

Buckler's Mead Academy

St John's Road, Yeovil, BA21 4NH

Inspection dates 16–17 September 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The academy has implemented the priorities for improvement identified at the last inspection well. There have been notable improvements in teaching in English and mathematics. The progress of students with identified special educational needs has improved.
- The headteacher and senior leaders are successfully driving the improvement in teaching and achievement with the full support of the staff.
- The academy's records of the academic progress of students show an improving trend. That improvement has led to a rise in attainment.
- Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour and the students respond well to their guidance. As a result, students have a positive attitude to learning. When there are incidents of poor behaviour they are dealt with well.
- There has been effective work to keep students safe, and to promote values that are appropriate for modern British life.
- The academy is using resources well to improve the progress of disadvantaged students.
- The academy directors know the academy well. They provide a good level of support and challenge that contributes to the academy's improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always provide a high enough level of challenge in the work they ask students to complete.
- The rising trend of achievement in mathematics and English has not yet led to achievement at an outstanding level.
- Some academy middle leaders do not yet make sure that all teaching is increasing the achievement of students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed episodes of teaching in 42 lessons and conducted short visits to lessons. Many of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, leaders with subject responsibilities, members of the governing body, and groups of students.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including information on students' achievement, the academy's self-evaluation, its improvement plan, minutes of meetings, and records relating to the monitoring of teaching, behaviour and safety.
- An analysis was made of the 40 responses to the online parent view survey, one letter from a parent and 53 responses received to the staff survey.
- Inspectors examined case studies that recorded how safeguarding issues had been addressed by the academy.

Inspection team

Alan Hinchliffe, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Robert Pyner	Her Majesty's Inspector
Fran Ashworth	Additional Inspector
David Howe	Additional Inspector
Stephanie Matthews	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than the averaged-sized secondary school and most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and children from services families, is at the national average level.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of students with greater learning needs and those supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum levels expected for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Of the five new teachers who joined the academy in September 2014, two are newly qualified.
- The academy operates a specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs that caters for seven students with identified communication difficulties.
- Alternative provision for a Year 10 student is provided by Somerset County Council.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - making sure verbal and written feedback to students is acted upon purposefully
 - using the most effective teachers as role models and coaches to improve the quality of teaching across the academy
 - improving the use of questioning to probe and develop students' deeper understanding, so as to increase the level of challenge for all students, including for the most able group

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's strong and effective leadership, combined with unstinting commitment, has brought about the improvement of the academy. She has introduced regular, effective monitoring that has had a positive impact on achievement and that includes observing teaching, and scrutiny of students' work. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher, the academy leadership team, and the wider academy staff.
- The academy has a clear record of self-evaluation that takes into account the quality of teaching, the progress of groups of students, students' views, and the views of parents. Inspectors agree with their collective evaluation that this is a good academy.
- Middle leaders have moved from being organisers of teaching to taking full responsibility for the impact of that teaching. They are now more effective in making sure students of all abilities receive suitable and challenging teaching, although some are better at this than others.
- The academy follows the National Curriculum framework and is in the process of adjusting to the new National Curriculum requirements. It has used that framework well to develop and implement a curriculum programme that takes into account local needs and has a positive impact on student achievement. It offers a range of subject choices well designed to help students move to employment or further education. Clubs and activities that broaden students' experience take place before and after school; many of them take place in the academy sports centre. It makes good use of the academy website to share this information with parents.
- The academy provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs is well led by the academy's special educational needs coordinator and, as a result, these students make good progress.
- The current academy improvement plan reflects the direct, focused approach that has been taken to introducing good systems that improve students' achievement. Academy leaders have a clear process for developing the academy.
- The academy actively promotes the spiritual, moral and cultural development of students through taught programmes, extended activities, and through staff acting as role models. For example, teaching includes an awareness of a wide range of religious festivals, and extended activities are varied enough to include a blacksmiths' club.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governance of the academy is carried out by a committed board of directors who represent the interest of the local community, parents and staff. Directors gain a good understanding of the academy's work through regular meetings with senior leaders and they use that understanding to provide a level of challenge that leads to improvement. They have developed a clear view of the quality of teaching and the achievement of students when compared with achievement in other schools and academies. For example, directors identified as a priority the need to further improve performance in mathematics and were active in the decision to recruit an experienced additional leader in mathematics. Directors have put in place a clear performance management policy. Working with the headteacher, they apply that policy in a way that allows good teaching to be rewarded.
 - Directors' direct involvement in the allocation, monitoring and best use of the academy pupil premium funding goes beyond meeting the basic requirements of their role. Their support for the progress of disadvantaged students, and students with special educational needs, models the academy's strong inclusive ethos.
 - Directors ensure that all aspects of safeguarding meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good, and they achieve well because they are keen to learn. The good behaviour has been developed through high teacher expectations and clear whole-academy systems. Students behave well around the academy and they help each other. For example, Year 7 students commented that older pupils had been very helpful to them in their first week at the academy.
- Students respond well to the academy's behaviour policy. This includes a range of rewards that encourage good behaviour, as well as appropriate sanctions. The academy use of fixed term exclusion is in line with the national average and permanent exclusions are rare.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. It achieves this through the content of its teaching, vigilance, and attention to the needs of individual children. The academy's inclusive approach makes all students feel valued; it encourages them to attend, and to enjoy school.

- Sports centre staff contribute well to the inclusive approach by providing activities for students. For example, students in an identified group have been encouraged to take part in a boxing fitness activity and, as a result, their attendance at the academy has improved.
- The combined impact of improved teaching, attendance checking systems, and the creation of a supportive environment has led to attendance above the national average.
- Teaching programmes include guidance for all students on staying safe. For example, teachers of computing take responsibility for delivering a series of lessons that ensure students are able to stay safe when online.
- Students know who to go to if they do not feel safe. On the rare occasions that bullying takes place it is reported by them and then it is dealt with well by the academy.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved through a clear, consistently applied, whole-academy approach. Good teaching is now typical across the full range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Some teaching is outstanding, for example in modern foreign languages students had clearly been enthused by the high quality teaching they had received. In English, students in Year 9 were excited by excellent opportunities created to develop their literacy skills. The improved teaching has already had a direct impact on the achievement of students and it is building the capacity for even better results in the future.
- Most teachers use information about students' progress to inform their planning and to provide appropriate learning activities that meet their individual needs. However, not all teachers make consistent enough use of this information to provide a high level of challenge for all groups of students.
- The progress made by students has been improved through the consistent use of a whole-academy marking policy. It is used well by teachers to help individual students know the level of their work and how to improve it.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to students' learning. They make direct interventions to help students' understanding and are very effective in making sure that students who need support have access to all subjects.
- Teachers encourage students to take pride in the presentation of their work. Students value books and other records that build evidence of their learning. For example, in art, students who are now in Year 11 have high quality portfolios that contain records of a full year of their work.
- Teachers give students opportunities to extend their learning by either directly setting homework, or giving online access to work.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the academy with attainment that is below average. The rate of progress they make during their time at academy has improved since the last inspection. This trend is closing the gap between achievement at this academy and average achievement in other schools nationally.
- The 2014 GCSE results show an improvement in progress in the percentage gaining GCSE grade A* to C in mathematics from 53% in 2011 to 63% in 2014. This has removed the gap between the academy's mathematics results and the national average.
- The academy has successfully developed an approach to student achievement that values the progress of all students. The percentage of Year 11 students who gain eight GCSE grades A* to G rose from 89% in 2011 to 96% in 2014 and now matches the national average % for this measure. Successful work takes place to ensure the good achievement of students educated in alternative off-site provision.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are supported well and are making good progress. The small numbers of students who receive support from the academy's special provision for students with communication difficulties are making good progress.
- The progress of students in English and mathematics in Years 7, 8 and 9 is rising rapidly. The teaching seen during the inspection, and by academy leaders over time, as well as scrutiny of students' books, supports the evidence that this is typical.
- The academy has used a process of early entry into examinations for English and mathematics GCSE. The rising outcomes in those subjects and the improved progress of all groups, including the most able, indicate that this has not limited the potential of students. Nonetheless, the academy is responding to the changes in examination systems by ending this approach.
- Disadvantaged students are now making improved progress. As a result, the in-school gap between their

achievement of five GCSEs at grade C and above, including English and mathematics, has narrowed to seven percentage points, and the gap between their attainment and the national average has narrowed. The effective targeted use of extra resources has led to an improvement in their progress.

- All students are encouraged to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. This includes them being given good opportunities for developing extended writing in English, and in a range of other subjects. Catch-up funding received has been used well to help the students in Year 7 who were identified as making below expected progress in literacy. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those whose first language is not English are making good progress and they are well supported.

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	137193
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	449098

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

Type of school	Academy Converter
School category	Secondary
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	906
Appropriate authority	Bucklers Mead Academy Trust
Chair	Richard Hunt
Headteacher	Sara Gorrod
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2012
Telephone number	01935 424454
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