

Dartmouth Academy

Milton Lane, Dartmouth, Devon, TQ6 9HW

Inspection dates 9–10 October 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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils' progress and attainment in English are below national expectations and their literacy skills are weak, in the secondary phase.
- Across the academy, pupils are not reading widely enough.
- The sixth form requires improvement because pupils are not making consistently good progress across A-level subjects.
- The quality of teaching is too uneven to promote consistently good academic progress throughout the academy.
- Some teachers are not making good use of assessment to challenge all pupils, especially the most able pupils, to make as much progress as possible.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' progress and attainment are improving. From their starting points, which are below national expectations, pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and primary phase. In the secondary phase, GCSE results are improving rapidly, although not evenly across all subjects.
- Attainment at GCSE and A level is particularly good in art and photography.
- Improvements in teaching and learning are leading to an upward trend in pupils' progress and attainment. Gaps are closing rapidly for pupils with low prior attainment or who are disadvantaged.
- Pupils' behaviour and attendance are also improving. Behaviour is good and pupils feel safe. They are proud of their achievements. They enjoy working together in this small, all-age school.
- The principal, ably supported by the leadership team and governing body, has successfully tackled previous weaknesses in teaching and is inspiring pupils and staff to raise standards.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 lessons taught by 30 teachers, almost all of which were observed jointly with members of the academy’s senior leadership team. In addition, they listened to a few pupils reading.
- Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils, academy staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and the education adviser from the academy sponsor, E-ACT.
- The inspection team observed the academy’s work and examined a range of documents, including information on the monitoring of pupils’ progress and the quality of teaching, the monitoring of pupils’ behaviour and attendance, systems for the performance management and development of staff, improvement plans and documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils.
- The inspection team took account of 30 responses to Ofsted’s online Parent View survey and questionnaires completed by 34 members of staff.

Inspection team

Sue Frater, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Phil Taylor

Additional Inspector

Christine Young

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school became a sponsor-led academy providing for ages three to 16 years in September 2010, having previously been separate primary and secondary schools. In September 2011, it started to develop a sixth form, thus extending the age range to 18 years. The academy is sponsored and supported by the E-ACT academy group. It has specialist subjects in the visual arts and mathematics. It is due to move into a new building on the same site in April 2014.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Nursery and a Reception class.
- There is a separate children's centre on the academy site which has provision for children aged from birth to three years.
- The academy is smaller than most primary and secondary schools. The primary phase has one form on entry. About 50 students join the secondary phase each year from neighbouring primary schools. The sixth form is much smaller than most.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average.
- A larger proportion of pupils than is found in most schools is eligible for support through the pupil premium. The pupil premium provides additional government funding for children in the care of the local authority, children of parents in the armed forces, and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The number supported by school action is below average.
- No pupils attend off-site alternative provision.
- The academy is a member of the South West Teaching Schools Alliance and shares staff training days across the partnership.
- The academy meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching by:
 - ensuring teachers constantly check and extend pupils' understanding during lessons and challenge all pupils, particularly the most able, to make rapid progress
 - developing teachers' questioning skills and their ability to adapt the pace of learning to support and challenge all pupils to make as much progress as possible
 - sharing the good and outstanding practice in the academy, and in partner schools, in engaging and inspiring pupils in their learning.
- Improve pupils' progress and attainment in English, and their literacy skills in the secondary phase, and encourage pupils to read more widely across the academy.
- Improve attainment in the sixth form by sharing the good and outstanding practice in the academy.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' progress and their attainment are improving, but they are not yet consistently good across all phases and subjects, and for all groups of pupils, in the academy. This is due to the quality of teaching which is not yet consistently good.
- When children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage, their starting points are below those expected for their age, especially in speech and language. They progress quickly and achieve a good level of development in meeting, or exceeding, all the early learning goals.
- Pupils' progress in reading by the age of six years is improving due to systematic teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make). The academy's information indicates that results in the phonics screening test were much higher in 2013 than in 2012, and were broadly in line with national expectations.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in lessons and, by the end of Key Stage 1, they attain results that are at least in line with national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' good progress in lessons across Key Stage 2 is leading to an improving trend in attainment, particularly in mathematics which the academy identified as an area of weakness in 2012. The academy's information for 2013 indicates that pupils' attainment was consistently in line with national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. This was due to improvements in mathematics teaching.
- Across the secondary phase, pupils' progress in lessons and their attainment are improving, but they are not yet consistently good across all subjects. The quality of teaching is improving and this, together with better use of information to identify and make appropriate provision for underachieving pupils, is leading to GCSE results that are rising at a faster rate than the national trend. Standards at GCSE including English and mathematics, however, are below average.
- The academy's information indicates that most secondary phase pupils made better progress in mathematics in 2013 than in 2012, and their attainment is broadly in line with national expectations. This is not the case for the most able pupils. Progress in mathematics lessons is improving in this phase due to improvement in teaching, but more able pupils are not being challenged to make good progress consistently across all lessons. The academy has stopped early entry to GCSE examinations in order to give pupils more time to reach higher grades.
- Pupils, especially the most able, are not making enough progress in English lessons in the secondary phase because expectations are not high enough. Their progress is hindered by weak literacy skills. Pupils do not read widely enough, even in the primary phase, to help them to develop their language and literacy skills. The academy is tackling weaknesses in the teaching of English in this phase, and pupils' attainment is improving but too slowly over time..
- Disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs, pupils with low prior attainment, those supported by Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium funding, and the few pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress throughout the academy because they are supported well in lessons and in intervention programmes. The gaps between their attainment and that of all pupils in the academy are closing rapidly. For example, pupils supported by the pupil premium were -4.6 in average point scores below others in English and -7.4 in mathematics in 2012. The academy's information indicates the gap was further reduced in 2013.
- In the sixth form, pupils' progress across subjects is too variable to be good. Pupils enter the sixth form with lower GCSE results than is usual. They attain AS- and A level results that are also below average overall, although results in visual arts subjects, such as art and photography, are above average.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not yet good across all phases and subjects in the academy because teachers are not consistently using assessment to match lessons to the needs of all pupils.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, effective use is made of assessment to plan and adapt lessons to enable all pupils to make good progress. Good attention is given to developing pupils' language skills and their use of phonics in reading.
- Improvements in teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics and in phonics are leading to a more consistently good quality of teaching in the primary phase.
- Teachers in the primary phase are now making better use of assessment to support and challenge all pupils to make good progress. For example, in a Year 6 literacy lesson on how to write a biography, the teacher used her assessments to vary the learning objectives, activities and her questions according to the pupils' different stages of learning.
- The pupils' differing targets and criteria for their work were pitched at a suitably high level for each group. The pupils were inspired by a video, the internet and role play, to research the life of Leif Erickson in order to write a biography about him. Through skilful questioning, the teacher constantly checked and extended pupils' understanding. The most able pupils could explain their use of main and subordinate clauses and edited each other's work very effectively, for example suggesting using 'more interesting conjunctions' to link sentences. They paid good attention to the use of punctuation, spelling and joined handwriting. In marking their work, the teacher wrote comments which helped individual pupils to know how to improve it. Due to the teacher's high expectations, including expecting pupils to use accurate technical vocabulary, all pupils made outstanding progress in the lesson.
- The teaching of English in the secondary phase does not build sufficiently on pupils' previous learning in the primary phase. Expectations are not high enough, particularly for the most able pupils, to sustain pupils' good progress across the academy. Pupils are not inspired by the limited use of resources and activities, although the recent emphasis given to using the academy library is beginning to encourage pupils to read for pleasure.
- Sixth form pupils are motivated by theatre visits and reviews to compare and contrast a range of texts. The teacher's probing questions help them to make good progress in their English literature lessons, although weaknesses in their use of language prevent some of the pupils from getting higher grades to support them in the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Improvements in the teaching of mathematics and science in the secondary phase and sixth form include engaging pupils in more practical activities, such as problem solving and investigation. These are leading to better academic progress. In lessons such as geography, history and physical education, teachers demonstrate the skills expected. This motivates pupils to refine and present their own work.
- Pupils are inspired to learn in the visual arts because of their teachers' excellent subject knowledge, the range of resources and high quality examples of work. The teachers' constant use of probing questions extends pupils' thinking and encourages pupils to improve and refine their work. Across subjects, not all teachers are constantly checking and extending pupils' understanding in this way, or adapting the pace of learning during lessons to challenge all pupils, and particularly the more able, to make as much progress as possible.
- In all lessons throughout the academy, relationships between pupils and their teachers create a positive climate for learning and vulnerable pupils are supported well. The academy's marking policy is being applied consistently, thus helping pupils to make better progress. The use of homework is helping to promote good progress in some subjects, but not consistently across all subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is typically good across the academy. Due to a more interesting and engaging curriculum, pupils' attitudes to learning have improved and are now good. Pupils apply themselves to their work even when lessons are not inspiring, and they support each other's learning well. Few lessons are affected by low-level disruption.

- Pupils, staff and the large majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View agree that the academy makes sure its pupils are well behaved and almost all agree that pupils feel safe.
- Leaders and managers have successfully established a positive ethos in, and around, the academy. Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and at lunch and break times. They are proud of their achievements and say they enjoy working together in this small school. Their attendance has improved and is now average. They are punctual to lessons.
- Pupils have a good awareness of different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying and prejudice-based bullying. They say the very few instances of bullying are dealt with effectively by the staff.
- Behaviour is managed consistently well across the academy. There are clear improvements over time for the very few pupils with particular behavioural needs.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school and they understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations.

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal, ably supported by senior and middle leaders, is successfully raising the aspirations of pupils and the expectations of staff. This is resulting in improving trends in achievement and teaching, and in the good behaviour and safety of pupils.
- Teaching is improving strongly across the academy, and previous inadequate teaching has been tackled by accurate monitoring, effective performance management, training and coaching.
- Arrangements for teachers' performance management are being reviewed appropriately to strengthen the link between pay progression and pupils' progress.
- To sustain the improvements, all leaders and managers are developing effective skills in self-evaluation, including lesson observation, examination of pupils' work and teachers' planning, and analysis of information on pupils' progress. Self-evaluation is identifying the right priorities for the academy improvement plan. It is supported by a relatively new system for checking pupils' progress and attainment. The information provided is generally accurate and very detailed, but lacks sufficient focus on the evaluation of the progress of different groups of pupils in English and mathematics throughout the academy. This has resulted in slow progress in addressing weaknesses in achievement in English in the secondary phase. While the academy has identified the need for a whole-school approach to developing literacy skills, and wider reading, action planning is too recent to have made any significant impact.
- An innovative range of subjects is engaging pupils and provides well for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It includes collapsing the timetable every tenth day to enable pupils to work on cross-curricular themes, such as courage, and to engage in visits. The curriculum is planned in three stages plus the sixth form, which overlap the traditional key stages and support transitions between them very effectively.
- The academy works well with parents. Most of the parents who responded to Parent View would recommend the academy to another parent.
- The academy's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.
- The education adviser from the academy sponsor, E-ACT, provides good support for the academy, for example in developing leadership and management skills in self-evaluation and in training the governing body in asking key questions to challenge the academy's performance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - knows the quality of teaching and the pupils' achievement well in relation to national expectations, through examining performance information, but would benefit from the provision of more focused evaluation of the progress of different groups of pupils in English and mathematics across the academy
 - systematically challenges senior leaders to improve teaching and pupils' achievement, as in

mathematics

- ensures the efficient management of financial resources so that staff and resources are effectively deployed and teachers are effectively held to account through performance management procedures
 - ensures the academy makes effective use of the Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium funding to promote good progress for the pupils it supports
 - ensures the academy makes good use of the new primary school sport funding in extending the range of sport available to the pupils. A good number of primary pupils engage in extra-curricular sport and this contributes to developing their well-being and healthy lifestyles. Specialist physical education teachers help the pupils to reach a good level of performance.
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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	136200
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	399796

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	534
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Shaw
Principal	Nick Hindmarsh
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01803 839700
Fax number	01803 231188
Email address	admin@dartmouthacademy.org.uk

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