June Cannie

Additional Inspector

Jackie Easter

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Full report

Information about this school

- Hertswood Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 September 2012. When its predecessor school, Hertswood School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be a satisfactory school.
- Hertswood Academy is a larger than average-sized secondary school with a sixth form. The academy is located on two separate sites within close proximity of each other. It has specialist arts status and houses a newly opened community arts theatre called The Ark.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and for students known to be eligible for free school meals, is above that found nationally.
- The majority of students are White British. Around one third of the students are from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below that found nationally.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above that found nationally. The proportion of students supported through school action is larger than the national average but the proportion of students supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 attend vocational courses at Barnet College, where they study salon services and construction.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum level expected for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' achievement so that different groups of students make good progress across all subjects and achieve better GCSE grades to be at least in line with the national average by:
 - building on the existing good practice of adjusting the work to match more closely the needs of every student in the class
 - ensuring that learning always progresses at a rapid pace
 - reducing the amount of time teachers talk in lessons
 - encouraging students to work independently and developing their investigative skills in lessons so that they do not rely on their teachers too much
 - making sure that all teachers mark students' work in as much detail as the very best, so that it is always clear what students must do to improve the quality of their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students join the academy with below-average levels of attainment. Students who attended the predecessor school in the past few years have not achieved well enough. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including in English and mathematics, has been below the national average for a number of years.
- Students' results at GCSE have been better in some subjects than in others. Recently, students have performed less well in dance, French, geography and history than in other subjects.
- A major drive on literacy, which started three years ago, is making a difference to students' achievement. This improvement is more noticeable in Years 7 to 9. Support for individual students, as well as for groups of students, is proving to be effective. This is due to a stronger focus on working with students on producing longer pieces of writing and on reading longer extracts from books.
- A stronger drive on developing students' numeracy skills has recently started. This is beginning to strengthen the development of numeracy across subject areas.
- A majority of parents and carers believes that their child is making good progress. Data gathered by the academy indicate that all students are progressing at a much quicker rate than in the past. This view is supported by inspectors who spoke with students, looked at their work and observed their learning.
- The school has chosen to enter some students early for GCSE examinations including in English, mathematics, design and technology and modern foreign languages. This has allowed more able students to achieve high grades and maximise their potential.
- The school has used its pupil premium to fund a range of activities and support for eligible students. This has included homework and breakfast clubs, one-to-one tuition and a summer school for those students in Year 6 joining the academy in September. As a result of this support, a large proportion of eligible students improved their rate of progress in Key Stage 3 and a significant proportion of students supported gained a GCSE A* to C grade in English or mathematics. However, students who are eligible for the pupil premium still achieve less well than those who do not.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve less well than other students in the academy, but the gap between their achievement and that of other students is narrowing. The gap is at its widest for those students supported at school action plus. Students from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as other groups of students in the academy. This is the same for students who speak English as an additional language.
- The few students who are following more practical courses at Barnet College enjoy the experience and are successfully acquiring the necessary skills to pursue careers related to construction and hair and beauty.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good across most subjects. Students make good progress from their starting points. This is because some of the best teaching is in the sixth form and teachers are successful in encouraging students to work independently. Students achieve relevant qualifications to enable them to move into higher education, employment or further training.

The quality of teaching is good

- Students mostly experience good teaching; sometimes it is of a high quality. Improvements in the way teachers plan their lessons, so that the needs of different pupils are met, are making a difference in how well students learn. Teachers provide challenging work for students of all abilities.
- Most teachers have high expectations about what students can achieve, including for those disabled students and those who have special educational needs, as well as those who receive pupil premium funding. This results in the differences in these students' achievements and those of their peers getting smaller.
- Good learning over time is promoted where teachers regularly and effectively check that students understand what they are learning. They help students improve by providing constructive advice to them and by their written feedback on students' work. Consequently, students become confident learners and know exactly what to do to achieve a better grade. Systems for tracking students' progress are established and teachers are expected to use this information when planning lessons.
- Good teaching makes a significant contribution towards the development of students' basic literacy and numeracy skills. Inspectors' scrutiny of students' books shows that these skills are being well taught and, as a result, are improving rapidly.
- Senior staff are aware that some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching still exist. A small minority of teaching is not good because teachers' expectations are not high enough. They spend too much time talking to the class and they expect all students to do exactly the same work. Too much teacher talk slows down the pace of the lesson; students make less progress because they are losing time when they could be working things out for themselves. These teachers' marking of students' work, whilst regular, is not providing sufficiently clear guidance to help them improve.
- Students who get extra support outside the classroom make gains in their learning. Meetings arranged to identify students who are at risk of falling behind in their learning ensure that timely and well-targeted additional support is provided. Teaching assistants provide good-quality support to students in the classroom because they have a good understanding of the needs of the students they are supporting.
- Records of the quality of teaching kept by senior staff and heads of subject areas are detailed and accurate. When inspectors observed teaching with senior staff, they agreed with their judgements.
- Teaching is good in the sixth form because the best elements of teaching seen elsewhere in the academy are combined more consistently; high expectations, skilful questioning and opportunities to develop independence are widespread, and linked to good quality feedback from teachers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students have a positive attitude to learning in lessons and are sensible when moving around the academy and between the two separate sites. Parents and carers rightly believe that the vast majority of students behave well.

- Students are also of the view that behaviour is good. They put this down to the fact that the rewards and sanctions systems are clear and fair. Any instances of unacceptable behaviour are logged, and appropriate action is taken to make sure that the matter is dealt with swiftly and does not recur. Staff have received good-quality training on how to deal effectively with any unacceptable behaviour.
- The proportion of students who are excluded has fallen markedly. This is due to improved teaching and the more suitable range of subjects on offer. As a result, students are more interested in their learning. The alternative provision, such as courses provided by colleges, has raised students' self-esteem.
- Bullying is rare. Students told inspectors that they are taught how to identify and cope with different forms of bullying should any occur. They are confident that any incidents that are reported will be dealt with effectively by members of staff.
- Students who face personal challenging circumstances are looked after well in the academy. Many, whose behaviour was at risk of getting worse, have successfully turned things around.
- Incidents relating to discrimination of any kind are systematically logged and follow-up action is recorded. The promotion of equal opportunities has a high profile in the academy and students are proud of their multi-cultural community.
- The provision of after-school activities and a wide range of opportunities to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development create a positive atmosphere and encourage students to make the most of good opportunities they have. The academy has played host to French and Spanish theatre groups.
- The academy's 'Wonder Weeks' and 'Wonder Days' provide excellent opportunities for all students to increase their knowledge and understanding of other cultures. Fundraising is also a regular occurrence, and students have raised significant amounts of money for local charities as well as for a school in Kenya.
- Attendance has improved and is now similar to the national average. Punctuality to school and between lessons is good. During the inspection, Year 11 students responded well to a school assembly on the important connection between attending school and achieving well, linked to securing future employment.
- Sixth form students act as excellent role models to younger students. They take on roles of responsibility and make a positive contribution to the life of the academy. As a result, many students in lower years express a desire to study in the academy's sixth form rather than look elsewhere.

The leadership and management are good

- The well-respected headteacher and her senior leadership team have established a clear vision for the academy, which is shared by staff and students. Staff are committed to doing their best for every student and are proud to work in a warm and friendly environment where respect is shown for all.
- Academy development plans have identified the right things that will make a difference and sustain improvement. The headteacher and her team know what is working well because of the

strong systems now in place for monitoring the work of the academy. They also know what needs to change to make things better.

- Senior staff monitor the performance of teachers robustly and can demonstrate effective methods for improving the quality of teaching. The importance of how to improve everyone's teaching is a constant topic of discussion. Better teachers are rewarded for their performance and weaker staff are given support to improve their practice. Teachers speak with great enthusiasm about the training they are offered, and how this has helped them do a better job.
- Twenty-five newly qualified teachers were appointed for the start of the new school year. These staff are well guided and were observed putting into practice successful strategies they had acquired in recent training sessions.
- The curriculum is much improved. There has been a radical overhaul of the Key Stage 3 curriculum, with students grouped according to their ability in some subjects. Subjects available at Key Stage 4 offer students a very suitable range, and open up a variety of choices when they reach the end of Year 11.
- The academy offers students courses in which they are interested, good at, and in which they are keen to succeed. Results for students studying motor vehicle maintenance have been outstanding because of this approach.
- The academy works well in partnership with other organisations. Good work has been done with local primary schools in relation to developing students' literacy skills. Students speak highly of the academy's links with local colleges and the courses they have followed.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. This is evident in lessons, clubs and activities as well as the thought-provoking displays around the academy.
- The sixth form is very well led and managed. There is a clear vision for the future and it meets the needs of students well through a well-designed curriculum.
- The school's safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Chair of the Governing Body has a long-standing relationship with the academy, and the governing body as a whole has an excellent grasp of the academy's good points and areas for improvement. It has challenged the headteacher on several occasions, particularly with regard to students' achievement and the quality of teaching, as part of the governing body's drive in improving standards.
 - Governors who have expertise in specific areas are allocated to committees where their knowledge will be most useful. The Chair of the Governing Body, who also leads the resources committee, keeps a close eye on how pupil premium funding is used to ensure that it makes a positive difference to students' achievement.
 - The governing body monitors teachers' performance and their salary progression rigorously.

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	138747
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	409369

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

Type of school	Academy
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	1412
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	264
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Taylor
Headteacher	Jan Palmer Sayer (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	020 8238 7200
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