

The Hereford Academy

Marlbrook Road, Redhill, Hereford, Herefordshire HR2 7NG

Inspection dates

10–11 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The principal, who joined the school in September 2016, has not yet secured the consistently good quality of teaching required for pupils to achieve well.
- Although leaders have set higher expectations for pupils' work and attitudes to learning, these are not upheld consistently well across the school.
- The quality of teaching is too variable. Pupils often do not learn well in classes taught by temporary or inexperienced teachers, in part because the attitudes of some pupils are too casual.
- In 2016, key stage 4 pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, left the school having made weak progress right across the curriculum.
- Outcomes for students on 16 to 19 study programmes have been too variable and, on some courses, low.
- Teachers' questioning sometimes fails to probe pupils' thinking sufficiently to deepen their understanding of the work. Some pupils are rarely challenged to reason mathematically.
- Teachers sometimes do not use the available information to ensure that they set work that is accurately based on the range of pupils' existing knowledge and understanding.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have taken strong action to maintain a consistent focus on the quality of teaching and learning in the school, including in the sixth form. As a result, standards across the school are now rising.
- The local governing board, working with the academy trust, has strengthened its ability to hold leaders to account. Governors know the school well and are ambitious for the future.
- Pupils feel very safe in school. Their behaviour at social times and in many lessons is good. Safeguarding procedures are effective.
- Leaders have implemented a coherent system for assessing pupils' progress. They provide good information to teachers about pupils' prior attainment and particular learning needs.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - all teachers make full use of the detailed information leaders provide about pupils and their starting points to set work which enables pupils of all abilities to make rapid progress
 - teachers question pupils more effectively during lessons to deepen their understanding and develop their ideas
 - all pupils at key stages 3 and 4 are required to reason mathematically.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - building on existing expectations that encourage pupils to show consistently good attitudes to learning
 - addressing weaker teaching systematically so that the consistency in the quality of teaching improves, especially in mathematics and science
 - ensuring that pupils learn well in classes taught by temporary or inexperienced teachers.
- Improve the 16 to 19 provision by ensuring that all learners are making strong progress on courses well suited to their needs.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement because senior leaders have not been able to secure consistently good teaching. In part, this reflects long-standing difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers. Standards, and especially standards of conduct, are rising, but expectations for pupils are not yet high enough to ensure that they make the most of their opportunities. As a result, pupils' quality of work, standards of presentation and classroom behaviour sometimes slip, typically when classes are taught by inexperienced or temporary teachers.
- Leaders have rightly emphasised the improvements since the last inspection, but there has not been enough hard-headed analysis of why until recently pupils' progress has been low. However, current plans for improvement are clear, relevant and well understood by the school community. The implementation of these plans is already having a positive impact on the consistency and quality of teaching.
- The principal has established clear expectations for staff, and sets challenging but realistic targets for teachers. These expectations are firmly linked to the progress of the pupils they teach. Staff report that training is generally helpful in improving their skills.
- Leaders have established a coherent new means of assessing pupils' progress following the removal of national curriculum levels and changes to key stage 4 examinations. They set appropriate targets for individual pupils. Subject leaders have relished the challenge of developing the statements against which progress is measured. Teachers check their judgements about the standard of pupils' work with each other, and at key stage 4, with teachers from other schools.
- Leaders of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities ensure that additional money provided for these pupils' education is well spent. They consistently give their colleagues detailed information about these pupils and how to teach them. Information supplied by the school shows that the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding has been used effectively to increase substantially the key skills of those who join the school with low prior attainment.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have received an external review of the pupil premium grant. They monitor its impact carefully and then amend the way it is spent. Inspection evidence showed that the money is being spent effectively, particularly in tackling some pupils' social and emotional barriers to learning.
- Leaders provide a balanced curriculum, and take good account of pupils' skills and interests. They have begun to improve the continuity of learning between key stage 3 and key stage 4, and between key stage 4 and the sixth form. Pupils benefit from a good range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, music and school trips both in this country and abroad.
- The school places an appropriate emphasis on pupils' personal, social and health education. Taught lessons, assemblies and visits from outside speakers develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of a range of cultures and beliefs. Pupils spoke highly of the impartial

careers education and guidance they have received, and in particular of the benefits of work experience at key stage 4.

- The trust has supported the school well, especially by commissioning reviews of aspects of the school's work from external consultants. For example, one such review contributed to current improvements in attendance.
- Leaders check carefully on the attendance, welfare and progress of the small number of post-16 students who receive alternative provision.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective.
- Governors are strongly committed to the long-term aims of the school and the enduring vision for a Christian education which meets the particular needs of the community around the school. Almost all governors visit the school frequently, and through link arrangements, meet with senior staff to discuss in detail the progress of the school. Together with the academy trust, they have recently commissioned their own review of governance in an effort to enhance further their own effectiveness. Governors know the comparative strengths and weaknesses of the school very well, although to some extent they take an overgenerous view of its progress.
- The local governing board has worked effectively with the Bishop Anthony Educational Trust, the school's sponsors, to streamline governance arrangements and to hold leaders to account. Records show that they use their knowledge to ask leaders searching questions. Together, they have established appropriately robust procedures for managing the performance of the principal and overseeing the performance of other staff.
- Governors ensure they play an effective part in keeping pupils safe. They are well trained in managing the risks to young people, including those associated with extremism and exploitation. They ensure that leaders follow the correct procedures when they appoint staff.
- The trust checks carefully on how leaders spend the additional money the school receives to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's arrangements meet all statutory requirements, and all policies and procedures are up to date. Leaders provide staff with updates on any changes to legislation or the circumstances of individual pupils.
- The school's culture is characterised by a strong commitment to the most vulnerable pupils which runs from governors through to all the staff, who are alert to any potential risks. This commitment is reflected in robust practical arrangements. Records are well maintained, and leaders work well with parents and other agencies which protect young people.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is too variable. Some of the teaching, typically but not exclusively by temporary teachers or those new to the school, does not meet pupils' academic needs reliably. In response, a small minority of pupils are sometimes inattentive or engage in mildly disruptive behaviour. In these circumstances, both the work set and some pupils' attitudes to learning slow the progress pupils make.
- Leaders provide teachers with detailed information, updated regularly, about each pupil in the class. This includes their current level of attainment in the subject, and strategies which can be employed to support those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Nevertheless, during the inspection, some less-able pupils struggled occasionally because they did not fully understand the work provided or how to approach it.
- Similarly, the most able and confident pupils in the class sometimes spend too much time on routine work or finish tasks early and wait for additional work to be set. Commonly teachers allow pupils to judge which of three tasks or questions is most suited to their prior understanding of the topic, but sometimes then fail to ensure that the most able pupils select a stiff enough challenge.
- Teachers' questioning varies in its effectiveness. Often, teachers use questions well to judge pupils' progress and to encourage them to consider a topic more deeply. Sometimes, questioning is superficial so pupils are not made to think, or is poorly directed so that the teacher has a limited awareness of how well the pupils are learning.
- In mathematics, some teaching effectively encourages pupils to develop their reasoning and apply their knowledge to solve practical problems. However, other teaching focuses heavily on routine calculations and does not provide pupils with sufficient opportunity to explore and explain their mathematical thinking.
- Teachers generally promote literacy effectively. During the inspection, teachers used subject specific vocabulary accurately. They identified new terms for students, drew attention to unfamiliar spellings and generally expected pupils to correct spelling and punctuation errors in their written work. In some subjects, word mats reinforce key words. In English, pupils write at length, and adopt a wide variety of styles to meet the needs of different contexts.
- Information supplied by the school and supported by inspection evidence shows that the quality of teaching overall is improving. Inspectors witnessed much good teaching, and some very strong practice right across the curriculum, but notably in art, physical education (PE), design and technology and modern foreign languages. Work was often well planned, so that pupils of different abilities in the same class were all able to make strong progress. Where expectations were high, pupils behaved well.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. The attitudes of a small minority of pupils towards their work are not consistently good. A higher proportion of pupils lack a little confidence in their abilities and do only what they are required to do, providing only the briefest answers to questions.
- Although the school's culture has strengthened and continues to do so, some pupils tend to rely on staff to motivate them and manage their behaviour. Too many do not bring equipment to lessons, and fail to maintain a consistently high standard of presentation in their books.
- However, the school's work to keep pupils safe is effective, and pupils describe bullying as very rare. They have total confidence that adults will resolve any social difficulties they may experience. Pupils respect each other, and understand how groups of people differ. One group of pupils told the inspectors that the school community 'accepts you for who you are'.
- The school teaches pupils how to be safe and healthy in many respects. These include how to use the internet safely, how to form healthy relationships and how to avoid substance misuse.
- Historically, a lack of aspiration has been a brake on the achievement of many pupils. Teachers therefore make sure that pupils are aware of current affairs to help them to understand their role in current British society, and pupils benefit from good-quality impartial careers advice. Pupils who spoke with inspectors had a good idea of the future options, including university entrance.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils told inspectors that there is some low-level disruption in lessons, and this was confirmed by inspection evidence, typically occurring in lessons taught by temporary and less experienced teachers. In these lessons, some pupils become disengaged when the work is not accurately matched to their needs. Teachers do not always apply the school's behaviour management policy effectively.
- Pupils were also insistent that behaviour has improved since the last inspection. The school's records show that this year the rate of fixed-term exclusion has fallen to below the national average, and that the use of internal isolation has also fallen sharply. Leaders attribute much of the improvement to clearer identification of special educational needs and/or disabilities, and to better provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school is an orderly and purposeful community. Pupils generally wear their uniforms with pride. They behave responsibly at social times and in the corridors, and respect the school's well-maintained facilities. Very little litter was evident after morning break and lunch.

- In the 2015/16 academic year, attendance overall was below the national average, and that for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was low. More precise tracking of absence and more effective rewards for those who attend regularly have led to a noticeable increase in the overall rate of attendance, and the attendance of the groups previously causing concern. However, these rates continue to be below that of all pupils nationally, and so more work remains to be done.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, pupils' progress has generally been below that found nationally, and sometimes well below. However, information supplied by the school and confirmed by inspection evidence showed that in a wide variety of subjects in all year groups, progress is increasing, albeit unevenly. This marked upturn reflects both a better quality of teaching, and the improvements in pupils' behaviour.
- Many pupils enter the school with attainment below that which is typical for their age. Those who left Year 11 in 2016 did so with low attainment and having made progress which was below average overall, and below average in each broad area of the curriculum. The progress disadvantaged pupils had made during their time in the school was lower still.
- In September, leaders established a system of milestones, against which teachers assess pupils' progress at key stage 3. Although still in its early days, the results of these assessments show clearly that pupils are generally on track to meet their targets. This in turn would constitute progress at least in line with that seen nationally. Where year-on-year comparison is possible, current pupils at key stage 4 are usually attaining more highly than previous cohorts. Scrutiny of pupils' workbooks confirmed that, across the school, standards are rising.
- Similarly, school information shows that the progress of disadvantaged pupils is increasing, sometimes exceeding that of other pupils in the school. Therefore, the difference between their progress and that of other pupils nationally is beginning to diminish. This improvement reflects better provision to overcome social and emotional barriers to learning, and teachers' greater awareness of how to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils in the classroom.
- The quality of disadvantaged pupils' work sampled by inspectors was similar to that of their peers. Because the school is increasingly effective at engaging disadvantaged pupils, the outcomes for the most able disadvantaged pupils are similar to those for other most-able pupils in the school.
- Leaders consistently provide teachers with detailed guidance on how to meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and increasingly, staff have the skills to incorporate this in their teaching. As a result, the progress of many in this group of pupils is now strong. Those pupils who enter the school with particularly low skills in literacy and numeracy catch up well in Year 7 as the result of well-targeted support.
- Overall, the most able pupils are making progress in line with their peers, although inspection evidence indicates that it varies considerably, depending on the quality of

teaching. All teachers are aware of their obligation to set challenging work, but their effectiveness in doing so is inconsistent. For example, in a Year 9 history lesson, the most able pupils chose demanding tasks and made good progress in evaluating historical sources, but in a Year 10 science lesson, pupils who completed the initial tasks quickly were left waiting for the next activity.

- Inspectors observed work of a high quality in art, PE and design technology, areas in which pupils have historically performed better. Although there is now consistently stronger progress across the curriculum, including in the key subjects, there remains a legacy of underachievement for those currently in key stage 4. The progress of these pupils needs to be accelerated for them to be well prepared for the next stages in their education and training.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- In the recent past, some students have followed courses which did not give them the best chance of progression on to the next level of education or employment. However, leaders have taken decisive action with a view to ensuring that the sixth form provides only relevant courses of a high quality, which lead to successful outcomes for students. They have severed the school's links with football training academies, and stopped or adapted a number of other courses. As a result, there are just over a quarter the number of sixth formers on the school's roll as there were at the time of the last inspection. A small number of students chose not to complete their courses as a result of the recent changes.
- At the same time, leaders have acted to set higher expectations for sixth-form students, monitor their progress more closely and align teaching on 16 to 19 study programmes with that in the main school. Early indications are that these major developments have had a positive impact on students' progress, but leaders and governors are rightly monitoring the quality of the provision carefully.
- Historically, outcomes for students have been too variable, and on some vocational courses they have been low. In 2016, progress for students who retook their GCSE examinations in English and mathematics was broadly average. The progress of the relatively small number of disadvantaged students has been at least as strong as that of non-disadvantaged students in the provision.
- Current information shows that students on most courses are now on track to meet their targets. However, underachievement in the past means that some students have a great deal of catching up to do. Leaders also acknowledge that new assessment arrangements mean that it is too early to conclude that all students are currently making good progress. Students who attend alternative provision make strong progress because they are committed to the vocational area of study.
- Teaching observed during the inspection was engaging and catered well for students' individual needs and interests. However, over time, teaching on many courses has not been strong enough to secure good outcomes.
- Leaders have increased the range and quality of non-qualification activity. Students now benefit from a relevant programme of personal, social, health and economic education, including information about healthy eating and road safety. Most benefit

from relevant work experience opportunities or regular work placements.

- Information and guidance for Year 11 pupils considering the sixth form is good. Crucially, staff provide impartial advice and acknowledge that other providers offer more appropriate courses for many pupils. Effective individual support and guidance is available to students in the sixth form, but not all students who spoke with inspectors had a clear plan for their future careers.
- The relationships between staff and students are good. Students report that teachers are very willing to help them with their work, and students in turn display positive attitudes towards their studies. They attend school regularly.

School details

Unique reference number	135662
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	10032616

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	674
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	48
Appropriate authority	The Bishop Anthony Educational Trust
Chair	Bruce Freeman
Principal	Paul Halcro
Telephone number	01432 373 570
Website	www.theherefordacademy.org.uk
Email address	admin@theherefordacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 November 2015

Information about this school

- The Hereford Academy is a smaller-than-average-sized secondary school with a small sixth form. It is sponsored by the Bishop Anthony Educational Trust, serving the Diocese of Hereford.
- The very large majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is high.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium is above average.
- Eight students follow 16 to 19 study programmes which include part-time alternative

provision at the Peter Prosser Hairdressing and Training School in Hereford.

- There has been considerable staff turnover since the last inspection. The principal took up his post in September 2016. Two assistant principals left their posts in December 2016, and their roles are currently undertaken by acting post holders. The current head of science took up his post in April 2017.
- In 2016, the school did not meet the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 11. The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 4 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- Some of the support to the school is provided by a National Leader in Education (NLE).
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about its recent examination results at key stage 4 and in the sixth form on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about recent examination results.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 31 lessons, two of which were conducted jointly with the principal. In addition, inspectors conducted a joint learning walk. Inspectors also observed an assembly and pupils' conduct at breaktime and lunchtime.
- The inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, other leaders and class teachers. The lead inspector met with governors, and with the chief executive of the academy trust.
- Four groups of pupils, three chosen at random, met with inspectors. Inspectors spoke with a large number of pupils informally.
- The inspectors looked at many workbooks in their visits to classrooms, and scrutinised in depth the work produced in English, mathematics and science by some pupils in Year 8 and Year 10. They considered a wide range of information about pupils' current and recent performance.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, both electronically and on paper. These included: development plans and evaluations of the school's progress; reports to parents; policies; the minutes of governors' meetings; reports by independent consultants who had visited the school; and anonymised information showing how the principal manages the performance of teachers. Inspectors also scrutinised records showing how the school supports vulnerable pupils.
- There were not enough responses to the online Parent View questionnaire for inspectors to take account of these views, but they considered comments made using the free-text service and the results of the school's own questionnaire for Year 11 parents and carers. They also took account of 32 responses to the questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Martin Spoor, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Alan Johnson	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Reeves	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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