

Adams' Grammar School

High Street, Newport, TF10 7BD

Inspection dates 27–28 November 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
Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The rich and varied curriculum, coupled with outstanding teaching over time, ensures that all students develop excellent attitudes to learning and achieve extremely well.
- Academic standards are exceptionally high. The excellent educational opportunities, in particular the extensive range of extra-curricular activities, develop in students a wide range of personal skills and attributes that equip them exceedingly well for the next stage of their education and the world beyond school.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding, and they feel safe in the school.
- The school's leaders consistently reinforce the highest expectations of all staff and high aspirations for all students, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs and those who are eligible for support through the pupil premium. As a result all groups of students achieve exceptionally well.
- Teachers know students exceptionally well as individuals. They ensure that teaching fuels students' interests and encourages them to be active learners who use their initiative.
- The boarding provision is good, and enables boarders to achieve outstanding learning outcomes. Boarders grow in confidence and are very positive about their boarding experience. They relish the extensive opportunities offered to them. Boarding provision is not yet outstanding because further improvements need to be made to the quality of accommodation.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools.
- The sixth form is outstanding. All students in the sixth form make exceptional progress in all subjects, including those who have entered from other schools because of the well planned courses offered by the school.
- The senior leaders have a blend of skills which enable the team to lead and manage with exceptional effectiveness.
- Outstanding leadership and governance ensures that all staff constantly strive for the very best for students and thus the school has built effectively on its existing strengths.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 lessons and parts of lessons. Ten lessons were observed jointly with the senior leadership team. Inspectors walked around the school with students to observe behaviour both in and out of lessons. The quality of the boarding provision was evaluated.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, heads of house and boarding masters, groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and other members, and the headteacher of the federated school.
- A meeting was held with a small group of parents and carers. The views of 146 parents and carers who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire, were considered. The results of 50 staff questionnaires were analysed.
- Inspectors analysed the school's 2011 and 2012 examination results, and the unvalidated results for 2013. They analysed the school's data on the progress students have made from their starting points and their current progress. Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including records of meetings, curriculum plans, records relating to safeguarding and boarding, and data on behaviour, attendance and exclusions. They looked at the school's evaluation of its strengths and areas for development, and its improvement plans.

Inspection team

Michelle Parker, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Merryl Ford	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jane Woodall	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Macfarlane	Additional Inspector
Trevor Hall	Social Care Inspector
Julian Parker	Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Adams' Grammar school converted to an academy in January 2011. When the predecessor school, Adams' Grammar School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding.
- This oversubscribed school is smaller than the average secondary school with a sixth form, and has boarding provision for 90 boys. The large sixth form accepts boys and girls from the wider area.
- The school is a Haberdashers' Company school, and the company appoints the governing body. It is federated with Abraham Darby School in Telford.
- The student population is stable with very few students joining or leaving the school partway through the year.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is much lower than the national average.
- Very few students are eligible for support through the pupil premium, the additional funding provided by the government for students who are looked after by the local authority, known to be eligible for free school meals or children of service families.
- A much smaller than average proportion of students are disabled or have special educational needs, supported through school action, school action plus or a have statement of special educational needs.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school is on two sites about a mile apart. One site is used predominately for boarding and for games.
- The school meets 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 the quality of teachers' written comments in students' exercise books so that it is as good as the detailed and highly effective oral feedback provided to students in lessons, to better assist parents and carers in supporting their child's learning.
- Ensure that the maintenance programme for boarding accommodation continues improving.
- Increase the number of staff with boarding responsibilities who have first-aid qualifications.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Standards are exceptionally high at the end of Year 11 and Year 13. Students' attainment is high in all subjects and in all year groups. Overall, all students make outstanding progress, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, the small number of students who are disabled or have special educational needs and the very small number of students who are eligible for support through the pupil premium. The funding is used well to promote their outstanding progress. There is no gap between the achievement of students eligible for free school meals and others.
- Attainment and progress of all students, including the most-able and those with special educational needs are well above national averages at the end of Year 11. The school's unvalidated results for 2013 indicate all students gained at least a C grade at GCSE for English and mathematics. In addition, across all subjects, students gained well above the national averages in the highest GCSE grades; 35.9% gained grade A* and 34% gained grade A. The overwhelming majority of students make better than expected progress in English. Almost every student makes better than expected progress in mathematics and across the majority of subjects. Students are not entered early for GCSE examinations.
- There are no students targeted for the Year 7 catch-up programme.
- Students make rapid and sustained progress in all lessons. This is because they have excellent skills in reading, writing and communication and can express themselves eloquently. Reading is valued highly. Students enjoy reading and are challenged to read a wide range of genres, both fiction and non-fiction.
- Students' mathematical understanding is excellent and they confidently and accurately apply their knowledge and understanding across a wide range of contexts in other subjects.
- Students in the sixth form achieve similarly well in both GCE AS- and A-level examinations. The school's unvalidated results for GCE A levels in 2013 indicate that 77% of students attained the highest A* to B grades, a proportion which is well above the national average. A slight dip in 2012 from the high standards normally seen in history and critical thinking has been addressed successfully. Students are excellently prepared for their next stage of learning or employment.
- In all the lessons observed, inspectors noted the high levels of challenge that encouraged students to acquire knowledge and understanding rapidly.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teachers constantly seek imaginative ways to extend students' understanding and knowledge and support them in achieving even more highly. Both boys and girls thrive because their love of learning is encouraged. For example, in design and technology boys design and make a bicycle that successfully combines high levels of scientific and mathematical understanding with knowledge of the design aesthetic. In history, Year 8 students gain a deeper understanding of what it is like to be a Civil War soldier through the visit to the school of an actor from the re-enactment society Sealed Knot.
- Teachers consistently develop students' high levels of literacy and mathematical skills across all subjects. This enables students to consolidate and apply their knowledge and skills with confidence. As a result, they make rapid gains in their understanding.

- The monitoring of students' progress across the school is rigorous. Any students at risk of underachievement are swiftly identified and a range of carefully chosen support is provided for them. The house system is used to implement and monitor this provision. Staff know all students exceptionally well. Sixth formers are an integral part of school life and support younger students as mentors, in every subject, to sustain both their interest in learning and their progress in courses.
- Teaching in the sixth form is characterised by high levels of expectation and challenge. Students have excellent skills in learning without direct help from adults, and teachers effectively engage them to sustain exceptional progress. Students stated that they value the high quality support and explanations from staff. All staff willingly give of their time to provide enrichment activities. Outside speakers and visits to centres of excellence excite students' interest and extend the learning in lessons.
- In all lessons observed, students took responsibility for their own learning and supported and challenged each other to do better. In a Year 9 French lesson, the 'hot chair' was used for a student to question the group in French. Students replied confidently in French with high levels of fluency. The fast pace of learning was driven as much by the students' enjoyment of the activity as by the teacher.
- High quality oral feedback to students was a strong feature in all the lessons observed. Teachers' questioning probed students' thinking well. Any weaknesses or misconceptions were skilfully addressed and learning extended. On some occasions inspectors noted that written feedback to students was not as detailed as the oral feedback.
- Homework is well considered and consolidates or extends learning well. Students complete homework to a high standard and this gives them a strong platform for tackling work in the following lesson. Homework diaries are used to communicate effectively between home and school.
- Students across year groups and subjects work well in groups and pairs, share their learning, and help each other.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students' excellent attitudes to learning and behaviour, their mutual respect for each other and support are significant factors in creating a positive culture for learning. Students are courteous to each other, polite and welcoming to visitors.
- Students know how to keep themselves safe. They appreciate the need for sensible behaviour using modern technology and social networking sites. The school takes a firm stand against any prejudice-based bullying such as racist, homophobic and trans-gender bullying and sexism. Students stated they felt accepted for who they are. All students spoken to stated they felt safe at school and in the rare instances of bullying knew who to go to for support. They are confident that any bullying is dealt with swiftly.
- Students regulate their own behaviour. The sixth-form students, especially in boarding houses and the house system, are key to ensuring this. Older students model high standards of behaviour for younger students. They take responsibility for the care and welfare of younger students and ensure that school is a caring community.

- Central to the students' development and the school ethos is the house system, which provides an exceptional sense of belonging that is valued very highly by the students. Their feeling of safety, high standards of behaviour and mutual support generate themselves from a strongly defined system of support through the houses.
- Attendance and punctuality are excellent and are higher than the national average.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, senior staff and governors are passionate about the school and the young people in their care. All staff share this commitment. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors communicate clearly their expectation of excellence in all the school's activities. The welfare and success of all students are fundamental to the school's ethos and underpin its continued improvement in attainment and achievement. It is testimony to the range and depth of the quality of the leadership within the school that this successful inspection took place over two days when the headteacher was away from the school. Very high quality leadership is evident across the school and in the sixth form.
- The school sets itself and achieves challenging targets. The expectation this year is that all students will achieve 100% A* to C grades in 10 subjects including English and mathematics. The school has altered the timetable this year to provide an extra period of English to further boost students' progress. Early indications are that this change is already having a positive impact. The school has continued to maintain the high quality of provision in the sixth form which ensures high retention rates and students' success in their study programmes. This enables them to be excellently prepared for their next stage of learning or employment.
- Rigorous and accurate monitoring ensures that all leaders take an objective view of the school's strengths and swift action is taken to address areas for improvement. High expectations are held that staff and leaders at all levels will rigorously tackle underperformance. The performance management targets of all staff are carefully matched to their training needs and drive the school's systematic sharing of good practice.
- Middle leaders play a key role in ensuring the high quality of all students' achievement across the school. Their meticulous analysis of data informs their monitoring of teaching and learning. School leaders effectively identify and develop the talent of prospective leaders in the school. For example, two younger members of staff developed and lead the school's valuing of diversity project. This has been instrumental in tackling potential prejudice.
- The curriculum is rich and sustains students' thirst for knowledge. Extra-curricular activities effectively promote the school's aim to develop the whole person. The school ensures that students have a wide range of opportunities to excel in traditional academic and other fields. Increased opportunities for excellence are provided through the new music block, the sixth form centre and the art studios that enable students to develop high quality work over extended periods. High quality independent advice prepares all students well for their next stage of learning or employment and ensures students have high aspirations for themselves. For example, students visit a number of top universities and listen to discussions and lectures led by experts in their field.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well through both the formal and informal curriculum; not only are students given excellent opportunities to be involved in a wide range of different sporting and cultural activities (and the involvement by students in these areas is promoted successfully by the house system) but it is developed throughout school life. House competitions encourage student participation and excellence in

both sporting and artistic endeavours. The quality of relationships between staff and students is supported effectively through this and senior leaders are highly committed to this important aspect of students' education.

- The school works effectively in partnership with its federated school. It has also developed links with a local primary school to support its higher attaining pupils in mathematics.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. One parent commented that his daughter 'buzzed' when she came home from school because of the 'academic challenge provided'. A small number of parents were concerned about the quality of boarding provision. Inspectors considered their comments carefully and found no evidence to substantiate their concerns other than those noted in the school's actions for improvement.

The governance of the school:

- The governance of the school is outstanding. Governors are highly skilled and knowledgeable and use their professional understanding to support and challenge senior leaders well. They take a keen and active role in school life and the welfare of all students and ensure the school meets current welfare and safeguarding requirements. They also oversee the leadership team of Abraham Darby School and enable both schools to support and share their respective good practice. Governors scrutinise every aspect of school life and have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and the achievement of all students. They support the headteacher in taking robust action in tackling weakness. They understand how teachers' performance is managed and reward successful teachers.

Outcomes for boarders	are outstanding
Quality of boarding provision and care	is good
Boarders' safety	is good
Leadership and management of boarding provision	are good

- Boarding staff have high aspirations for the young people. They have created a structured and supportive environment within the boarding provision. This encourages students to take responsibility for themselves and others. The boarding provision supports the students' high levels of achievement in school.
- Awareness of individuality and the needs and rights of others are fundamental in the boarding community. Diversity and difference are effectively explored by the celebration of cultural events from different sectors of society, enhancing boarders' understanding and respect for others.
- Boarders live in a highly inclusive boarding community, forming exceptionally good relationships. They encourage and support one another and feel safe and happy in their respective boarding houses. They are tolerant of each other and develop a strong sense of their own value and self-worth.
- The leadership and management of boarding are good. Boarding is an important part of the whole school structure and fully complements the education component of the school. Boarders' accommodation is decorated to varying standards, recent investment has been made in improving the décor, and further improvements are planned for the shower areas.

- Safeguarding procedures are robust and are well known and understood by all staff and students. The school's senior staff understand their responsibilities within the wider safeguarding framework. This ensures that students receive a fully integrated service. The care of boarding students has improved since the previous boarding inspection and is good.

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>

Boarding		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	137446
Social care unique reference number	SC020589
Local authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	413412

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	838
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	301
Number of boarders on roll	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Cann
Headteacher	Michael Barratt
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01952 386300
Fax number	01952 812696
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