

# Ansford Academy

Maggs Lane, Castle Cary, Somerset, BA7 7JJ

## Inspection dates

5–6 December, 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	N/A
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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 because

- Achievement is good. Most students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, make good progress. From their average starting points they make good progress over time, often exceeding their target grades.
- The proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is above average and improving rapidly. Students make excellent progress in English.
- Strong leadership and management of teaching and learning have ensured that the quality of teaching and learning is improving and is consistently good.
- The teaching of reading, writing, communication and numeracy across all subjects enables all students to make good or better progress over time.
- Students feel safe and behave well. The level of exclusions is low and student attendance is high. Both trends have improved rapidly since the academy opened.
- The headteacher has a strong vision of the academy as a top-performing institution, moving behaviour, achievement and teaching to the highest standards. He is well supported by a new and effective senior leadership team and the governing body.
- The governors are fully aware of their leadership and management role. They have been closely involved in the academy's development and have a good understanding of the priorities for improvement.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers' marking and feedback are not always detailed or consistent enough.
- Targets for the most-able students are sometimes not challenging enough. Students have too few opportunities to develop their independent learning skills.
- The leadership and management of modern foreign languages and humanities are less rigorous than in other subject areas. Faculty changes have led to dips in achievement in these subjects.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 lessons, each involving a different teacher. A number of lessons were jointly observed with senior members of staff. In addition, other lessons were visited to determine how well the needs of individual students are taken into account in lesson planning, to look at the quality of marking and the help offered to ensure work can be improved.
- Meetings were held with four different groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other members, and a wide variety of staff including senior and middle leaders. Inspectors also had a telephone conversation with the local authority school improvement partner.
- Inspectors took account of 50 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). Thirty responses to the staff questionnaire were also reviewed and results collated.
- Inspectors scrutinised examples of students' past and present work and looked at various documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and development plans, information on students' academic progress and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Sheila Crew, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
William Stoneham	Additional Inspector
Rob Isaac	Additional Inspector
Tom Morrison	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized mixed rural comprehensive school.
- Ansford Academy converted to become an academy on 1 July 2011. When its predecessor school, Ansford School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- Ansford Academy is part of a collaborative trust with its partner secondary schools, The Castle School in Taunton and Haygrove School in Bridgwater.
- The proportion of students supported by pupil premium is below average (7%), but increasing significantly in the current Years 7 and 8.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is below average as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are well below national averages.
- A very small number of Key Stage 4 students receive part of their education off site, at Strode College. These students are all following vocational studies combined with work-related courses.
- The number of students on roll has declined consistently in this small rural community as the number of families has declined.
- The school meets the current floor standards set by the government, which determines the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise levels of progress and achievement for all students, ensuring that:
  - in every lesson, the quality of marking and feedback is raised to that of the best and is always detailed enough to support students' progress
  - the needs of all students, especially the most able, are consistently met, by ensuring that teachers plan lessons which have sufficiently challenging targets
  - all lessons include varied tasks that help to develop students' independent learning skills
  - by the end of the present academic year, the quality of learning in all subjects is at least good.
- Raise the quality of subject leadership, particularly in modern foreign languages and humanities, so that all departments are as good as the best.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Standards are rising rapidly. GCSE results are improving, noticeably so in English. The proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics, is significantly above the national average. This represents good achievement given students' broadly average starting points.
- In English, progress over time is outstanding. The number of students making and exceeding the expected levels of progress since starting secondary school is high.
- Most students make at least good progress in mathematics, and there is an improving trend. Analysis of each student's performance in last year's examination results revealed that entering students early for mathematics GCSE examinations, usually in Year 10, has had a detrimental impact on attainment of the highest grades in mathematics. Leaders have decided that early entry will now only be used for students who show an outstanding aptitude for the subject and the school is convinced that the student will gain an exceptionally high grade.
- There has been a declining trend in achievement over time for the minority of students who take humanities and modern foreign languages.
- There is strong evidence to show that achievement is benefiting from improvements in teaching over time. The tutor review meetings each term have had a strong impact on achievement and have helped staff to 'drill down' so that they can meet individual students' needs. The system has ensured that there is an increased focus by senior leaders on the achievement of individuals.
- The combination of academic and tutorial staff working together has brought about a more coordinated, informed system for setting targets for individual students or groups of students. However, leaders are aware that some of the most able students do not always achieve A\*/A grades when the lesson and homework targets set for them by teachers are not high enough.
- Collated data about performance is used well to ensure that most students are set realistic, but challenging, targets for each subject they study.
- The learning and progress of different groups of students, including those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, are good.
- Those eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium make good progress and attain higher than similar groups nationally. The average point scores show that the gap is closing between these pupils and those not supported by pupil premium. Pupil premium funding has been used to provide additional staffing for a one-to-one tuition programme, plus two teaching assistants who provide in-class support in mathematics and a range of other subjects.
- A small number of Key Stage 4 students study off site. They make good progress and arrangements for monitoring their attendance, punctuality and progress are effective.
- It is rare for any students to leave school at the end of Year 11 without a placement in education, training or employment. This reflects well on the progress students make at school, especially in developing their key skills in literacy, numeracy and the use of information and communication technology. The school successfully prepares its students well for the next stage in their careers.
- An overwhelming majority of the parents and carers who responded to the on-line inspection questionnaire believe that their children make good progress. Inspection evidence supports this view.

### The quality of teaching

Is good

- In most lessons, and over time, teaching is at least good and sometimes outstanding.
- Evidence for outstanding teaching was seen in a number of subjects, particularly in performing arts, English and some design and technology lessons where teachers ensured that students

understood clearly their individual targets and they were able to work independently.

- Teachers' expectations of what students can do and achieve are at least good in the vast majority of lessons. In the small number of lessons where improvement is needed, expectations are not high enough, tasks are not varied and there is a tendency for the teacher to do too much of the work. This restricts the scope for students to learn and progress by working independently.
- Opportunities for students to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy are good and evident in many subjects such as science, mathematics, English, information and communication technology, history, design and technology, physical education and religious education. As a result, students are very articulate in conversation, debate, discussion and write well in a range of subjects.
- Where teaching is most effective, lessons are characterised by pace and challenge and expectations are high. This was amply illustrated in a Year 7 English lesson where all students made excellent progress in their reading skills. Students had to read a play aloud, taking the parts of different characters, which they approached with noticeable confidence and their delivery was lively and articulate. Learning was rapid and highly effective as the students found the work challenging but enjoyable.
- Highly effective learning was also evident in a Year 11 religious education lesson on the moral dilemma about abortion, in which the teacher used skilful probing questions to challenge students to reflect on their views. Learning was good because the discussion tested the students' understanding of work already covered in exercise books, which had been marked well with good evidence of students responding to assessment.
- There is too much variability in the quality of teachers' feedback and marking. In many subjects, feedback is not detailed enough and opportunities are missed to provide guidance to support students' learning.
- The number of higher ability students achieving A\* or A grades at GCSE is not yet high enough. Teachers do not always ensure that they use assessment data to plan lessons which have varied targets that challenge the most able and set them appropriate homework learning tasks.
- An overwhelming majority of parents and carers responding to the on-line inspection questionnaire said that teaching is at least good.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Overall, student behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Students behave well, show respect and are polite and courteous. These qualities contribute well to their personal development.
- Attitudes to learning are very positive. Students enjoy attending the school and say that it is improving. They feel safe, are catered for well and say that staff respect them. Although a small minority of parents and carers expressed some reservations about behaviour and how it is managed, the majority commented that it is good.
- Students informed inspectors that the 'restorative justice' system, introduced when the academy opened, has had a noticeable impact on improving behaviour.
- Students informed inspectors that incidents of bullying based on name calling, racism or homophobia are rare. Any incidents that do arise are dealt with appropriately by staff.
- The school's promotion of good behaviour, together with the provision of counselling and pastoral care, has outstanding features and is a strength of the school.
- The school's management of behaviour for disabled students and those with special educational needs is a strength, with notably effective and sophisticated inclusion strategies.
- Students were very enthusiastic and positive about representing the school. Some students from Years 10 and 11 spoke about their good behaviour during their work experience.
- Good behaviour is reflected in the above average attendance figures and the rapidly declining rate of fixed-term exclusions. Students attend school regularly and punctually and this makes a significant contribution to their good levels of achievement. Behaviour is managed consistently

well across the school.

- Students commented that this is a good, happy and harmonious school. Older students believe that the level of harmony has improved because of the highly inclusive ethos of the school. It is also a good and happy school because of the respect that exists between students and between students and staff.

## **The leadership and management is good**

- The school is well led by the headteacher, who has put in place rigorous systems to improve the leadership and management of teaching and learning. The senior leadership team has been restructured, with the result that achievement has improved rapidly.
- Management of staff performance is robust with targets linked to the quality of teaching and learning and leading to improvements in classroom practice and students' achievement.
- The leadership of humanities and modern foreign languages has been constrained by staff changes. As a result, management of these subject areas is less rigorous than that in other faculties and there have been dips in achievement. Leaders are aware of this and are now working to tackle this issue.
- Leaders work hard to ensure all students have equality of opportunity. The curriculum is broad and includes subjects appropriate for all groups of students, including the most vulnerable. There is evidence that the pupil premium has been used effectively to 'narrow the gap' for this group of students.
- The teaching and learning leadership group has successfully strengthened consistency of key skills through a skills-based curriculum which is delivered across subjects for Years 7 to 10.
- Partnership opportunities are built in to the curriculum as part of the Years 10 and 11 work experience which has had positive reviews, and has been praised by the Confederation of British Industries, with one student enthusiastically describing his recent work experience with Rick Stein.
- The range of experiences available to students also contributes well to their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. For example, the school promotes an awareness of, and respect for, cultural diversity with their engagement in the Zambia Exchange programme. This is evident in work with the local community; for example, the school's recipe book is sold in a local shop to raise funds for the programme.
- The promotion of equality is a strength of the school's work and all groups of pupils achieve well as a result.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive in their opinions about the school and students feel it is a successful school which has helped them to improve.
- Staff morale is high. Almost all responses to the staff inspection questionnaire were positive, with specific praise for the coaching programme introduced by senior leadership to disseminate best teaching practice, described by one teacher as being 'inspirational to my practice'. Trainee teachers comment positively on their experiences at the school, particularly in terms of developing knowledge on inclusion.
- The local authority and school work well in partnership and this has contributed well to the strong improvement in achievement.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are thorough, including the risk assessments for the occasions when some students work off site and provision of warning signs on the public footpath which crosses the playing fields.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have a realistic understanding of how well the school is performing, and the quality of teaching and learning. They rightly judge that it offers a good education to its students and they are fully aware of its strengths and where improvements are needed. They hold the school to account well for its performance. They analyse outcomes, including examination performance; they are aware of the many strengths that exist in teaching and they are fully involved in ensuring that there is a close link between salary progression and the effectiveness

of teaching. They understand how performance management works through the training they have received. The governors monitor expenditure thoroughly and challenge the headteacher to account for the way in which additional funding from the pupil premium is spent. They are proud of the school they represent.

## 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**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136839
<b>Local authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	406650

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	629
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Christopher Culpin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Robert Benzie
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	N/A
<b>Telephone number</b>	01963 350895
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