

Forest E-ACT Academy

Causeway Road, Cinderford, Gloucestershire, GL14 2AZ

Inspection dates 22–23 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' achievement is not consistently good across the academy and, for students in Year 11, it is below the level expected.
- Many students, particularly boys, find it more difficult to make progress, because of their weak skills in reading and writing.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good enough, despite recent improvements, to secure good achievement for all.
- Not all teachers plan work that is at the right level of difficulty for all students in the class. As a result, work is sometimes too easy or too difficult for some and progress is slower than it should be.
- New approaches adopted by academy leaders have not yet resulted in achievement and teaching that are consistently good. Information from the monitoring of teaching is not used sharply enough to focus on the further improvements needed.

The school has the following strengths

- The Principal, governors and senior leaders are firmly committed to improving all students' achievement rapidly. This urgency is widely shared by the staff, and better progress and improved teaching are now evident.
- Students' behaviour is good. They are generally keen to learn and report that they feel safe in the orderly and calm atmosphere of the academy.
- The academy works effectively to include all students in its community. It provides good support for those with particular social or emotional needs.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons, of which five were joint observations with a member of the academy’s senior leadership team, as well as four other occasions when learning was taking place. An inspector toured the academy with a senior member of staff to make observations of a series of lessons and focused on the quality of provision for students with disabilities or with special educational needs.
- Meetings were held with the Chair and members of the Governing Body, a representative from E-ACT, the academy’s sponsor, and with senior and middle leaders as well as two groups of students.
- Inspectors took account of the 12 responses to the online Parent View survey.
- Inspectors looked at key documents, including the academy’s plans for improvement, the minutes of meetings of the governing body, the academy’s data on students’ progress, records relating to the academy’s own assessment of how well it is doing, behaviour and attendance policies, procedures for safeguarding and samples of students’ work.

Inspection team

Grahame Sherfield, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Brian Netto

Additional Inspector

Karl Sampson

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Forest E-ACT Academy opened in September 2012 in the accommodation of its predecessor, Heywood Community School.
- The academy is well below average in size and serves a mainly White British community in the Forest of Dean.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs and need extra help is below average, both for those supported through school action, and for those supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding in this academy for looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is above that found nationally.
- Off-site provision for a small number of students, generally for one day a week, is made through Gloucestershire College.
- The academy does not yet have published data to determine whether it 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?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is good or better by ensuring that:
 - work is at the right level of difficulty for all students so that they are fully engaged in their learning and make rapid progress
 - students articulate and refine their ideas orally to help them in their writing
 - students respond to their teachers' marking routinely and discuss with their teachers how best to improve their work.
- Accelerate students' progress in their subjects, particularly by boys in English, by setting targets based on more than the nationally expected rates of progress by the end of Year 11.
- Improve the leadership and management of teaching by using information from monitoring and evaluation to focus more sharply on tackling remaining weaknesses so that students' progress over time is accelerated.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because students' progress remains below nationally expected levels. However, progress is improving. For example, in Year 10, progress in English and mathematics is similar to that expected nationally. Staff continue to work, with some success, on narrowing the gap between girls' and boys' progress in English.
- In lessons where activities are not at the right level of difficulty, students' attention tends to wander and this hinders learning.
- Students join the academy with attainment that is significantly below average, particularly in reading and writing. As a result of concerted action, the academy's data indicate that in the examinations this summer, Year 11 students are set to exceed the government's current floor standard for the proportion attaining five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics. Attainment, however, remains below average.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. Particularly effective support is provided for those with social and emotional problems that make learning difficult.
- In most lessons, students sustain their concentration effectively. Relationships with staff and behaviour are good. They respond particularly well to teachers' enthusiasm and to activities that are carefully designed to ensure the right level of challenge.
- The academy's approach to early entry for GCSE mathematics does not limit the potential of more able students. Students are entered early but this is in order to build confidence and provide a platform for improvement in the subject. They take the examination again in the summer.
- The academy has had some success in closing the gap in attainment between those known to be eligible for the pupil premium and their peers. For example, in English and mathematics in Year 11, the gap has narrowed and the attainment of students receiving this additional support is now about a quarter of a grade lower in each subject.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There is not yet enough good teaching to bring about consistently good progress by the students. Where teaching is good, it has often not been good for long enough to tackle weaknesses in students' knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Where teaching requires improvement, it is sometimes because teachers do not help students to articulate their ideas more clearly so that they have greater support when they write about them. On occasions, teachers do not check students' learning as the lesson progresses. Consequently, they do not adjust the activities so that all students can make good progress.
- Teaching is improving as academy leaders hold teachers more rigorously to account for the progress of their students in lessons and, increasingly, over longer periods of time. Students interviewed by inspectors identified that their teachers expect more of them now.
- Some teachers are skilled in developing students' literacy skills, such as explaining how best to structure their writing, and adjusting activities well to maximise students' learning.
- Teaching is good or better when teachers plan activities that are based on a firm understanding of students' strengths and weaknesses and ask probing questions to check their understanding as the lesson progresses.
- In an outstanding Year 9 physical education lesson, the teacher maintained a brisk, purposeful pace. She used her good knowledge of the students' varying capabilities to provide activities to help them to develop their skills in the triple jump. In addition, she modelled the good use of language, asking effective questions to check and extend their understanding. As a result, students enjoyed the lesson and made rapid progress.

- Teachers' marking is improving. There is now much more consistent practice that makes clear to students what they have done well and how to improve their work. Students do not routinely respond to teachers' marking or develop a dialogue where the teacher sets the student further challenges and checks the student's response later.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The academy's 'Behaviour for Learning' approach, involving the careful application of 'rewards' and 'consequences', has led to improvements in behaviour that are recognised by the students.
- Behaviour at breaks and lunchtimes is good. Students are polite and well-mannered. They get on well with each other and with the staff.
- In lessons, most students get on with their work well. A few students report that behaviour varies in lessons when occasionally the work is too challenging or too easy.
- Students report that bullying is rare, mostly related to minor disagreements, and is effectively tackled by staff.
- Students are generally well informed about contemporary issues, such as cyber-bullying and homophobic bullying and the dangers that might be encountered online. They say that while most staff tackle students' occasional use of inappropriate language, a few do not.
- Students in need of a little extra help are well cared for and the academy makes good use of the support of other agencies. Provision in the 'Stepzone' for students who need extra help in order to settle to their work is good.
- Attendance has improved as a result of effective action to promote its importance. It is now broadly average. The academy is wisely beginning to work with its partner primary schools on a joint approach to tackling absence in the local area.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leaders have a realistic view of how well the academy is doing. The Principal and senior staff recognise the importance of improving teaching and have an accurate view of its quality. The 'Accelerated Progress' document, drawn up in February 2013, sets out clear expectations of staff, who report that they are being held accountable for students' progress much more rigorously.
- Data on students' progress are collected regularly and the progress of individuals is checked carefully in the frequent meetings of the Targeted Accountabilities Group. Since February 2013, targets have been based on the progress expected nationally and senior leaders are rightly soon to set targets based on exceeding this, in order to accelerate progress further.
- The academy's development plan sets out clearly the progress made, with a small number of priorities. It does not include key actions to be taken by leaders to achieve the set priorities nor how and when progress is to be monitored.
- A good start has been made in improving teaching and all staff have a better understanding of the importance of the impact of teaching on students' progress. Objectives for teachers to improve their teaching have been focused on achieving all of the teachers' standards that the academy is using but these have not identified precisely enough which are the most important for individuals or groups to work on.
- Subject leadership is strengthening, particularly in English and mathematics. Through short visits to lessons in their departments, subject leaders have a better understanding of the quality of teaching and learning and are committed to playing their part in bringing about improvements.
- The curriculum is addressing students' literacy needs through the energetic and wide-ranging ways in which literacy is promoted. This includes a whole-academy approach to reading in tutor time as well as Year 9 or Year 10 'reading buddies' for weaker Year 7 readers and one-to-one support for those who need it in Years 7, 8 and 9. Good plans are in place to widen the range of GCSE subjects available in 2013/14.

- Pupil premium funding supports a good range of extra help for students, including support by a higher-level teaching assistant, mentoring and additional help in the 'Stepzone'.
- Carefully considered and effective use is made of off-site provision and checks are made on students' progress and well-being. Students receive good support in making decisions about education, training and employment after the age of 16. Links with partner primary schools are developing well and pupils from these schools regularly visit the academy, for example for 'Academy Tradition' events.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. Students benefit from the opportunities for older students to work with younger ones and through taking on leadership roles in sport or mathematics. The academy tackles discrimination in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony.
- The sponsor challenges the academy's performance and visits from advisers to review progress with improvements make a positive contribution to its development. Training to assist in improving teaching further and in helping staff to address some students' difficulties with reading has not taken place yet but is due to start soon.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors recognise that students' progress is not good enough and are challenging the academy to improve this rapidly.
 - The governing body is using the development plan and reports from the sponsor's advisers effectively to check on improvements and to ask challenging questions of the academy's leaders. Governors have not yet undertaken training on the academy's systems for collecting information about students' progress. This is due to take place shortly.
 - Governors are determined that weaknesses in teaching are tackled quickly and are committed to ensuring that pay awards depend on the progress made by students that teachers bring about.

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	138496
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	422010

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	317
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neill Ricketts
Principal	Tanya Prosser
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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