

Ernulf Academy

Barford Road, Eynesbury, St Neots, PE19 2SH

Inspection dates 26–27 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- The proportion of students who achieved five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, at the end of Year 11 in 2012 was significantly below average.
- The proportion achieving A* to C grades in mathematics was particularly low, and too few Year 11 students made the progress expected nationally in either English or mathematics.
- Teaching is not always matched closely enough to the skills and abilities of all students.
- Teachers' marking does not have as much impact on achievement as it should.
- Some teachers spend too long providing introductions and explanations in lessons, so valuable learning time is lost.
- Some teachers do not ask probing questions effectively in lessons to develop students' understanding.
- The academy's improvement plan does not clearly indicate how the actions taken will help to improve teaching and achievement.
- During the academy's first year, leaders and managers were not successful in tackling underachievement, particularly in GCSE mathematics.
- The quality of subject leadership is not consistently good.
- Governors do not influence improvements in teaching and achievement as well as they should.
- The sixth form requires improvement because the quality of teaching since the academy opened has not been consistently good.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching and achievement are improving, because leaders and managers are working more effectively than they did during the academy's first year.
- Students who benefit from the 'Opening Minds' curriculum make good progress in reading.
- Students are polite, courteous and well mannered. Relationships across the whole academy are positive, and students feel safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 lessons, eight of which were jointly observed with senior leaders. The inspection team also made several short visits to other lessons to check on the progress and behaviour of different groups of students.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students from Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form. Other meetings were held with governors, senior leaders and staff, including those responsible for leading subjects.
- Inspectors analysed 37 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) during the inspection, as well as responses to questionnaires from 67 staff.
- Inspectors observed the work of the academy and looked at a number of documents, including those relating to the monitoring of teaching and the targets set for teachers to improve their work. They also looked at records relating to attendance, behaviour, bullying and safeguarding, the academy's improvement plan and data on students' progress.
- Due to the timing of the inspection it was not possible for inspectors to observe Year 11 or Year 13 classes.

Inspection team

Richard Sutton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Rosemarie McCarthy	Additional Inspector
Paul Bartlett	Additional Inspector
Paul O'Shea	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- Ernulf Academy converted to academy status in August 2011. When the predecessor school, St Neots Community College, was last inspected by Ofsted in March 2011, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- The academy is smaller than the average secondary school with a sixth form.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is slightly below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A tenth of the students are from minority ethnic heritages, which is lower than average.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, which is additional funding given to schools for students in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and students from service families, is average.
- A small number of students attend alternative provision in Years 10 and 11. They study courses in farming at the College of West Anglia and engineering at 'Peterborough Alternative Curriculum Education (ACE)'.
- The academy is part of a multi-academy trust and works closely with a nearby partner academy in the trust.
- As part of the St Neots Learning Partnership Academy Trust, the academy supports some students through 'Prospect House' which ensures that students who may be at risk of exclusion remain taught by specialist teachers.
- A nursery shares the academy site, but it is subject to separate inspection and reporting arrangements.
- The academy does not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and students' achievement, particularly in mathematics, in the main school and the sixth form by making sure that:
 - work in lessons is always well matched to the different skills and abilities of all students
 - students' work is marked regularly, with targets to help improve the work that are checked by teachers to make sure students respond to the advice given
 - teachers spend less time providing introductions and explanations, so students can work more on their own
 - teachers use different types of questions more effectively to help students of different abilities to develop their understanding.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - reviewing the priorities in the academy's improvement plan, so they can be clearly monitored against their impact on the quality of teaching and achievement at key points throughout the

year

- developing the skills of those responsible for leading subjects so that teaching and achievement in all subjects are consistently and accurately monitored
- devising a system for all teachers and leaders to share good practice in a coordinated way.

■ Make sure the governing body is better able to influence improvements in teaching and achievement by:

- providing governors with regular, more detailed information about the quality of teaching and achievement
- regularly and thoroughly checking this information at governing body meetings against the objectives in the academy improvement plan.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- The academy's first set of GCSE examination results, achieved in 2012, were too low. Students had joined the academy with attainment that was significantly below average, but did not make enough progress and the proportion achieving five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, was much lower than it should have been.
- Achievement in mathematics was inadequate in 2012. Only a small proportion of students achieved A* to C grades and far too many students did not make enough progress. The reason for this underachievement was that too many students did not benefit from consistently good teaching in Year 11.
- Achievement in English was better than in mathematics, and an average proportion of students achieved A* to C grades. However, not enough made the progress expected nationally.
- Achievement is improving because leaders and managers are having a much better impact on improving teaching than they had during the first year of the academy. However, the quality of teaching still varies too much to support good achievement across all year groups and subjects. Achievement in mathematics, although improving, remains inadequate in Year 11.
- Almost all groups of students are making similar progress, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language and students from ethnic minority heritages.
- The small number of students who attend the off-site farming and engineering courses achieve well and make good progress.
- Some students are supported through additional Year 7 catch-up funding, which helps students who join with attainment below the expected levels in English and mathematics. The academy uses this funding to provide one-to-one and small group tuition in English and mathematics. Students who are eligible are making variable progress, but it is good in reading.
- The academy spends its pupil premium funding on additional staff to give students one-to-one support, and a wide and varied range of educational trips and activities. Students who are eligible for support are beginning to make better progress than they have in previous years because leaders and managers are developing an effective strategy for monitoring their progress. In 2012, eligible students achieved, on average, almost a grade lower than other students in GCSE English and two-thirds of a grade lower in mathematics.
- Students in the sixth form made the progress that was expected of them in 2012. Some in this phase achieved well in 2012, particularly in mathematics. However, not enough sixth form students have made good progress since the academy opened because teaching has not been consistently good, though it is now improving.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Since the academy opened, teaching has not been good enough to help all students across all year groups and subjects to make good progress. Some inadequate teaching in its first year left students with ground to make up. The quality of teaching is improving, particularly since September 2012, but still not enough is consistently good or better. As a result, achievement is

improving, but not as rapidly as it needs to.

- Teaching in mathematics has been inadequate. It is now improving and students' progress in this subject is beginning to improve. However, it is too early to see the full impact on achievement.
- More teachers are now ensuring that learning is better matched to the different skills and abilities of individual students, but this is not consistent across all subjects and year groups.
- Teachers do not always make sure that students' work is marked regularly. They make variable use of targets to help students improve, and when targets are set teachers do not regularly check that students have acted on the advice given.
- Teachers sometimes take up too much time in lessons providing explanations and introductions. This results in lost learning time, and often students become passive and lose concentration.
- Teachers do not always use different types of questions as well as they should to help students develop their thinking and understanding at their own level.
- Where teaching is good or outstanding, learning typically progresses quickly. Teachers plan a variety of activities that are challenging but pitched at the right level of difficulty so that all students can demonstrate success.
- The 'Opening Minds' lessons in Year 7 are well taught because teachers are appropriately focused on helping students to improve their literacy skills. As a result many are making good progress, particularly in reading.
- In the sixth-form lessons where teaching is good, teachers use their knowledge of examination criteria well to help students focus clearly on what they need to do to show success.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Some students do not always show good attitudes to learning, and they become passive in some lessons. This is usually a result of teaching which is not as good as it should be, but also because some students are not as motivated to succeed as others.
- Most students behave appropriately in lessons and around the academy at break and lunch-time. Students told inspectors that behaviour is not always good, and a few of the responses to the staff questionnaire confirmed this.
- Students have a good understanding of bullying and the various forms it can take. Records show that bullying is infrequent at the academy, although a few students told inspectors that in their view it occurs more often than staff are aware of.
- Students understand issues relating to safety, and they overwhelmingly feel safe at the academy. They gave inspectors many examples of activities the academy has provided to help them understand a wide range of safety issues, such as keeping safe when using computers.
- The vast majority of students are polite, courteous and well mannered. This helps to ensure that relationships across the whole academy are predominantly positive.

- The academy is rightly focused on continuing to improve attendance. Rates of attendance have improved during the second year since the academy opened, but remain below average.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- During the academy's first year, the efforts of leaders and managers to improve teaching and achievement had little impact. Consequently, the Year 11 group who left the academy in 2012 underachieved significantly. Leaders and managers are now having a greater impact on achievement and teaching and this is why they are beginning to improve, although there still remain too many inconsistencies.
- Senior leaders are increasingly focused on ensuring that the work of all leaders and managers has a clear impact on the quality of teaching and students' progress. The positive impact of this approach is seen in the better progress, overall, across the academy.
- All leaders monitor teaching and achievement regularly, and the results are used to provide focused support and development for teachers where this is necessary. However, there are wide inconsistencies in the quality and accuracy of monitoring by those responsible for subjects. This is why the quality of teaching and achievement are still too variable.
- The academy's improvement plan is not detailed enough, and it lacks specific information about how strategies will be evaluated for their impact on teaching and achievement at various points throughout the academic year. This is another key reason why achievement has not improved at a consistently fast rate.
- The targets set for teachers to support them in improving their work are appropriately linked to students' achievement. Consequently, the proportion of teachers who have moved up the pay scale in the past two years is appropriate.
- Since September 2012, leaders have provided a wide range of training and development for some teachers and this is beginning to have a positive impact their practice and on students' achievement. However, not all teachers have had access to effective training opportunities as there is no systematic and structured approach to the sharing of good practice.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has not monitored teaching and achievement as well as it should have done since the academy opened. It has not ensured that it receives appropriately frequent and detailed information about the quality of teaching and students' achievement. Consequently, it has not provided enough challenge, and this also contributed to low standards in 2012.
 - The quality of support and challenge has improved in line with other aspects of leadership and management since September 2012. The governors now have a secure understanding of the academy's strengths and key areas for improvement, but still not in sufficient detail to enable them to provide the rigorous challenge needed.
 - The governors have a good understanding of how targets are set for teachers, and how these relate to staff pay rises and promotion. They also know how the pupil premium is spent, and are aware of the impact that this funding is having for eligible students.
 - The governing body makes sure that the academy fulfils its responsibilities regarding safeguarding. All staff have been checked as required, and are trained appropriately to keep students safe and free from harm.

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	137187
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	400166

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

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	820
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Hyde
Headteacher	Scott Preston
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01480 374748
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