

Queen Elizabeth's Academy Trust

Western Road, Crediton, Devon, EX17 3LU

Inspection dates 7–8 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Attainment at GCSE has improved steadily since the last inspection. The proportion of students attaining at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is now above average, as are the proportions of students making or exceeding the progress expected of them in both English and mathematics.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium and those who are disabled or have special educational needs achieve well. The achievement of students with dyslexia is especially good.
- Teaching is routinely good and some is outstanding, especially in the sixth form. Teachers have high expectations of students and use interesting tasks that meet their needs very effectively.
- Students behave well in lessons and around the academy. They work well together and independently.
- Students say there is little bullying and the school's records and parents and carers confirm that this is routinely the case. Students are wellinformed concerning the dangers of misuse of electronic media.
- Leadership and management, including governance, have improved since the last inspection. Data are used more effectively to monitor progress and identify areas for improvement. Teachers' performance is monitored accurately and is managed effectively.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students attain above average A- and AS-level grades from modest starting points.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Boys' attainment at the end of Year 11 is considerably lower than that of girls. While both groups make generally good progress over time, weaknesses that exist in boys' writing when they start at the academy are not rectified quickly enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the teaching of 47 teachers. About one-third of these observations were carried out jointly with senior or middle leaders. Briefer visits were made to lessons planned to develop students' literacy skills.
- Inspectors reviewed documents, including those relating to students' attainment and progress, behaviour and safeguarding. They considered reports on the quality of the academy's work provided by external consultants.
- Meetings were held with staff, groups of students and members of the governing body.
- The views of 208 parents and carers who submitted them on the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and of staff who completed a questionnaire, were analysed and taken into account.

Inspection team

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Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is larger than the average size secondary school. It serves the town of Crediton and the surrounding rural area.
- The school converted to academy status in April 2011. While the academy is commonly known as the Queen Elizabeth's Academy Trust, its legal title is the QE Academy Trust. No other educational establishments are members of the Trust.
- The academy is a member of a Teaching School Alliance, in which local schools work together to improve the quality of their teaching.
- The school hosts a local authority resource for the education of students with statements of special educational needs for dyslexia. While eight places are funded by the local authority, there are currently 10 such students at the academy. The staff of the resource are also engaged in outreach work at other schools.
- The academy has boarding provision for 50 students. The boarding provision was inspected in June 2012 when it was assessed as good. It was not inspected on this occasion.
- The academy has two sites which are located about one mile apart. Years 7 and 8 are educated at the lower school site; Years 9 to 13 at the upper school site.
- The number of students supported through school action is average, while the proportion who are supported through school action plus or who have statements of special educational needs is above average. Most of these students have autistic spectrum disorders, dyslexia or moderate learning or behavioural difficulties.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for children in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and students with a parent or carer in the armed services..
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Some students in Years 10 and 11 pursue courses related to agriculture, horticulture and animal welfare at Exeter and Bicton Colleges. From time to time the academy uses a range of provision for the education of students who have serious long-term illnesses.
- The Principal has recently announced his intention to retire in July 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the attainment of boys to equal that of girls by:
 - ensuring that where necessary, boys' writing skills are improved as soon as possible after they arrive in Year 7
 - placing a greater emphasis on the production of high-quality writing in all subjects throughout Years 7 to 11
 - ensuring that teachers adopt a consistent approach to the marking of written work and provide feedback to students on how to improve it
 - implementing the plan to improve literacy across the academy, in particular through monitoring the progress of boys relative to that of girls and by taking appropriate remedial action when progress slows.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students start at the academy in Year 7 with broadly average attainment in English and mathematics. However, the attainment of boys in writing at this point is below average.
- The proportion of students leaving Year 11 having attained at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has risen steadily over the past three years, and in 2012 and 2013 was increasingly above average. In 2013, the proportion attaining the full English Baccalaureate was high, notably among girls, where nearly half attained this standard compared with just over one quarter of girls nationally. This shows that attainment is consistently above average across a range of subjects.
- Attainment in the sixth form is high. In 2014, Year 13 students attained grades A*, A or B in well over half the A levels taken. Results in the sciences, art, English literature, further mathematics, sociology and food technology were notably high.
- Students make good progress throughout the academy. In both English and mathematics, the proportions making or exceeding the progress expected of them from Year 7 to Year 11 are above average, including for the most able students. In the sixth form, students attain their excellent A-level results in relation to their starting points, demonstrating outstanding progress.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium achieve well and gaps in their performance when compared with other students are closing. In English the gap in GCSE performance closed from one grade in 2012 to half a grade in 2013. In mathematics there was a similar but slightly smaller improvement.
- Students who are disabled or who have special educational needs also achieve well, most notably those who are dyslexic, who make very rapid improvements in their literacy skills due to the high-quality intensive help that they receive.
- While both boys and girls generally achieve well in English, in the case of boys this is often from a lower starting point, especially in writing. Insufficient emphasis is placed on rectifying this weakness at an early stage, so that the gap in the performance of boys and girls persists to Year 11.
- Students read widely and with enthusiasm, as seen for example when Year 11 students read a text in French concerning career aspirations in order to prepare for their own assessed presentation on the topic. However, the quality of written work is too variable and sometimes lacks accuracy and care with presentation.
- The academy makes limited use of early entry for GCSE. Some able mathematicians are entered for the subject in Year 10. Academy leaders have evidence that this contributes to both the popularity and success of the subject in the sixth form, which was observed when a sizable group studying further mathematics in Year 13 tackled second order differential equations with enthusiasm and success.
- The achievement of students who attend college courses is monitored effectively, and shows that they make good progress.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and prepare interesting tasks to motivate students. They also use their good subject knowledge well. In an outstanding example, Year 10 biology students investigated the effect of caffeine on the heart rate of daphnia, by direct microscopic observation. This A-level type investigation created great excitement and rapid progress in learning and contributed well to students' spiritual and moral development.
- Teachers increasingly use data effectively to plan work that meets individual needs. In mathematics, while Year 10 students solved quadratic equations, a challenging activity in itself, the most able tackled tasks with an even higher level of challenge.

- Questioning is used well to promote learning and to assess students' knowledge, for example in a Year 13 law lesson where the teacher probed students' understanding of the use of case law through sophisticated questioning.
- Students are aware of their progress and of the GCSE or A-level grades they are capable of attaining. These records of progress are regularly updated and are made available to parents and carers. Teachers provide good guidance on how grades might be improved, especially at A level.
- In some cases too little emphasis is placed on the production of high-quality written work. The marking of such work is too variable. In the best examples teachers provide detailed guidance on how such work might be improved, but this is not always the case and there is too little consistency of approach across different subjects concerning the expectations of written work and its marking.
- Students who are disabled or who have special educational needs are taught well. They receive good support from other adults that enables them to make rapid progress. This is especially the case where students are dyslexic and adults have received specialist training on meeting students' needs.
- Practical subjects such as physical education are also taught well. Teachers were seen challenging stereotypes, such as in a dance lesson for Year 9 boys, and students responded enthusiastically and made very good progress.
- Students and their parents and carers agree that teaching is good and that it has improved recently by better meeting students' individual needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' behaviour is good, and they are keen to learn. Only on the rare occasions where teaching is weak does behaviour in lessons fall below an acceptable standard, which is why behaviour is not outstanding. Students behave well around the academy and low levels of exclusion and the limited use of other sanctions show that this is consistently the case, demonstrating that the academy effectively promotes good relationships.
- Students say there is little bullying and any that occurs is dealt with effectively by adults. The school successfully fosters a lack of discrimination, for example towards gay, lesbian and transgender students. Students are wellinformed about the dangers of misuse of electronic media and the use of mobile phones is carefully monitored and controlled.
- Student safety is also good. The many adventurous activities on offer are assessed for risk and led by well-trained staff. Staff, rather than students, travel between the academy's two sites, reducing the level of risk from such journeys.
- Limited dining facilities have led to students in Years 10 to 13 being allowed off the site at lunchtime. This is carefully controlled and monitored and the governing body rightly plans to increase the capacity for dining within the academy.
- Students attending college courses are always accompanied by a member of the academy staff. This ensures their welfare and safety while away from the academy.
- Attendance has improved steadily since the last inspection and is now above average. Students enjoy coming to the academy and there is little persistent absence. Sixth form students are required to demonstrate at least a minimum level of attendance of 90%.
- Students receive good guidance for choices about the next stage of their lives. Three-quarters of sixth form students enter university, a high proportion for the local authority area. Others are supported in making other active choices, such as to apply for modern apprenticeships.

The leadership and management are good

- The quality of middle and senior leadership has improved since the last inspection. This includes

subject leadership, for example in English and history, and of other aspects such as the sixth form and provision for students who are disabled or who have special educational needs. This is demonstrated by the outstanding quality of the sixth form and of the provision for students with dyslexia, including the outreach work of staff with other schools.

- The academy has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses that is well informed by the work of academy leaders and external consultants. Actions taken as a result have been successful in improving students' achievement and the quality of teaching.
- Data are used with increasing effectiveness to monitor progress and plan work. Staff and governors have received useful training in this field. Leaders are rightly refining datasets to reflect the academy's priorities, such as by analysing the progress of boys relative to girls', or monitoring incidents of misbehaviour relating to the use of mobile phones.
- A plan to improve the development of literacy in Years 7 to 11, and in particular boys' writing, has been drawn up but has yet to be implemented. This is a high priority, in particular to promote good quality written work in all subjects and to improve the consistency of marking and feedback to students about how it might be improved. While the academy promotes equality of opportunity well in almost all respects, the relatively lower attainment of boys shows that work remains to be done in this field.
- Senior leaders accurately assess staff performance and manage it effectively. There are appropriate links between performance and pay. Successful action has been taken to improve the quality of teaching, for example in English. Useful professional development helps teachers to improve, including through the sharing of effective practice within the teaching school alliance. The academy increasingly works effectively with local primary schools, in particular to tackle the weak performance of boys in writing at an early stage.
- The curriculum is a strength and students appreciate the wide range of courses on offer, and in particular the breadth of additional activities. These include sport, performance, adventure and cultural activities and make a very strong contribution to students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Parents and carers are positive about the academy, the vast majority saying their children are happy, safe and making good progress. Nine out of 10 would recommend the academy to other parents and carers. Staff have a positive view of their work and feel they are supported well.
- The academy makes good use of external consultants, including some obtained through the local authority, to monitor its work and to contribute to improvement.
- The academy makes good use of its resources. The accommodation, some of which is cramped and dated, has been the subject of a steady programme of improvement which the governors rightly intend to continue. The pupil premium has been used well to improve the achievement of the students it is intended to help, but additional resources to help underperforming students to catch up in Year 7 have been used less effectively to improve boys' writing skills.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved since the last inspection as governors are using data more effectively to monitor students' progress. Governors have a clear understanding of how the academy's performance relates to other schools' nationally and of areas of strength and weakness. Governors have challenged school leaders appropriately and effectively, for example concerning improvements to teaching. They monitor the impact of pupil premium spending and have an informative statement about this on the academy's useful website. They have a generally good understanding of teachers' performance and of how this links to their pay, but there is a lack of clarity as to how this information is to be used most effectively to support the work of the governing body.
 - Governors carry out their statutory responsibilities well. For example they ensure that students are kept safe and that teachers are well trained in their responsibilities for child protection. They face an immediate challenge concerning the appointment of a new Principal and are wellplaced to do this effectively.

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	136646
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	431076

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1,402
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	264
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Demitri Coryton
Principal	Richard Newton Chance
Date of previous school inspection	26–28 June 2012
Telephone number	01363 773401
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