

The Kings of Wessex Academy

Station Road, Cheddar, BS27 3AQ

Inspection dates

5–6 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	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
Sixth form provision	Outstanding		1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher provides determined leadership. He is uncompromising in his pursuit of excellence among students and staff, and as a result, teaching is improving.
- The proportion of students awarded at least five or more good GCSE grades including English and mathematics has been above average for the last three years.
- The most-able students perform well and achieve the highest grades in a range of subjects.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about passing on their expertise.
- Support for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development draws strength from the Christian ethos of the academy and is very effective.
- The academy's work to keep all students safe is outstanding. Students say they feel safe and are well cared for. They learn in a calm, purposeful environment.
- Relationships between staff and students are good. The vast majority of students are proud of their academy. As a result, they work diligently and behave well both in lessons and around the site at break and lunchtime.
- The sixth form is outstanding; achievement is very strong and improving. Many sixth form students go on to prestigious universities when they leave.
- Governors are very committed to the academy, they are well informed and provide a good level of challenge to senior leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all subject leaders are effective in securing the very best teaching for students in their subject areas.
- Teachers do not always check on students' learning in lessons closely enough. Consequently, some students, particularly the less able, are either not challenged enough or do not receive the help they need to succeed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 lessons. Of these, four were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with students during lessons, at break times and at lunchtime. They also met formally with groups of students from Key Stages 4 and 5.
- Inspectors also looked at examples of students' work in lessons and during discussions with students, as well as a looking at samples of books.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers responsible for subject areas and teachers responsible for pastoral care.
- The lead inspector spoke with the Chair of the Governing Body and held a meeting with three other governors.
- The lead inspector also spoke with a representative of the South West Academies Group, which supports the academy.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents expressed in 90 submissions to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and considered 58 responses to a staff questionnaire. In addition, inspectors took account of the school's own survey of parents as well as meeting two parents.
- Inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at a number of documents, including the academy's self-evaluation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, documentation regarding governance, information on students' current progress and documents concerning safeguarding.

Inspection team

Paul Williams, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Caroline Dearden	Additional Inspector
Julie Miriam	Additional Inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional Inspector
Martin Watson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Kings of Wessex Academy converted to become an academy on 1 June 2011. When the predecessor school, The Kings of Wessex School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school is a Church of England academy.
- The school admits students aged 13 to 18; it is slightly larger than most secondary schools.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students who are eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority) is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The very large majority of students are from White British backgrounds.
- No students are currently entered early for GCSE examinations.
- None of the school's students are educated off-site in alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school is part of the South West Academies Group, which provides school-to-school support.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers check students' understanding during lessons and refocus teaching when necessary
 - challenging lower-ability students to deepen their understanding
 - making sure that all students know how to respond when they need help.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that all subject leaders bring about improvements to teaching in their subject areas.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has high expectations. He provides strong leadership by consistently communicating his desire to see academic excellence throughout the academy. He has instilled a culture of continually seeking improvement to help students to 'be the best they can be' and to 'stand out from the crowd'.
- Teaching is good and improvements are being made as a result of a range of professional development opportunities. Each teacher has a bespoke professional learning package. Senior leaders ensure that this closely matches their development needs through a 'Professional Dashboard'. For example, recently appointed subject leaders have been given the opportunity to follow the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership. The targets that teachers are set are linked closely to students' progress and the academy's priorities for improvement.
- Systematic and thorough self-evaluation is achieved by senior leaders working closely with subject leaders to analyse pupil performance information. However, there are some inconsistencies in the impact that the resulting actions achieve. For example, teaching has improved in music and geography but the level of challenge and support that teachers give to lower-ability pupils in mathematics and in history is still too variable.
- The academy has put a lot of effort into improving the achievement of disadvantaged students through, for instance, support groups, student mentors, extra lessons and a homework club. Their progress has improved and, as a result, the standards they attain are now rising.
- The academy's Christian ethos promotes equality of opportunity well. Individuals are valued and students are encouraged, both in lessons and at other times, to think about how they can take their place in a diverse multicultural society. In partnership with a group of local churches, a Christian Leader is employed by the academy, and this enhances the spiritual life of the academy.
- A suitably broad range of mainly GCSE subjects is offered to students in Key Stage 4. Many cultural and sporting opportunities are also available for students, for example a well-supported debating society. Opportunities are available for international visits; a recent trip to Auschwitz for Year 10 promoted students' social and moral development well. Along with an effective Personal, Social and Health Education course (PSHE), these experiences ensure that students are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- The academy's focus on literacy is evident, with teachers using individual literacy targets with students across all year groups. However, feedback to students on whether or not they are meeting their literacy targets is not consistently given in all subjects.
- The school takes very effective measures to meet the statutory requirements for the safeguarding of children. Safeguarding records are meticulous and governors' oversight of this area is exemplary. Unannounced visits by a governor with responsibility for safeguarding are used to ensure full compliance. All school policies are regularly reviewed, and all staff and governors are thoroughly trained and kept up to date with emerging risks. Good use is made of the academy's employment lawyers to provide this training.
- The academy contributes to, and makes good use of, the South West Academies Group, which provides school-to-school support at all levels of leadership. For example, a successful conference was recently hosted for newly qualified teachers from across the group.
- Careers information, advice and guidance are effective, as shown by the consistently high numbers moving to employment, training or to the next stage of education. All students are given an interview with a senior leader to review their career plans midway through Year 11. This investment of time is appreciated by students and provides motivation. Excellent advice is given to students regarding subject choice and the process of application to higher education. This results in a high proportion of sixth form students gaining places at Russell Group universities.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - A new Chair of the Governing Body was elected in October 2014. He leads a dedicated team of governors who bring a wealth of experience and expertise to their roles, enabling them to effectively challenge, support and strategically influence the academy's development.
 - Governors know the academy's strengths and the challenges it faces, and are aware of how the academy performs in relation to other schools. The appointment of a governor as a 'Pupil Premium Champion' and subsequent actions to increase the impact of pupil premium funding on the achievement of disadvantaged students demonstrates this. They are closely involved in the life of the academy; they make regular visits, receive presentations from staff and ask searching questions. Consequently, they are aware of the quality of teaching. They make certain that the performance management of staff is robust and links performance to salary progression. Governors ensure that safeguarding procedures

meet statutory requirements so that all staff and students are kept safe; their work in this regard is outstanding. Good systems are in place to ensure that financial resources are well managed, including oversight of the Kings Fitness and Leisure centre, which is owned by the Academy Trust.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Behaviour in lessons is good; low-level disruption to learning is rare. Students arrive punctually for lessons and settle quickly to their work. Some students need encouragement to persevere when they find the work difficult.
- In the sixth form, students' positive attitudes in lessons are impressive; they show a real desire to learn. Their outstanding behaviour helps learning by allowing all students to feel comfortable expressing their ideas and opinions.
- Students' behaviour around the academy is very good; they are polite and courteous. The vast majority of students get on extremely well with each other and with their teachers. The inclusive nature of the academy is shown by the harmonious relationship between different groups of students, including the small numbers who are disabled. Students respect their environment, there is very little litter and the buildings are well kept and free of graffiti.
- Students show considerable responsibility as leaders. For example, when helping younger students with their reading, sixth form students are mature and reliable, and this sets a good example for all.
- Rewards for good behaviour, effort and achievement take a high profile in the academy which has developed a culture of celebrating success, for example by sending praise postcards home. Similarly, sanctions are clear, well understood and rigorously applied. The '4 strikes response' system for dealing with poor behaviour is used consistently across the academy. Permanent exclusions are very rare, with only one in the last four years; similarly, the rate of fixed-term exclusion is very low.
- Students' attendance is in line with the national average.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Arrangements for the safeguarding of students, including checks on the recruitment of staff, are very effective and monitored closely by senior staff and governors.
- Procedures are firmly in place for ensuring that all visitors are suitably checked and monitored. A good example of this was seen during the inspection when a team of exam invigilators were undergoing training in preparation for working in the academy.
- Students met by inspectors during the inspection say that they feel safe, and this is confirmed by the majority of parents' responses on Parent View. They are extremely well supervised throughout the day on all parts of the site.
- Students say that bullying and harassment, such as racist, homophobic or cyber-bullying, are uncommon and staff deal with them effectively when they occur. Students are absolutely clear that they have no tolerance of derogatory language about any groups of people. They can identify many adults in the school on whom they can call upon if they are worried or bothered.
- Care for students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable is sensitive, thorough and well documented. Very effective liaison is made with other agencies, such as social care. Regular checks are made by the academy on the well-being of those at risk.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good. As a result, students make good progress from their starting points when they join the academy in Year 9. Teaching is outstanding in the sixth form where students achieve exceptionally well.
- Strong and respectful relationships between teachers and their students are clearly evident in lessons. Teachers have high expectations and, as a result, students work hard and productively; they are keen to learn. The vast majority have positive attitudes to learning and give of their best.
- Where teaching is most effective, all students make good progress because teachers plan tasks at different levels of challenge which are interesting and suit the range of abilities in the class. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to question students skilfully, and draw out and develop their

understanding. In one Year 12 psychology lesson, students' ideas about different psychological disorders were explored expertly by the teacher.

- When progress is variable and achievement not high enough, teachers do not check on students' thinking closely enough to test for misunderstandings. This limits students' learning because they spend time waiting for help. Teaching is improving as a result of the coaching, mentoring and professional challenge staff have received, particularly in relation to the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- Careful planning by teachers and expert assistance from well-trained and experienced support staff makes sure that disabled students and those who have special educational needs are supported very well and make good progress.
- Teachers plan lessons that make a strong contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is especially true in religious education (RE), where contemporary issues such as the growth of extremism are taught well.
- Work in students' books shows that teachers' marking is frequent and accurate. Students say they find this feedback helpful and they regularly write responses, and correct or rewrite work, as a result. The use of dedicated improvement and reflection time, 'DIRT', for students to consider the comments that teachers have made in their books, is not yet embedded in all subjects across the academy and is superficial in some lessons.
- Homework is set regularly using a new online system; this is making a good contribution to students' learning.
- Students are tested at the start of Year 9 in reading, mathematics and languages. This gives teachers a good understanding of students' prior attainment. Frequent checks in each year ensure that this accurate picture of students' attainment is maintained.
- Most of the parents who completed Parent View or the recent academy questionnaire agree that their children are well taught, and this is in line with inspection evidence.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students leaving the academy last year made good progress, and by the end of Year 11, they attained results which were above average in a range of subjects. In 2014, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was above the national average.
- In 2014, the proportion of students making the progress expected of them from their individual starting points, and the proportion making better progress than this, were above the national averages in English and in mathematics. The students currently in Year 11 are also making good progress.
- In English at the end of Year 11 in 2014, disadvantaged students attained just under a grade lower than non-disadvantaged students nationally, and just over a grade lower than other students in the academy. In mathematics, disadvantaged students attained just over a grade lower than others nationally, and a grade and a quarter lower than others within the academy. Current academy information indicates that disadvantaged students are now making better progress and that these attainment gaps are closing as they make up for previous underachievement.
- The most-able students are challenged very well in lessons and make rapid progress in both English and mathematics. They are taught on an accelerated pathway which includes further mathematics.
- In comparison, the progress of lower-ability students is not as good as the other pupils in the academy. This is confirmed by inspection evidence from observing teaching and learning, work in students' books and talking to students. Sometimes, the work set for these students does not help them to develop a deep enough understanding of ideas.
- Students who are disabled or with special educational needs achieve well from their starting points because the support they receive is well targeted and is effective in meeting their needs.
- Early entry for GCSE is no longer used in the academy.
- In 2014, attainment in both GCSE music and history was significantly lower than in other subjects.
- Individual reading, three times each week, with Year 9 students who have lower than average reading ability is effective and is helping these students to grow in confidence.

The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- Students express great confidence in the sixth form and large numbers of Year 11 students choose to stay on. Last year, all of those students who began in Year 12 stayed to the end of the year, most continued

from Year 12 into Year 13, and of these, almost all stayed to the end of the year to complete their studies.

- Achievement in the sixth form is outstanding because students make rapid progress and, as a result, attain examination results which are well above the national average. In 2014, over a third of the A-level grades awarded were at A and A*. Information provided by the academy, supported by inspection evidence from lessons, talking to students and scrutiny of their work, indicates that the high standards of achievement are continuing for students currently in the sixth form.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is outstanding because it provides a high level of challenge. Teachers' expectations are high. Excellent subject knowledge stretches students of all abilities. The small number of disadvantaged students are attaining close to the level of their peers. The tracking of students' academic progress against challenging targets is highly effective and results in comprehensive feedback which helps students to sustain their progress.
- Senior leaders have ensured that the development of good study skills is a priority. This not only enhances the progress students are able to make in their academic studies but also makes them exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Students commented on the willingness of teachers to spend extra time with them outside of lessons in order to help them with their work. They appreciate their teachers' readiness to 'go the extra mile' to give them support. Equally, students are supportive of each other and model high levels of maturity in exchanging ideas and helping each other.
- The academy's links with the University of Cambridge and its position as a hub for advice in the south west mean that the quality of careers advice and guidance in the sixth form is excellent and is much valued by students. It results in a high proportion of students going on to higher education when they leave.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding in the sixth form. Students behave impeccably and feel exceptionally safe. This makes a strong contribution to their learning and their enjoyment of the sixth form experience.
- Students value the opportunities they are given to take on responsibilities and leadership roles. Elections for these roles give students a valuable insight into the democratic process. Students take advantage of the wide range of extra-curricular activities. For example, some students volunteer to carry out local community projects over the summer as part of the National Citizenship Scheme.

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	136783
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	453395

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,176
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	333
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Kirkup
Headteacher	Chris Richardson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01934 742608
Fax number	01934 742757
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