

Short inspection of Exeter Mathematics School

Inspection dates:

12 and 13 March 2024

Outcome

Exeter Mathematics School continues to be an outstanding provider.

Information about this provider

Exeter mathematics school (EMS) was judged to be outstanding at its previous inspection in January 2017. EMS is a 16 to 19 academy based in Exeter and provides specialist mathematics provision. All students study A levels in mathematics, further mathematics, computer science and, or physics. In addition, students study a researched-based learning programme developed in conjunction with employers, such as Dyson and the University of Exeter. A small proportion of students study a fourth A level at Exeter college.

Leaders recruit students from across the Devon, Somerset, Dorset and Cornwall regions. The selection of students is based on their aptitude and motivation to study mathematics at A level. At the time of the inspection, 127 students were studying at EMS, 43 students lived in the school's residential provision on weekdays, and two students were in receipt of high needs funding. Around 10% of students have previously been in receipt of free school meals and a further 10% of students speak English as an additional language.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Students are exceptionally motivated and highly value their learning. They regularly produce work of a high standard which significantly exceeds what is expected of students at this stage in their education. Students appreciate the opportunities to work with employers and university academics, as part of studying the Exeter mathematics certificate curriculum. This enables them to considerably develop their mathematical interests by producing project work of exceptional quality. For example, students develop links to real-world applications such as statistical modelling of sports results to predict outcomes. As a result, they deepen their knowledge and secure their understanding of mathematics and learn how it relates to a wide range of careers and jobs. Students grow in confidence because they see the relevance of what they are learning. They feel part of a safe and inclusive learning environment.

All students take part in useful conversations with a qualified careers adviser. They develop a comprehensive understanding of what they can do when they finish studying A levels, including progression to higher education and studying an apprenticeship at levels 6 and 7. Leaders arrange helpful mock interviews with university academics for those students who are applying to study at university. As a result, students are very well prepared for their next steps.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and managers ensure that teachers provide students with high-quality education. Teachers take part in ongoing and highly effective training in pedagogy. Leaders listen carefully to students to understand their learning experiences. When improvements are identified, leaders respond rapidly with highly effective action plans. Leaders routinely draw on current education research to ensure their actions have the best possible impact on the quality of provision.

Leaders and teachers are innovative in the way in which they enhance the student learning experience. They ensure that the limitations regarding the size of the school's learning space do not hinder the students' experience. Teachers are highly ambitious for their students. They place significant importance on the development of a student's character, resilience and independence, as well as achieving high academic outcomes. All students study the A-level further mathematics curriculum. As a result, students thrive in the aspirational learning environment and relish the challenges that they are provided with by teachers.

Teachers plan and teach the curriculum expertly and in a way that highly motivates students to learn more. They teach complicated new topics early in the academic year to challenge and inspire students. Teachers use the links between topics to skilfully revisit prior learning and secure knowledge. Because of this, students are excited about their learning and become highly effective at forming and solving problems, often applying the skills they develop, across different curriculum areas. For example, students studying the Exeter mathematics certificate developed and applied new coding skills to support the statistical analysis within a mathematics project.

Teachers teach students to understand fully the fundamental concepts behind the complex mathematical skills they develop. They expertly explain topics to students, focusing on the reasons why problems are approached in specific ways. As a result, students develop a deep understanding of how to apply their knowledge, which extends significantly beyond the expectations of the qualification's specification.

Tutors use assessment skilfully to support and check on students' learning. They analyse each student's strengths and weaknesses and provide them with highly effective feedback. Tutors undertake useful remedial interventions, including providing additional one-to-one support for students who are not performing as well as expected. As a result, gaps or misconceptions in knowledge are swiftly identified and corrected, and the pace of students' progress is significant and swift.

Teachers support learners exceptionally well. They consider carefully what students need to achieve or exceed their potential. Teachers cultivate a culture where students learn from their mistakes and positively embrace the opportunity to do so. As a result, students feel secure to ask their tutors questions, request help, or try out new things without apprehension in lessons. Teachers and tutors support those students with high needs and special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) very well. They make thoughtful adaptations to teaching and resources, and as a result students with SEND achieve in line with their peers.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Provider details

Unique reference number	140971
Address	Rougemont House Castle Road Exeter Devon EX4 3PU
Contact number	01392 429020
Website	http://www.exetermathematicsschool.ac.uk/
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Kerry Burnham
Provider type	16 to 19 academy
Date of previous inspection	24 to 26 January 2017
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since Exeter Mathematics School was judged to be outstanding in January 2017.

The inspection team was assisted by the headteacher, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Paul James, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lowenna Bradley	His Majesty's Inspector
John Evans	Ofsted Inspector
Roger Pilgrim	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024