

# Ernulf Academy

Barford Road, Eynesbury, St Neots, PE19 2SH

**Inspection dates** 16–17 December 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' progress is not good enough in some subjects, including mathematics, science and modern foreign languages.
- The most able do not consistently achieve the grades of which they are capable. Disadvantaged students are not catching up with other students quickly enough.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good across all subjects and year groups. Students are not challenged to build upon their initial responses to questioning to promote deeper thinking. Work set by some teachers fails to motivate or interest students.
- Teachers do not apply the behaviour policy consistently resulting in some instances of low-level disruption and off-task behaviour.
- Students' basic numeracy skills are not always secure resulting in a lack of confidence and resilience.
- Relationships with parents are not strong enough. As a result, too many parents fail to engage successfully with the academy's work.
- The sixth form requires improvement because there are too many 'U' grades at AS. Too few students gain a pass at A\* to C in their GCSE mathematics re-sit examination.

### The school has the following strengths

- Students achieve well in English.
- Members of the governing body are knowledgeable and good quality governance challenges leaders rigorously.
- The off-site alternative provision at 'Prospect House' is of good quality. Students achieve well.
- Leaders have worked successfully to improve the quality of the curriculum. As a result, students are able to follow more appropriate courses. These improvements, coupled with effective advice and guidance, ensure students are prepared well for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 25 lessons, and made short visits to a number of other lessons. They also visited form periods and an assembly. Eight lessons and short visits were jointly observed with senior staff.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including the academy’s documents on safeguarding, the academy’s view of its own performance, and improvement plans. They also looked at information about attainment and progress, and records of the quality of teaching, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke to students in lessons and looked at their books. In addition, a range of students’ books were scrutinised in different subjects and year groups.
- Students were observed at breaks and lunchtimes, inside and outside the academy.
- Discussions were held with governors, senior and subject leaders and groups of students about their views of the academy.
- Inspectors considered the 56 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire and the academy’s own survey of 116 parents. The 54 questionnaires returned by staff were also considered.

## Inspection team

Glynis Bradley-Peat, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Vondra Mays	Additional Inspector
John Mason	Additional Inspector
Chris Ockenden	Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.*

### Information about this school

- Ernulf Academy converted to academy status in August 2011. It was last inspected by Ofsted in June 2013 and was judged to be inadequate. It was designated as a school with serious weaknesses.
- In September 2010, the St Neot's Learning Partnership was formed, a multi-academy trust, which includes Longsands Academy and Ernulf Academy.
- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school with a sixth-form.
- The vast majority of students are White British.
- The proportion of disabled students or those who have special educational needs, at more than a quarter, is above average.
- Just over a quarter of students are eligible for the pupil premium, which is average. This additional funding is given to schools for students who are looked after by the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- A small number of students attend alternative provision off the main academy site at Prospect House. This provision is run by the academy trust. Students from Longsands Academy also attend, along with a small number of students from other schools. There are 21 places altogether for students at risk of exclusion or for whom the academy curriculum is not wholly appropriate. Occasionally, a few students attend Samuel Pepys special school.
- The academy meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress at GCSE.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, attainment and rates of students' progress, particularly in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages by ensuring that:
  - progress across year groups, key stages and subjects is consistently good
  - teachers have higher expectations of what the most able students can achieve, including in the sixth form, and challenge them appropriately
  - disadvantaged students receive good quality support to reduce the gap in their attainment with other students more quickly
  - leaders' checking of the quality of teaching focuses more on how well students are learning
  - the necessary improvement in students' spelling, grammar and punctuation in all subjects is addressed promptly
  - teachers adapt their teaching in light of students' responses to their questions
  - students have regular opportunities to practise their basic skills and develop their mental agility in mathematics
  - teaching in mathematics builds students' resilience and confidence.
- Improve the behaviour of a small minority of students both in class and around the academy by ensuring that:
  - all teachers implement the academy's behaviour policy consistently and tackle any incidents of low-level disruption rigorously
  - teachers plan work which motivates and catches students' interest effectively.
- Build upon work already started to improve the academy's work and relationships with parents to ensure that:
  - relationships improve with those parents who currently do not engage positively with the academy

- opportunities for parents to work in partnership with the academy are extended.

An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management requires improvement

- Despite some clear improvements since the last inspection, leaders have not yet had sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching and students' behaviour so that they become consistently good. A small amount of weak teaching remains and, as a result, students' progress in some key subjects remains as expected rather than good and achievement requires improvement. There remains some low-level disruption.
- The leadership of teaching is growing in its effectiveness although the quality of teaching remains variable across subjects. Leaders have ensured that work is now being better matched to students' needs and is more demanding. However, leaders do not yet focus enough on how well students are learning. Both senior and middle leaders visit lessons regularly, scrutinise students' work and compare this to information gathered about students' progress. However, overall judgements about teaching in the academy self-evaluation are a little over generous.
- Engagement with parents, especially those who find difficulty working with the academy, is not as effective as it should be. Opportunities for parents to work in partnership with the academy are increasing but engagement remains low. A third of the parents who responded to Parent View felt that the academy did not respond well enough to their concerns. A third also stated that they did not receive enough information about their child's progress. Half of parents did not believe the academy ensured students behaved well. Although the academy's own survey showed lower proportions of dissatisfaction, a quarter of parents still felt that students did not behave well and a fifth said they did not receive enough information about progress.
- Middle leaders are increasingly taking responsibility for their areas and are keen to drive up standards and support better teaching. There is a mixture of experienced leaders and some relatively new to post. The English leader has brought about good improvement in examination results and progress. The mathematics leader has had less impact and understands that better development of students' basic skills is a matter of some urgency.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors guided the academy with resolve through a very demanding period of staff turbulence and parental disquiet that followed the previous inspection. Throughout that time they received effective support from Longsands Academy. This has ensured that systems for managing the performance of teachers and the quality of their training has improved and are having a more rapid impact on improving teaching. The academy ensures that unless their teaching is good, teachers do not progress through the pay scale.
- Changes in the leadership and management of the sixth form are becoming increasingly effective. Information about the attainment and progress of students is used well to tackle underperformance at AS and has ensured that the proportion of students receiving 'U' Grades, while too high, is going down. The range of courses offered in the sixth form has been reviewed and effective guidance is provided for students to steer them towards those which are most suitable.
- The academy has taken some measures to ensure that different groups of students have an equal opportunity to succeed. For example, the pupil premium funding is beginning to be used more effectively. Students are supported both academically and through care and guidance to reduce the gap between their achievement and that of their classmates. The academy seeks to prevent any discrimination. For example, students say that while occasionally there are homophobic comments, leaders take appropriate action to stamp them out.
- The range of subjects and courses that the academy offers is broad and balanced, despite being constrained by comparatively small numbers of students taking part. All students have the opportunity to undertake work experience in Year 10. This helps their employability skills if they decide to leave the academy and enter the world of work. Advice and careers guidance provided for students, to ensure that they follow the correct courses, has improved markedly at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13. This gives students the best chance of success in the next stage of their education, training or employment.

- The range of subjects and courses promotes tolerance of other cultures and faiths and prepares students for life in modern Britain. Recently, the 'Horizon's Project' saw students from Ernulf and Longsands joining students from Germany, Russia and Italy to work with the humanities and languages departments as part of an international project based around the 'Industrial Revolution'. As a result, students learnt about the differences in culture between Britain and other countries.
- The progress, attendance and behaviour of those students who attend Prospect House or the local special school are regularly checked. Students achieve and behave well and attend regularly.
- Leaders, including governors, have fulfilled their statutory duties in relation to safeguarding and the arrangements to keep students safe are effective. They have ensured that required policies are available on the website.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is effective. It oversees the work of both Ernulf and Longsands academies. Governors have a thorough understanding of the attainment and progress of students and how well they attend. Members of the governing body have a thorough knowledge about the quality of teaching because they cross reference the information given to them by the academy with external reports. This ensures that they are able to challenge the academy's leaders and hold them firmly to account. Governors speak knowledgeably about the range of subjects and courses and how what the academy has to offer students has changed in response to their needs.
  - Targets set by governors for the academy and the headteacher are realistic and focus well on bringing about improvement. The governing body's knowledge of performance management is sound. This enables it to make the right decisions about pay increases for teachers. These are only awarded if students achieve well because their teaching is effective. Governors have a clear understanding of what it is that leaders do to tackle underperformance and use this to check the impact of measures taken to promote improvement.
  - Governors are clear about the importance of instilling British values and keenly monitor whether leaders and teachers prepare students for life in modern Britain.
  - The governing body ensures that statutory duties are met and that the vetting of adults working in the academy is thorough.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

## requires improvement

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Their attitudes to learning are not consistently good in all subjects and there is some evidence of low-level disruption. Students sometimes lose their concentration and do not persevere when they are set work which they find difficult. Teachers do not always use the academy's behaviour policy effectively to minimise idle chatter or lack of work.
- Most students move around the corridors and classrooms calmly and sensibly. They are courteous and friendly to adults and each other. They hold doors open for staff and their classmates without being asked. Unfortunately they do not look after the outside areas well enough and there is evidence of a large amount of litter.
- The academy offers appropriate support for students who have behavioural difficulties. There have been no permanent exclusions in recent years. This is the result of more effective use of the academy's isolation system and alternative provision. Students speak highly of the 'student support officers' who help them to improve their behaviour. The use of short periods of exclusion is reducing although the proportion of repeat offenders remains too high. The proportion of disadvantaged students who are excluded is low.
- Although attendance is still below average, levels of absence have decreased. There has been a marked improvement in the levels of persistent absence through the active role of the attendance officer. The academy has identified that girls, disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs do not attend the academy as regularly as their classmates. Work is being done to improve the attendance of these specific groups.

- The behaviour of students in their alternative provision placements is good. This promotes their good progress. In the sixth form, students are keen and motivated to do well. Hence they have positive attitudes to learning, and behave and attend well.

### Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- The overwhelming majority of staff, a large majority of students, and most parents who responded to Parent View, say that they have confidence in the academy's procedures to deal with any bullying or incidents of a racial nature. Such incidents are said to be relatively uncommon although occasionally they do occur. Students from all backgrounds work well together and say that they feel safe in the academy. The academy's own survey of parents provides a positive picture.
- The academy's personal, social and health education provision ensures students know the risks associated with social media and the internet. It also promotes students' clear understanding of British values and their role as citizens in modern Britain. This contributes well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The academy ensures students who attend off site provision are safe. Visits are made and safety measures are checked. Students in the sixth form feel safe and their concerns are dealt with effectively.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what students can achieve, particularly the most able students, and set work which is too easy. Students' books show that some teachers accept work which is poorly presented or unfinished. Marking shows that praise is given freely but focused points for improvement less so. This means students' make progress which is sometimes too slow.
- The academy has improved the basic questioning skills of teachers since the previous inspection. Questions check understanding or recall learning from previous lessons. However, sometimes students' responses are cut short because teachers do not follow up their initial questions with more challenging ones to probe learning.
- Teachers do not always plan work which interests or motivates students to persevere. As a result, some chat about things other than their work, showing their boredom, and make progress too slowly. Students say 'We want to do work which interests us'.
- Teaching is beginning to improve the younger students' literacy and reading skills, particularly for those students attending the academy's booster programmes. The reading ages of some of the weakest students have risen perceptibly over a short space of time because this aspect of literacy is taught more systematically. However, poor spelling, grammar and punctuation are not routinely picked up by all teachers and weaknesses persist.
- Teaching in English is a strength and students make at least good progress across the academy. Year 7 students worked well on their identification of language features through a series of short, sharp, focused activities. This kept them actively engaged because they knew they could be challenged at any time by their teacher's questioning. These students say 'lessons are fun' and 'she gets people involved.'
- The teaching of basic mathematical skills remains a weaker area. Students do not know their times tables well enough which affects how quickly they can work on other topics. The least able students' limited understanding of place value hampers their calculation skills. As a result, they sometimes give up too easily and show a lack of resilience.
- There is some highly effective teaching evident in mathematics. Observation of Year 10 mathematics showed students making excellent progress in working out quadratic factors because teaching expected

the most from them. Students worked hard moving quickly on to more difficult questions with gusto.

- Teaching is variable in the sixth form but overall it has improved. As a result, students achieve better results in both academic and vocational examinations and assessments than in the past.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- From students' below average starting points on entry to Year 7, they make expected progress rather than good. Therefore, by the end of Year 11, the proportion of students attaining five or more good GCSEs is not high enough.
- GCSE examination results in the summer showed a big improvement from the previous year. The proportion of students gaining five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics has risen markedly by some ten percentage points. In 2014 students left Year 11 with above average attainment in English but below-average attainment in mathematics, core science, French and German. Students taking separate biology, chemistry and physics achieved well above average results.
- There has been some improvement to the quality of teaching in mathematics but it is not yet consistently good enough to accelerate progress significantly or to make up for previous underachievement. In 2014, the proportion of students making or exceeding expected rates of progress in English in Year 11 was above average. This was not the case in mathematics; a well-below-average proportion made the progress expected of them. The academy's assessment information shows that this is improving and more students are making or exceeding expected progress in mathematics in the current Year 11. Students make slow progress in core science, French and German.
- The attainment of students eligible for the pupil premium has been lower than that of other students. In 2014, these students were, on average, a GCSE grade behind other students in the academy in English and mathematics. In relation to other students nationally, disadvantaged students are two grades behind in mathematics and one grade behind in English. The academy's commitment to equal opportunities has ensured that staff review and modify the support offered to disadvantaged students. This approach is beginning to have an impact on the progress students make, although it is slow. As a result, academy information shows that the gap in achievement between them and other students, both in the academy and nationally, is gradually closing slowly over time.
- Some of the most able students do not make good enough progress in mathematics, core science and modern foreign languages, although they achieve well in biology, chemistry and physics. The proportion of these students attaining the higher grades in 2014 varied across subjects. Teaching in the past has not always ensured that these students reached the grades of which they were capable. Currently, teaching does not always consistently stretch and challenge the most able students well enough in all their subjects.
- From the scrutiny of students' work and what was seen in lessons, disabled students and those who have special educational needs make more progress than the others during Key Stage 3 in particular. This enables them to catch up well with their classmates because the help and support afforded to these students is effective. There is a range of appropriate programmes which has successfully accelerated their progress in reading, for example. Students benefit from phonics sessions (the sounds that letters make) and literacy skills programmes coupled with drama, information and communications technology and art.
- Some students in danger of not achieving a C grade in mathematics were entered early for their GCSE. This served the students well. Some who achieved a D grade were motivated to work harder to achieve the C grade they needed to progress onto the courses they had chosen for the next stage of their education, training or employment. The grades achieved by the most able students were not affected.
- Those students in Year 7 who attained below Level 4 in English or mathematics at primary school receive additional support to boost their achievement. Most students catch up successfully in English but in mathematics they make expected rather than good progress. The academy continues to track progress and adjust support as appropriate.



- Although improving, students in the sixth form do not achieve well enough in Year 12 in particular. Too many students fail to gain a pass at AS in some subjects.
- Students who are in danger of exclusion or who have specific medical needs attend alternative provision at Prospect House and at a local special school. They make good progress and achieve in line with their peers. A significant proportion gain five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics. Others achieve passes in both vocational and academic subjects. A few complete other accredited courses which enable them to move on successfully to local colleges.

### **The sixth form provision** requires improvement

- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is below average; the large majority of students in Year 12 have completed their Year 11 at Ernulf. Academic attainment is below average. However, for the small number of students who take vocational subjects, attainment has improved in 2014. Larger proportions are achieving the higher grades of merit and distinction.
- At AS, students do not achieve as well as other students nationally and although much reduced this year, there are too many 'U' grades. At A2, attainment has improved over time and is broadly average although the proportion of students gaining the higher A\* to B is significantly lower. Rates of progress are improving and are similar to those seen nationally. Disadvantaged students achieve less well than other students nationally but perform as well as other students in the academy.
- The proportion of students gaining their mathematics re-sit is low whereas in English, all students were successful.
- Teaching demonstrates an improving picture, although it remains too variable. Progress is good in some subjects, for example in English, but weaker in others. Teachers focus well on developing students' examination techniques, especially in English. In Year 13, students' thoughtful responses to the teacher's searching questions showed a genuine appreciation of poetry. As a result, students were able to write at length.
- Most students are following programmes which meet their needs. A variety of different courses are available and good, impartial careers advice and guidance directs students to appropriate courses and prepares them for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form requires improvement because there is still some way to go in ensuring that students make consistently good progress across different subjects and reach higher grades. Nonetheless, leaders are working hard to improve provision across the sixth form as a whole. They have focused well on improving teaching, setting challenging targets and closely monitoring progress. They have actively tackled the underperformance of a few teachers and subjects.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137187
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	447732

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11-18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	688
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	95
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Karl Wainwright
<b>Headteacher</b>	Scott Preston
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 June 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01480 374748
<b>Fax number</b>	01480 375469
<b>Email address</b>	office@ernulf.cambs.sch.uk

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