

Holyrood Academy

Zembard Lane, Chard, Somerset, TA20 1JL

Inspection dates

9–10 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Although the majority of students enter this academy with just below average starting points, nearly all go on to attain above-average results in GCSE examinations.
- Teachers are highly ambitious for their students and use their strong subject knowledge to plan lessons that motivate and guide students to make rapid progress and achieve extremely well.
- The headteacher leads the school community with outstanding moral purpose, drive and vision. Supported by his determined and focused leadership team, he has firmly embedded shared values and a commitment to excellence in all areas of the school.
- Students approach their studies with enthusiasm, confidence and maturity. Their behaviour is exemplary, demonstrating high levels of cooperation and respect for everyone within their community.
- The academy looks after the students exceptionally well, particularly those who find learning difficult or who are vulnerable in any way. Government funding is used particularly well to ensure that individuals are guided and supported effectively. Consequently, they achieve extremely well.
- There is a strong focus on raising standards of literacy and there is exceptional provision in Key Stage 3 to help students improve their reading and writing.
- Members of the governing body are well informed and bring a wide range of skills to the leadership of the academy. They have contributed considerably to the continued drive for improvement.
- The sixth form is good. Standards in teaching and students' achievement have risen sharply over the last two years.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 lessons, some of which were seen together with senior leaders. They also made a small number of short visits to lessons.
- They observed behaviour in lessons and around the school during breaks.
- Meetings were held with students, members of the governing body, senior leaders and other staff. The lead inspector also talked to the academy's improvement partner.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 39 parents and carers who responded to the online Parent View survey, and also considered the more detailed information from recent surveys of parents and carers, students and staff carried out by the school. Inspectors also received one parent letter.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including safeguarding records, policies, self-evaluation and plans, information about students' progress, monitoring records and the governing body minutes.

Inspection team

Jacqueline Goodall, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Fran Ashworth	Additional Inspector
Anthony Byrne	Additional Inspector
Shahnaz Maqsood	Additional Inspector
Mark Warren	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Holyrood Academy converted to become an academy on 1 September 2010. When its predecessor school, Holyrood Community School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- Most students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above the national average, although the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is just below average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding from the government for looked after children, students known to be eligible for free school meals, and children of service families) is below average.
- A very small number of students attend a local further education college to study vocational courses.
- 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?

- Ensure that all students in Years 12 and 13 make the highest rates of progress by:
 - fully embedding independent learning in sixth form lessons, so extending the best practice that characterises outstanding lessons in the main school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The attainment of the majority of students who join the academy in Year 7 is just below average. As a result of outstanding teaching, all groups of students typically make progress at a much faster rate than that seen nationally.
- The provision for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is exceptional, especially for those with low literacy skills. These students achieve particularly well. The support provided in the Flexible Learning Base to students in Years 7 and 8 is highly effective.
- The proportion of Year 11 students gaining at least five good GCSE passes has risen significantly over the last four years and when this measure includes English and mathematics, there has been a steady rise until 2012, when fewer students than expected achieved a grade C or above in English. However, inspectors found evidence of high standards of teaching and learning in English over time, with excellent levels of achievement currently and confident predictions for improved performance in this summer's examinations.
- The proportion of students who are exceeding their challenging targets for progress has risen sharply over the last year. This is because teachers are very skilled and meticulous at using the accurate and comprehensive data available to them to help each student make rapid gains in their learning.
- The academy uses its pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding very effectively to support eligible students; they typically make rapid progress. Last year, there was a gap on average of just under one GCSE grade in both English and mathematics between those eligible for the pupil premium and those who were not. This gap is closing, however, and across the academy, the achievement of students supported through this funding is broadly similar to that of other students.
- Students make rapid gains in their literacy skills. Every lesson has a literacy focus and every student has a literacy target.
- Students who attend the local further education college to study vocational courses achieve very well. Excellent communication and monitoring systems ensure that they make appropriate progress and are kept safe. Students are very motivated by these courses and their behaviour is exemplary while at the college.
- Up until last year, some students sat early entry examinations. This did not generally limit their potential to secure the highest grades of which they were capable.
- Standards in the sixth form are close to the national averages and rising. The school has swiftly addressed lower performance in subjects such as biology and chemistry. Leaders have improved the quality of teaching in line with that in the main school, and students are now making good and sometimes outstanding progress. Changes in the curriculum to provide more relevant and challenging courses are also having a positive impact on achievement and retention levels.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- An expectation that only high-quality teaching is acceptable characterises the very positive attitudes of teachers. They contribute enthusiastically to the whole-school aim of raising standards of teaching and learning, and engage in training activities and share good practice.
- Teachers regularly give detailed feedback and guidance to help students improve their work. Students also develop confidence in giving and receiving feedback when working in pairs or groups. From Year 7, students are taught how to evaluate and improve their own learning. Disabled students and those with special educational needs are given highly personalised and effective support, provided in a sensitive and inclusive way. Teachers prioritise the development of literacy skills in all subjects and this, combined with the excellent provision of the Flexible Learning Base, means that all students are able to access the curriculum effectively.
- Students say that their teachers really care about them and their progress. They are interested

in their views and also in their ambitions.

- In sixth form lessons, teachers have become more adept at developing further the learning skills students have acquired in the main school. There has been an increase in expectation that all students will work hard and achieve highly. Most teachers provide structure in their lessons to maximise progress but some students do not have sufficient opportunities to work independently, thus better preparing them for higher education.
- There are many opportunities for students to learn through studying real-life problems, visits from outside speakers, trips to places of interest and by attending lunchtime and after-school activities. These contribute very positively to students' all-round achievement. Provision for students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is rich and varied, preparing them well for later life. Sixth form students learn basic skills that they will need for independent living, such as cooking on a budget and how to wire an electric plug.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students behave exceptionally well. Their behaviour is founded on respect for others, high expectations of themselves and a sense of responsibility.
- During the inspection, Year 11 students had their final study day and their end of year celebration to which parents and carers were invited. Behaviour during the two days was impeccable and students concentrated fully on their studies.
- In lessons, students value their learning, and are mature and cooperative when working in pairs or groups. They are also able to work independently. As they move through the year groups, they develop reliable study skills, which contribute significantly to their ability to learn.
- Because of the academy's relentless drive to change attitudes to attendance, this has risen steadily over the last four years and even more rapidly this year. It is now just above average. An agreement with local doctors' surgeries to provide evidence for absence has been very effective.
- Because behaviour is so good, there are very few missed days through exclusion. The academy works hard to improve the behaviour of the few students who do not meet its expectations and there is a marked improvement of these individuals as they move through the key stages.
- Students say that there is very little bullying within the school and it is a very safe place in which to be. In particular, there are virtually no incidents relating to racist or other prejudice-based differences. One student described how, by taking care of students with different ethnic backgrounds 'from day one, they settle in and feel cared for'.
- There are many opportunities for student leadership, such as mentoring, becoming a 'buddy' or a sports coach, and these responsibilities are carried out in a very mature way.
- Nearly all parents and carers who have expressed their views in Parent View and the school's surveys are very satisfied with the behaviour and safety of students within the academy.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and his leadership team have successfully embedded a wide range of improvements over the last two years in particular. These improvements have focused on making sure that teaching and learning are consistently of the highest quality. The headteacher has inspired loyalty from the staff and respect by all.
- The quality of self-evaluation and planning is exceptionally high, and this is reflected in the external reviews commissioned by the academy.
- When there are indications of a drop in performance in any aspect, leaders are swift to address the issue. This was very evident after the drop in English GCSE results last year. In-depth investigations were carried out to ensure that the quality of provision in English remained high. Teaching and assessment methods have now been adapted to meet the changed examination

marking requirements. Current achievement levels are high and there is strong evidence that students are on course to perform very well in this year's examinations.

- Academy leaders have improved considerably the standard of teaching in French and German, and inspectors noted the exceptional performance of students in these subjects.
- The monitoring of teaching by senior and middle leaders is rigorous and evaluation is accurate. The expertise of the three advanced skills teachers are used particularly well to provide support and training for staff within the academy and also across the family of schools.
- Senior leaders and governors have placed an emphasis on ensuring equality of provision and opportunity. Strategies include the very effective literacy improvement programme, appropriate use of extra government funding and the appointment of staff members with specific equal opportunity responsibilities.
- Very effective partnerships are in place to help the academy meet the needs of its students; in particular, liaison with local primary schools is exemplary.
- The curriculum is very well suited to the students' academic needs and interests. Students are motivated by the level of challenge provided because they have developed confidence in their own ability. Students who would benefit from courses other than GCSE examinations are given other opportunities to achieve success through the vocational courses provided.
- The curriculum is enriched in a variety of ways to maximise students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Examples include visits to mosques and temples, the Anne Frank Trip and many opportunities to develop skills in performance, sport and creative arts. The link with a school and an orphanage in India is particularly valued, with the associated exchange programme providing extensive opportunities for personal development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body have a wide range of skills and use them to contribute to the monitoring and improvement of performance, and to ensure that policies and practices meet statutory requirements. They engage in a range of training activities to help them do this, including attending some of the twilight staff development sessions. Governors are very aware of their role in scrutinising the comprehensive information provided by the headteacher and his team. They ask searching questions and make sure that they follow through any areas of uncertainty. The governing body responded swiftly to the halt in the rising trend of examination results last year. At every key meeting since then, governors have discussed progress in English and modern foreign languages, using their skills in understanding academic data and comparing the academy's performance with other schools. Governors are particularly involved in the monitoring of teachers' performance. They take on the responsibility of making decisions on pay following recommendations from the headteacher, ensuring that the evidence provided is secure. Governors are exceptionally focused on ensuring that the academy enables all to succeed and they monitor the impact of the expenditure of extra government funding stringently. They have also managed the finances of the academy very efficiently to ensure that the future needs of the academy can be met.

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	136295
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	411961
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	1,229
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Adams
Headteacher	Maurice Hicks
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01460 260100
Fax number	01460 260149
Email address	sch.517@educ.somerset.gov.uk

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