

Offa's Mead Academy

Beachley Road, Sedbury, Chepstow, NP16 7DT

Inspection dates 27–28 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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.

- Since the school opened as an academy in September 2012, there has been a strong and successful drive to tackle any underperformance and poor teaching.
- Most pupils make good progress from starting points which are often low. They are currently reaching standards above the latest national averages in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is good because teachers question pupils well. They plan tasks in English and mathematics that rapidly build on what the pupils are already able to do.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage because staff set activities for them which effectively develop children's language and communication skills.
- The many pupils who join the academy after the Reception Year are well supported and settle quickly.
- All staff create a family environment in which pupils feel safe and well cared for. As a result, pupils are keen to learn, and share a sense of responsibility for each other.
- The headteacher, well supported by the local management board and an excellent partnership with the academy trust, has been very effective in leading sustained improvements. All staff share her enthusiasm and high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- The headteacher and managers check the quality of teaching rigorously. This has led to a rapid improvement in teaching and in pupils' achievement across the academy.
- Parents and carers are proud of the academy and the way it has developed in the community since opening. They are happy that their children are safe and well cared for.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in writing is not as rapid as in reading and mathematics. A few older pupils lack confidence with sentence construction, punctuation and spelling.
- Pupils do not have enough chances to write at length in subjects other than English.
- Within the overall picture of good achievement, there are some variations between year groups, particularly in writing. On occasions the more able pupils are not challenged in their work, especially in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons involving five teachers. One of the lessons was observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector held discussions with academy leaders, staff and a representative of the Academy Trust.
- The inspector observed the academy's work and looked at documentation, including improvement plans, the systems for tracking pupils' progress, the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and samples of pupils' work. He heard groups of pupils reading and spoke with pupils about behaviour and safety arrangements at the academy.
- Account was taken of the 20 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the views expressed by those parents and carers who spoke with the inspectors at the start of the academy day or wrote letters. The inspector also considered 14 staff questionnaires

Inspection team

Michael Bartleman, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This academy is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The academy joined Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) in September 2012. When its predecessor school, known as Offa's Mead Primary School, was last inspected in October 2011, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- The academy has seen a large number of staff changes in the four terms it has been open, including the appointment of a new headteacher in September 2012.
- A small local management board, who work as the governing body under a scheme of delegation from the Academies Enterprise Trust Board, was formed in April 2013.
- The academy is situated in Chepstow, close to Beachley Barracks. The academy draws about two fifths of its pupils from the families of the service personnel based at the barracks. As a result the proportion of pupils eligible for extra funding provided for children of service families is above average.
- Most pupils come from a White British background.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. Around one pupil in 10 is supported at school action plus or has statement of special educational needs, which is also above average.
- About a third of all pupils are supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked-after children). This is above average.
- The governing body manages a daily before- and after-school club.
- A high proportion of pupils start at the academy after the Early Years Foundation Stage, and they often join part-way through the school year.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of one full-time Reception class. Other pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes.
- The school has an area known as 'The Cwtch', which is a classroom where pupils with additional needs spend some of their time.
- There is a pre-school setting, Penguins, on the academy site, which is not managed by the governing body and was therefore not included as part of this inspection.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so more is outstanding by ensuring that:
 - more-able pupils are challenged in all lessons, especially in mathematics
 - pupils have opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English
 - pupils develop their skills and confidence in the use of punctuation, grammar and sentence construction
 - progress in writing for all groups of pupils is as rapid as it is reading and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The achievement of pupils has improved significantly in the short time the academy has been open. The proportion of pupils attaining at or above the levels expected for their ages is improving quickly.
- Children join the academy with skill levels that are generally lower than those expected for their ages, particularly in communication and language. By the end of the Reception Year in 2013, over half of children reached a good level of development, which is similar to the national average. This represents good achievement. Children are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Pupils learn the sounds that letters make (phonics) quickly and use this knowledge when reading unfamiliar words. In the national phonics screening check in 2013, a greater proportion of pupils than that seen nationally reached the expected level.
- Throughout the academy a love of reading is encouraged with 'DEAR' (drop everything and read). Standards in reading are above average in Year 2, and average at Year 6.
- In 2013, standards by the end of Year 6 were above average, although achievement was lower in writing than in reading and mathematics. The academy's data show that the trend of rapid improvement is likely to be continued in 2014 for the current Year 6 pupils, with an increased number of pupils attaining the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The work seen in pupils' books and in lessons and the academy's own records of pupils' progress show that the vast majority of pupils, including those from service families and those who join the academy other than at the usual time, are making good progress. Gaps in attainment between groups of pupils are closing.
- Achievement is not outstanding because there is some variability in the rates of progress between groups of pupils in writing. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise and apply their literacy skills in other subjects.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because they receive well-targeted support. Pupils are helped with their work both in class and in small groups or on a one-to-one basis.
- The vast majority of the most able pupils are making good progress to reach standards above those expected for their age in reading, mathematics and writing. The proportion reaching the higher levels in the national tests at the end of both key stages is rising rapidly. However, there are a few occasions in mathematics when they are not always challenged sufficiently.
- The academy uses the pupil premium funding effectively to provide additional teaching assistants and a wide range of support activities for eligible pupils. In 2013, the attainment of Year 6 pupils supported by the pupil premium was the equivalent of seven terms ahead of their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. Currently, the vast majority of eligible pupils are making good progress. The school is working successfully to make sure that eligible pupils achieve at least as well as their classmates in other year groups.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good and enables pupils to achieve well, particularly in literacy and mathematics. Teachers typically ensure that pupils are clear about what they are learning, and this helps them to make good progress.
- Writing, reading and mathematics are taught effectively. Pupils make use of vibrant displays and examples of work on walls, which they refer to when working in class. Teaching has improved rapidly following effective training and close checking of its impact on pupils' learning.
- Progress is best when teachers respond to how well pupils are learning and use questioning to test their understanding about the work being undertaken. For example, in a Year 2 and 3 mathematics lesson, the teacher clearly explained misunderstandings so pupils could complete their multiplication calculations successfully.

- Although improving, the teaching of writing is not ensuring all pupils have the opportunity to write at length in subjects other than English.
- A few of the older pupils lack confidence in sentence construction, punctuation and spelling. New spelling and grammar strategies have been introduced and have started to address the lack of skills and previous underachievement.
- The most able pupils are suitably challenged and motivated to do their best. As a result, they learn well. However, there are a few occasions in mathematics when they have to work through whole-class activities unnecessarily before having the more challenging ones, and this slows their progress.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, all staff provide a stimulating and caring setting where children are confident learners and make good progress. Adults step in at appropriate points to help with and extend children's learning and to regularly assess and record their progress. The local lifeboat and crew visit to the Reception class during the inspection encouraged children to ask questions which developed their language skills well.
- Throughout the academy, teaching assistants effectively support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs so they make the same good progress as other pupils. Some are especially skilled in activities that support pupils' emotional well-being and behaviour. They have a beneficial impact in such areas.
- The academy rightly puts a high priority on making learning as enjoyable as possible and ensures that pupils have many experiences before writing. For example, during the inspection Year 3, 4 and 5 pupils wrote about their samba drumming experiences. Well-managed discussion with the classteacher allowed pupils to develop their vocabulary and technical skills so they could write accurately. Pupils understand that these experiences are an integral part of their learning.
- Marking is regular and most teachers give good advice on what needs to be done to improve to the next stage. Pupils are fully involved in judging their own work against their targets and the given 'success criteria' so they are able to improve their work. The setting of purposeful and interesting homework makes a useful contribution to pupils' good achievement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are very supportive of each other. Typically, pupils are polite, friendly and considerate of others. They are well motivated, settle to their work quickly and enjoy their learning.
- Concern for pupils' welfare is a strength of the academy. Staff use their excellent working relationships with outside agencies to support pupils and their families whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Parents and carers said that all staff ensure that pupils are able to make the most of the learning opportunities offered. They were quick to praise the nurturing programme.
- Pupils, their parents and carers and the staff are positive about standards of behaviour. Pupils say that bullying is rare. They know about the different forms this can take, such as cyber bullying and racist name-calling. Pupils are confident that any minor 'falling-outs' will be sorted quickly by the adults.
- Pupils play an active role in ensuring a happy, well-organised academy. They say that their views are listened to. Opportunities to be peer mediators and 'yellow hat' playground helpers and to be part of the pupil leadership team have a positive effect on their personal development.
- Academy records show that the good behaviour seen during the inspection is typical of behaviour over time. Pupils and parents say behaviour has improved markedly. At playtimes and lunchtimes, pupils play harmoniously. Many clubs ensure that pupils have a range of activities to choose from, and these enhance their learning.
- A small number of pupils who have behavioural difficulties are managed well. These pupils benefit from carefully tailored nurturing support in 'The Cwtch' and have become more confident and resilient as learners.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel very safe in

the academy, and parents and carers who completed the online questionnaire or who spoke to the inspector agree. Pupils are prepared well for maintaining their personal safety both in and outside of the academy.

- Academy leaders have worked hard with parents and carers to encourage regular attendance and reduce any unnecessary absences. As a consequence, current rates are at national average and punctuality is improving.
- Equality of opportunity is absolutely central to the academy's vision and practice. Discrimination is not tolerated in any form and good relations are promoted. The academy promotes diversity and teaches pupils about life in a multicultural society.
- Pupils who attend the breakfast club get a good, healthy and sociable start to the day. The breakfast club has helped to improve the attendance and punctuality of some pupils.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders, managers and representatives from Academies Enterprise Trust work successfully together to drive improvement across the academy. There is now an established culture where expectations of staff and pupils are high within a supportive and caring environment.
- The headteacher is passionate about improving the academy. Since the academy opened, she has improved standards, teaching, behaviour and attendance rates. The results of this work are reflected around the academy in the interesting displays and the wide range of opportunities and visits available for the pupils.
- Morale among the staff is also high. In the questionnaire for staff, all those who responded were unreservedly positive about the teamwork that is driving the improvements in the academy.
- The accurate evaluation of the academy's strengths and weaknesses, combined with the record of improvement, show that leaders have a strong capacity to improve the academy further. Plans for improvement are realistic and focused on the right priorities. The headteacher has managed developments and the many staff changes well so there is a common sense of purpose.
- Senior leaders check the quality of teaching rigorously by regularly observing lessons, examining pupils' work and providing constructive feedback. Staff benefit from well-planned, additional training. Leaders manage the performance of staff well by setting challenging targets based on the progress of pupils. This means that teachers are held to account by how well pupils achieve, so that any pay award or promotion is justified.
- The systems used to check how well individual pupils are progressing are very thorough. These tracking systems enable leaders to assess how different groups and individuals are achieving. Those who need extra help are quickly identified and supported.
- Staff work successfully to make sure that consistently caring attitudes are encouraged across the academy community and that pupils develop an understanding of different cultures and faiths from around the world.
- The breadth of learning opportunities fosters an excitement to learning and contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a significant focus on literacy and numeracy, which are key priorities for the academy. However, the potential to develop pupils' writing skills more extensively through work in other subjects is not strongly developed. Leaders are tackling this through the planning for the new curriculum.
- A wide range of clubs, visits (including residential visits), visitors to the academy, opportunities to learn to play musical instruments or to sing in a choir all enhance learning.
- Sports funding is being used to extend staff's expertise in teaching sport, to increase opportunities for inter-school competition and to offer more after-academy sports clubs. The headteacher's frequent checks show that there has been an increase in participation in clubs and sports activities.
- Academies Enterprise Trust has provided highly effective and regular support for the academy. Very good use is made of this expertise and training which has supported the improvements to

teaching since the academy's opening, and ensured that leaders' view of the quality of the academy's work is accurate.

- The academy successfully promotes equality of opportunity, fosters good relationships and tackles discrimination. Partnerships with parents are good and have developed well since the academy's formation.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The small local management board is increasingly effective and knowledgeable. Together with representatives from the Academies Enterprise Trust, they visit the academy regularly and know it well. This is because they have a good understanding of the information showing pupils' progress and use it to hold the headteacher to account for the quality of teaching and standards in the academy. They have effective procedures to manage the performance of the headteacher and make sure pay rises for staff are deserved by teachers' success in enabling pupils to make progress.
- Members of the board undertake training to enable them to fulfil their roles, including checking the impact of the academy's work on raising pupils' achievement. They carefully monitor the progress of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and make sure that this extra resource is being spent effectively to raise the achievement of eligible pupils. They also have suitable procedures for monitoring the impact of the new sports funding on pupils' health, well-being and sporting achievement. Safeguarding meets all statutory requirements and is regularly checked.

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	138786
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	440031

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	144
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gerry Walters
Headteacher	Clare Greene
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
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