

The Hereford Academy

Marlbrook Road, Redhill, Hereford, HR2 7NG

Inspection dates 27–28 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Leaders, managers and those responsible for governing the academy have not driven improvements in English and mathematics quickly enough since the last inspection. Plans for improvement are not sufficiently well developed. They do not demonstrate the necessary capacity to improve the academy.
- Teaching has been weak in English and mathematics over the last three years. As a result, students do not make adequate progress in their learning and the majority do not develop the basic skills they need for further study or employment.
- Teachers do not always assess students' work in a timely manner and the quality of their feedback is variable. As a result, students do not know how to improve their work.
- The proportion of students attaining five GCSE passes at grades A* to C (including English and mathematics) has improved too slowly and remains stubbornly below levels seen nationally and in schools in similar circumstances.
- Students who are eligible for additional support to help them succeed are not doing as well as other students, particularly in English and mathematics. As a result, they achieve almost two thirds of one GCSE grade lower than their classmates.
- Key subject leaders have not driven improvements in the teaching of English and mathematics fast enough.
- The systems to track how well students learn are ineffective. This is because the information entered into the system is not always accurate, as some teachers are not sufficiently clear about how to assess and track students' progress.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Students do not make good progress from their low starting points.
- Governors do not have high enough aspirations for what students can achieve and so do not provide sufficient challenge to senior leaders. They do not make the best use of information available to them.

The school has the following strengths

- Students' attitudes are positive and their behaviour over time has improved well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is well developed.
- Students feel safe and supported. All forms of bullying are rare. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Parents and staff hold positive views about the academy.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 33 lessons, including eight mathematics lessons. Over two thirds of the lessons observed were in Years 7 to 11, and almost one third in the sixth form. Seven lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders including the Principal.
- The lead inspector met with three governors, including the Chair, and the Director of Education from the Diocese of Herefordshire (the academy’s sponsor).
- Inspectors met with four groups of students and also spoke with them at break, lunchtime and during lessons. They met with subject leaders and held other meetings with senior staff about a range of issues including the use of data, the quality of teaching, achievement and behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors analysed the responses from 27 parents to Parent View online and also met with a group of parents.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents including the school’s own data on achievement, attendance and behaviour. They scrutinised the academy’s safe recruitment procedures and other aspects of safeguarding, including the single central record of staff.

Inspection team

Michael Blakey, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Helen Martin	Additional Inspector
Keith Brown	Additional Inspector
Kevin Harrison	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Hereford Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- In September 2013 the academy sponsor changed to the Diocese of Herefordshire Board of Education.
- Most students are White British. The proportion from minority ethnic groups is below average.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- At 39%, the proportion of students eligible for support through the pupil premium is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided to schools to support students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, in the care of the local authority, or from a family with a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of students supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- Approximately 50 students in Years 10 to 13 and those returning for a further year post-18 attend alternative provision at Peter Prosser Hairdressing and Commanche Dressage Stables.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress for students at the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is at least good, particularly in English and mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - teachers provide lesson activities that cater for different ability levels, so that all groups of students make good progress
 - marking of students' books shows them clearly what they need to do to improve their work
 - teachers use questioning well to check students' understanding and provide support and challenge where they are most needed
 - leaders of subjects raise teachers' expectations and secure improvements
 - senior leaders provide support and training to enable subject leaders to more effectively identify, monitor, support and challenge weak practice.
- Improve the achievement of all students, particularly in English and mathematics, so that it is at least in line with national levels by ensuring that:
 - students' progress is assessed accurately
 - the resulting information is used by all leaders, managers and teachers to identify when groups, classes or year groups are not making good progress, and to plan for improvements in teaching and achievement in a focused way
 - the spending of the pupil premium funding results in the attainment gap between students eligible for the funding and other students in the academy being narrowed.
- Those responsible for governance and leaders at all levels should develop a highly focused

development plan which :

- is founded on an accurate analysis of current performance
- includes specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-limited targets
- makes it clear what key individuals must do to drive improvements at a much faster rate.

Ofsted has made recommendations for action on governance to the authority responsible for the school. An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- The achievement of students is inadequate because weak teaching prevents them from making the progress they should. This is despite their good and occasionally better attitudes to learning.
- Students' progress in English and mathematics is too slow. As a result, over the last three years, the proportion of students attaining five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics has been well below the national figure.
- Over the past three years, the proportion of students attaining a good GCSE in mathematics has increased by six percentage points, but is still well below levels seen nationally. School data, partly based on some students taking national examinations early, suggest that this slow improvement will continue in 2014. The proportion of students making expected progress in mathematics increased from 38% in 2012 to 54% in 2013, but this is still not good enough.
- In English, students do not make the progress they should and the proportion attaining grade C or above at GCSE is well below the national average. However, achievement in English is showing signs of improvement as a result of the academy-wide focus on improving literacy. Additional funding to support Year 7 students to catch up with their reading is used effectively.
- Most students who are eligible for additional support funded by the pupil are not making adequate progress. As a result, the attainment gap between them and their classmates is not narrowing. This picture is clearly evident in their GCSE results at the end of Year 11, which show that these students are two thirds of a grade behind their classmates in English and mathematics. The most recent information the academy holds confirms this is continuing.
- When students are entered early for national examinations, for example in mathematics, this limits the attainment of the most-able students, whose overall achievement is also inadequate.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs requires improvement, but they make better progress than other students as a result of effective support from the special educational needs coordinator and team of teaching assistants.
- Achievement in some subjects is often better than in English and mathematics. For example, students make good progress in science and they enjoy learning in a wide range of subjects, including art, history and physical education.
- The proportion of students attaining five GCSE passes at grades A* to C *excluding* English and mathematics rose from 85% in 2009 to 91% in 2012. Data that take into account the grades attained by students in their eight best GCSE subject examinations show that their attainment has been higher than the national average over the last three years.
- The achievement of students in the sixth form requires improvement. Although students broadly make the progress expected, they are hindered by their weak basic skills in English and mathematics. However, achievement in some work-related subjects, including BTEC sport, health and social care, and public services, is often higher than the national average.
- Leaders and managers carefully monitor the quality of teaching and learning for students attending Peter Prosser Hairdressing and Comanche Dressage Stables, to ensure that students access acceptable work-related training.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- The quality of teaching over time in English and mathematics has been weak. As a result, few students are able to read, write and apply mathematical skills as well as they should.
- Teaching, particularly in mathematics, does not take enough account of what students already know and can do. Teachers do not always ensure that activities are tailored for the most able or for students whose basic skills are less well developed. They do not always sequence activities in a logical way to build students' knowledge and understanding systematically. As a result, students, including those who are supported by the pupil premium, make inadequate progress.
- Teachers do not keep a sufficiently close or accurate check on students' progress, and the academy has identified this as an area for development. The information used by teachers to identify when students are not making good progress is not as accurate as it needs to be, and as a result teaching is not always sufficiently tailored to meet the needs of different ability groups. During lessons, teachers do not ask questions effectively to assess students' knowledge and understanding, so they can subsequently adjust the difficulty of the work to ensure students make good progress.
- Teachers do not always mark students' work often enough for their feedback to help raise standards, and some pay too little attention to providing students with the detail they need to help them to improve. In some subjects, such as art and history, feedback to students is clear and, as a result, they know exactly what they need to do to improve. However, this approach is not typical and, as a result, too many students do not achieve as well as they should.
- Teaching in the sixth form requires improvement, because teachers do not always sufficiently challenge students or have the highest expectations for what they can achieve. In some of the lessons seen, students did not make good progress the teaching was mundane and the activities not sufficiently interesting or stimulating.
- Inspectors jointly observed seven lessons with senior leaders and confirmed their judgements about how well students are learning in lessons as a result of the quality of teaching. While the school's own monitoring records show that the proportion of good or better teaching has increased over time in most subjects, these improvements have not been quick enough to enable students to achieve well in English and mathematics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are very courteous and polite to each other, teachers and visitors. They arrive on time to the academy and to lessons. These positive attitudes to learning and to each other are well embedded and provide a strong foundation from which the academy should be able to improve achievement.
- In almost all lessons observed, students' behaviour was good and low-level disruption was very uncommon. Students behave equally well before and after school, at break and lunch time, and when moving between lessons. Behaviour in an assembly was outstanding.
- Despite poor teaching over time in some key subjects and across all year groups, students demonstrate strongly positive attitudes to learning. They willingly engage in lessons, and have an equally positive approach when working on their own, in pairs or in groups. Even when teaching is inadequate, or in lessons lasting over three hours, their behaviour remains good.

- The academy's own monitoring clearly shows that attendance has improved over time. It is now broadly in line with national levels, as a result of focused work by the attendance team.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions reduced significantly from above average in 2011 to below average in 2012 and remained low in 2013. There have been no permanent exclusions for over two years.
- Parents, students and staff say that the academy is a safe place where behaviour is good. Students say that there is very little bullying or discrimination of any kind, and on the odd occasion when it does occur it is dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. Students whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable are overwhelmingly positive about how secure they feel at Hereford Academy.
- Students who attend alternative provision say that they feel safe, and school records show that they attend regularly.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leaders and managers have not driven improvements quickly enough, specifically in the quality of teaching and students' achievement in English and mathematics. This is despite these issues been raised in previous inspections. Neither have they effectively narrowed the attainment gap between students supported by pupil premium funding and their peers. They have not demonstrated the capacity to secure improvements in these important areas. The recent change of the academy's sponsor has created some confusion over governance.
- Plans to improve the academy are not sufficiently well focused on the most important issues. Targets are not always specific, and the actions to achieve them are not always clearly described. Tasks are not always allocated to one key individual and, therefore, there is a lack of clarity about who is responsible for what.
- Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- Leaders and managers hold an inaccurate view about the academy's performance. However, they accurately assess the quality of teaching and identify areas of weak practice. They have implemented processes to improve the performance of teachers, including coaching, which have begun to have an impact. However, these initiatives are not making a difference quickly enough. Teachers who are successful are rewarded appropriately.
- The academy provides opportunities for subject leaders to undertake training to improve their leadership skills. However, support for subject leaders, particularly in English and mathematics, has not been sufficiently well focused on improving the quality of teaching and achievement of students. As a result, achievement is not improving fast enough.
- All statutory duties to safeguard students are met, including the safe recruitment and appropriate training of all staff. The academy contributes well to the use of the Common Assessment Framework which makes sure that students receive early help when they need to, and effectively supports a range of students whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable.
- Leaders and managers have created a culture of good behaviour and an academy where

students feel safe and cared for.

- The curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for students, particularly in the sixth form, where students have a wide range of choice of work-related programmes to study. Although the curriculum does not contribute sufficiently well to achievement in English and mathematics, it makes a marked contribution to students' overall development, as seen in students' attainment in their best eight subjects.
- The curriculum makes a positive impact on students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and this is evident in good relationships with their peers and teachers and students' good behaviour.
- Most parents accept invitations to discuss their children's learning with staff at regular academic tutoring days. Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey (Parent View) stated that they would recommend the academy to other parents.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors' aspirations for students are limited by a belief that the national floor target for the proportion of students achieving five GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics is 'too challenging for the academy'.
- Governors have a broadly accurate view of the quality of teaching but have not driven improvements in teaching quickly enough and, as a result, the proportion of students achieving five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics is well below national levels.
- Governors do not make full use of the range of data to challenge performance as well as they should. For example, their understanding of the use of the pupil premium funding is limited.
- Resources are not deployed effectively to improve the quality of teaching in English and mathematics.
- Governors have recently appointed an external education consultant to support the Principal. However, this support has yet to show any impact on the effectiveness of the academy.

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	135662
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	427347

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	760
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christopher Whitney
Principal	John Sheppard
Date of previous school inspection	18 May 2011
Telephone number	01432 373570
Fax number	01432 278216
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