

Holbrook Academy

Ipswich Road, Holbrook, Ipswich IP9 2QZ

Inspection dates	21–22 October 2015
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Standards and achievement at Holbrook Academy have risen rapidly in recent years. Pupils make good progress and are served well by the academy.
- Academy leaders and governors are providing strong leadership and a clear vision for the academy. Parents, pupils and staff are overwhelmingly supportive of the headteacher's high expectations and standards.
- The social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils is nurtured very effectively through a wide range of activities and opportunities that all pupils have access to.
- Teaching succeeds in challenging and engaging pupils. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that is used to create interesting and stimulating lessons. Marking and feedback are regular and helpful.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons and enjoy a rich, stimulating range of subjects and activities. The academy ensures their safety effectively; they feel cared for and listened to in the academy.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The attendance of some pupils is not yet as high as it should be, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils.
- Some teachers do not use assessment information closely enough to match the work they plan to pupils' particular needs.
- Leaders do not always check how effective their actions have been in helping the academy to improve.
- Occasional incidents of antisocial behaviour outside of lessons have not yet been fully eradicated.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is not yet consistently as good as that made by other pupils in the academy.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Close the remaining gaps between the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils by:
 - monitoring the attendance patterns of these groups more closely and developing systems to help them improve their attendance
 - supporting and challenging pupils and their families to improve pupils' attendance.
- Sharpen the way assessment is used to ensure that:
 - all teachers use assessment information systematically to plan for pupils' particular needs
 - all pupils have a well-developed understanding of their strengths and the steps required to improve.
- Leaders should evaluate the impact of their actions more incisively, identifying clear, quantifiable priorities for improvement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has led the academy with energy and rigour since his appointment in 2013. Through challenging times, he has set high expectations for the academy which have substantially raised standards. His ambitions to improve the academy carry the overwhelming support of pupils, parents and staff because they are underpinned by what one staff member described as 'kindness and humanity'.
- Leaders communicate the aims and values of the academy to parents very effectively. The clear website, helpful use of text messaging and regular parent forums have all contributed to very high levels of satisfaction from parents and an overwhelming level of support for the work of the academy.
- Improvements to teaching have been secured because leaders set clear expectations; these are supported by a good range of training opportunities that are valued by staff. Leaders challenge underperformance robustly and link pay progression closely to both pupils' achievement and teachers' professional development.
- Leaders are now monitoring achievement, behaviour and attendance effectively. They gather accurate information using well-designed systems that inform targeted actions and support. However, they are not always using this information to evaluate the impact of their work. As a result, they do not always have a clear enough understanding of the priority areas for improvement.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe is systematic and well managed. Staff are trained rigorously in the identification and reporting of risk. The most vulnerable pupils receive close support and the academy's liaison with other agencies is effective.
- The support provided to disadvantaged pupils, and to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, is systematic and effective. Outcomes for these pupils have improved markedly because their needs are being closely tracked and leaders use associated funding, resources and strategies effectively.
- The curriculum has been substantially improved in recent years. Additional teaching time has been added to allow a stronger focus on basic skills, but also to nurture the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils through special activities and 'life skills' lessons. A good range of subjects is available to pupils; the traditional English baccalaureate subjects are balanced by a range of practical and arts-based subjects.
- The curriculum ensures that pupils know about fundamental British values such as tolerance and respect for others, democracy and the rule of law. There is a culture in lessons and in tutorial periods of debate and discussion. Pupils talk about recent current affairs and a number had visited parliament the week before the inspection. All pupils learn about a range of faiths and cultures through religious education and history lessons.
- The academy's enrichment programme is extensive. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in a range of exciting lessons such as Mandarin or politics, as well as experiencing a wide range of clubs and educational visits. Pupils were very positive about the opportunities they have to mix with other year groups. Inspectors saw a number of examples of pupils being encouraged to reflect on their learning and share and evaluate each other's work.
- Pupils in Year 7 who receive additional funding to catch up to the expected level receive strong additional support through small-group numeracy and literacy sessions delivered by the pupil support centre (SSC). These sessions are also offered to other year groups. Inspectors saw the work undertaken here having a marked impact upon the progress pupils were making, particularly in reading and writing. Pupils themselves were highly enthusiastic about how these sessions have helped them improve.
- The academy made limited use of targeted early examination entry for a few pupils in 2014/15. This will slightly affect the published performance tables because they do not reflect the final, 'best' outcomes secured by all pupils. Leaders do not intend to use this approach in the future.
- **The governance of the academy**
 - Governors understand the academy's strengths and areas of weakness well and challenge academy leaders effectively. They have undertaken an audit of their own skills and areas of expertise, securing support and training from a range of providers where need has been identified.
 - Governors challenge academy leaders to provide better information to help them to monitor improvements. For example, the governors requested better information about pupil attendance that

is now helping them to ensure that leaders secure improvements.

- Governors actively check the quality of provision in the academy by visiting lessons and holding regular meetings with academy leaders. They communicate effectively with parents and ensure that the arrangements for keeping pupils safe are rigorous and effectively administered.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to set high standards in the classroom. Lessons are typically challenging and well planned, drawing upon a range of well-chosen resources. As a result, pupils make good progress and are interested and engaged in their learning.
- The majority of teaching works very effectively to deepen pupils' skills and knowledge. For example, in Key Stage 3 English lessons, teachers focus very closely upon the accurate use of a range of sophisticated writing techniques to help pupils generate very impressive written responses.
- The teaching of literacy across the academy is a strength. For example, pupils regularly correct spelling, punctuation and grammar errors that teachers identify through marking. Pupils are encouraged to read aloud, and the texts that are used in lessons are generally of a challenging nature.
- Mathematics teaching works effectively to develop skills and knowledge. Inspectors saw pupils applying a range of methods and articulately debating approaches to different mathematical topics. Pupils are enthusiastic about mathematics and described to inspectors how their skills have improved since joining the academy.
- Marking and feedback are helpful and effective. In the majority of instances, teachers give pupils good advice and guidance on how to improve which they are then acting upon. Pupils told inspectors that they value the high quality of marking they receive and were able to give a range of examples of how teachers' marking had led to them improving their skills and understanding.
- Homework is used effectively to support learning. An online homework management system has been introduced recently and was well received by pupils and parents. Key Stage 4 pupils use the system regularly to access revision materials and guidance uploaded by their teachers. Key Stage 3 pupils are proud of the extended home learning projects they have undertaken in subjects such as art and catering.
- Teachers communicate well with pupils. They develop good relationships, use questions effectively and encourage discussion and debate.
- Teachers have worked hard to develop and introduce a new assessment system to replace National Curriculum levels and reflect the move towards a one to nine grading system at GCSE. In the most effective lessons, this system was being used to inform pupils about their progress and to challenge them with steps to improve. In a few lessons, teachers are not using assessment information systematically to inform their planning and to shape the guidance and support they give pupils.
- Teachers are drawing upon their expertise, skills and interests to deliver exciting and stimulating enrichment lessons on Wednesday afternoons. These sessions are raising aspirations and developing skills for possible future careers. For example, the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) club have shared and presented their experiments into decibel levels with a local higher education provider, and the photography club have had the opportunity to work with a professional photographer.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils overwhelmingly feel safe and well looked after in the academy, a perception that is shared by parents. Pupils understand in detail the different forms of bullying and agree that incidents of such behaviour are rare, expressing confidence in the academy's ability to tackle bullying when it does happen. Pupils are well informed about how to stay safe online because they are taught about it explicitly in lessons.
- The academy's enrichment and 'life skills' programme is greatly enjoyed by pupils and provides a range of opportunities for personal development and reflection upon their conduct and behaviour. In one Year 7 lesson, pupils had been considering life goals and were reflecting on how to better cope with stressful situations.

- The academy provides many opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles, from the pupil ambassador and prefect programme to sports' coaching roles and the popular Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. For example, pupil ambassadors were busy surveying pupils' views on new signage they had campaigned for and designed for the canteen.
- The academy provides a strong programme of impartial careers information, advice and guidance. All pupils participate in work experience and receive personal careers interviews. Employers and further education providers regularly speak to pupils and they are well prepared for the next steps in their education.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils, parents and staff overwhelmingly feel that the positive behaviour of pupils is now a strength of the academy. In lessons, pupils are almost always extremely well behaved and it is rare for them to be removed or sanctioned.
- Pupils are polite, cooperative and supportive of each other. During enrichment lessons, pupils from different year groups work very well together and there are no areas of the academy where pupils do not feel safe to be. Pupils agree that this is an academy where it is safe to be different.
- The headteacher is uncompromising in the standards and expectations he has of pupils' behaviour. As a result, occasional incidents of antisocial behaviour such as swearing or smoking are in sharp decline and are met with clear and robust sanctions, including the use of fixed-term exclusions. No pupils have been permanently excluded in the last two years.
- Pupils' overall attendance at the academy, including the proportion of pupils that are persistently absent, has improved significantly in recent years and is now slightly better than the national average. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils was lower than the national average in 2015. Arrangements for tracking attendance and for supporting and challenging families when attendance is low have recently been improved and are now robust.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- A significant improvement in outcomes for pupils was secured in 2015. Pupils' progress across the majority of subjects, including in English and mathematics, was better than the national average for pupils from similar starting points. These improvements are secure because similarly strong progress is currently being made in all year groups.
- Achievement in mathematics is particularly strong throughout the academy. In 2015, the proportion of pupils who made better than expected progress from their starting points was substantially higher than the national average. This pattern of very strong progress can be seen in other year groups, where achievement is consistently high as a result of effective teaching.
- Standards and achievement in English are now better than the national average and improving throughout the academy. In 2015, pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 made better progress than other pupils nationally, and a higher proportion secured the top grades. Achievement across year groups is also strong and improving.
- Pupils achieve well in the humanities, particularly history and religious studies where standards are high. Similarly, pupils achieve well in modern languages; as a result, an increasing number of pupils are opting to study a language at GCSE.
- The overall progress made by disadvantaged pupils improved significantly in 2015. In mathematics, twice as many disadvantaged pupils made the expected level of progress than in 2014; the proportion doing so is now close to that for other pupils nationally. Similar improvements were secured in English, where disadvantaged pupils are making progress that is in line with that of similar pupils nationally, and is approaching that made by all other pupils. Inspectors saw convincing evidence that the achievement of disadvantaged pupils will continue to improve rapidly and that in some lower years they are now performing better than other pupils.
- Outcomes for disabled pupils and pupils who have special educational needs improved markedly in 2015. The achievement of this group of pupils is continuing to improve strongly throughout the academy. The progress they made in English and mathematics in 2015 was similar to that made by all other pupils

nationally. Across subjects and year groups, these pupils are achieving well as a result of well-targeted and closely monitored support.

- The most-able pupils receive teaching that challenges them. As a result, they are increasingly making progress that is better than the national average for pupils from similar starting points. In 2015, a higher than average proportion of the most-able pupils made better than expected progress in both English and mathematics.

School details

Unique reference number	137208
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10001880

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	426
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adrian Marr
Headteacher	Simon Letman
Telephone number	01473 328317
Website	www.holbrookacademy.org
Email address	office@holbrookacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	20–21 November 2013

Information about this school

- Holbrook Academy is a smaller than average 11–16 comprehensive academy serving an area of rural Suffolk outside Ipswich. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2013.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British, with a smaller proportion than average coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the academy receives pupil premium funding (additional government funding to support pupils who are in the care of the local authority or who are known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is broadly average.
- The academy does not use any alternative provision to educate their pupils. The academy occasionally supports pupils through the use of home tuition.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils in 27 lessons in order to contribute to their evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Some of these observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher or with other members of the academy leadership team. Inspectors also observed a range of activities taking place as part of the academy's timetabled enrichment programme.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, members of the governing body, academy leaders, teachers, support staff and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of academy documentation, including that relating to policies, the minutes of governors meetings, annual review documents, self-evaluation documents, pupil achievement, behaviour and attendance data, and a wide range of pupil work.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in 86 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and in 28 questionnaires returned by academy staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised the various forms of communication the academy uses, including the website and information sent to parents and other stakeholders.

Inspection team

Richard Spencer, lead inspector	Seconded Inspector
Russel Ayling	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Pemberton	Ofsted Inspector

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