

The Cotswold Academy

The Avenue, Bourton-on-the-Water, Cheltenham, GL54 2BD

Inspection dates 18 – 19 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Outstanding 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher has high expectations and aspirations for the academy. Through his dedication and drive he has inspired outstanding leadership at all levels.
- Governors use their considerable knowledge and experience to very effectively challenge senior leaders to maintain and improve all aspects of the academy's work.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of all students, regardless of their ability. They plan lessons that engage and challenge students, and use questioning to deepen understanding, so that students achieve at the highest level.
- Achievement is outstanding. At GCSE, the proportion of students gaining five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, is well above the national average. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades of A* and A, across a number of subjects, is well above average.
- Disadvantaged students make rapid progress because of the very effective additional support they receive.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make excellent progress because of the individual and well-planned help they are given.
- The most-able students make outstanding progress because they are provided with additional, challenging activities in lessons and for homework, which considerably extend their learning.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary. They show high levels of respect for staff and each other. Their attitudes to learning are excellent, which contributes greatly to their outstanding progress.
- Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally strong through a wide and varied range of subjects, many after-school clubs and educational visits, and a well-planned personal and social development programme. Students are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Students are extremely proud of the academy. They say they enjoy lessons, feel very safe and well cared for, and value the very positive relationships that they have with their teachers and each other. The academy's work to keep them safe is outstanding.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students respond well to excellent teaching and pastoral support and make outstanding progress. The academy's strong partnerships with universities, colleges of further education and industry provide students with excellent opportunities to pursue careers of their choice.
- Well-qualified teaching assistants play an effective part in students' learning in most lessons. However, there are a few occasions when their expertise is not used fully, and they are not always clear about their role in supporting students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 40 lessons to observe the progress and engagement of students. Nine of these observations were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors reviewed the quality of the work in students’ books to judge the effectiveness of marking, the progress of students over time, and the accuracy of the academy’s assessment information.
- Other aspects of the academy day were observed, including an assembly, registration time, students’ behaviour at break, lunchtime and between lessons, and students’ arrival and departure from the academy.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior staff and subject leaders. A meeting took place with four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors spoke with five groups of students formally in meetings and with a number of students informally in lessons and at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors took account of the views of the 204 parents and carers who responded to the Parent View online questionnaire and six letters from parents. They also considered the 107 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents including: the academy’s information on students’ progress; self-evaluation and improvement plans; training arrangements for teachers and other staff; checks on the quality of teaching; attendance records and behaviour logs; minutes of governing body meetings; documents relating to students’ safety; and documents relating to the management of teachers’ performance.

Inspection team

Ann Behan, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Steven Edwards	Additional Inspector
Jean Whalley	Additional Inspector
Helen Owen	Additional Inspector
Fiona Hammans	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Cotswold Academy converted to become an academy school on 6 September 2010. When its predecessor school, The Cotswold School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The academy is a larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds with a very small minority from different ethnic groups. Very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium is well below the national average. This is additional government funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is well below average.
- The school receives a small amount of Year 7 catch-up funding to help eligible students improve their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Seven Key Stage 4 students receive part of their education away from the academy site. These students are following work-related courses at Tewkesbury Launchpad and Chipping Campden School.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching assistants are clear about their roles and are effectively deployed in lessons.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The academy is exceptionally well led by the headteacher and the senior leadership team. They have high expectations and are relentless in their pursuit of excellence. They have worked very effectively to raise achievement and improve teaching. They are extremely well supported by all staff.
 - Self-evaluation is sharp and accurate. The academy's detailed plans for future developments are firmly based on providing the best opportunities for all students.
 - Leadership of teaching is thorough and uncompromising, and is focused on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards of achievement. Regular checks on teaching, supported by well-targeted training, have led to an increase in the proportion of high quality teaching.
 - Performance management of staff is linked closely to the quality of teaching and students' achievement. Staff do not move onto the next pay level unless they meet exacting targets. There are very good support systems for staff who need help, but if improvements are not made, underperformance is dealt with decisively by the headteacher and governors.
 - Subject leaders manage their areas of responsibility very well by rigorously checking the quality of teaching and students' progress in their departments. They challenge underperformance quickly and robustly.
 - Pastoral leaders check the work of colleagues in supporting students and take immediate action if there appears to be underperformance in their areas of responsibility.
 - The range of courses offered to students is wide and well suited to meet the needs and interests of different ability students. The very well-organised and timely careers advice that students receive, together with the strong links that the academy has with primary schools, other schools, academies and colleges in the local area, and many universities, provide students with excellent support at different times in their education. Almost all students successfully progress to education, training, apprenticeships or work at the end of Year 11 and Year 13.
 - The academy's emphasis on positive relationships, the rich experience gained through different subjects, and the wide, diverse and plentiful opportunities for students to take part in after-school clubs and trips promote students' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development exceptionally well. Students are provided with a number of opportunities to help them to develop their leadership roles. They are encouraged to take on responsibilities through the student council, mentoring of younger students, and various charity fund-raising events. Students show a good understanding of British values. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
 - The academy makes sure that all students have equality of access and equal opportunities. It uses additional funding to provide extra teaching and support for disadvantaged students and Year 7 catch-up students, and to make sure that all students have full access to after-school clubs and educational trips and visits. Leaders closely monitor the progress, attendance and behaviour of students attending the alternative provisions.
 - Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. The drive for excellence has improved teaching and widened opportunities for students. This has brought about outstanding achievement.
 - The academy collaborates well with schools and academies in the local area. This gives many opportunities to share ideas and expertise in improving the quality of teaching and in responding to new educational initiatives, as well as for training for staff and governors.
 - The academy has positive links with the local authority, which provides good support for teachers in their first year of teaching and training for governors.
 - Relationships with parents are excellent. The overwhelming majority who responded to the online questionnaire were pleased with the education and support provided by the academy. All would recommend the academy to another parent.
 - There are extremely effective safeguarding procedures in place that are adhered to consistently by all staff. Statutory requirements are met in full.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors bring a wealth of experience from industry, commerce and education to their role, which they use very effectively to challenge the leadership of the academy to maintain and improve high quality teaching and raise standards of achievement. When there are vacancies on the governing body, an audit of skills is taken so that any new governors bring additional expertise to the group.
 - Governors are thorough in their analysis of information of different groups of students' attainment and progress, including disadvantaged students and those who are disabled or who have special educational needs. They use assessment information very well to monitor the performance of the academy against other schools nationally.

- Governors are very well informed through the wide range of training that they have received. They visit the academy regularly to monitor the quality of teaching, look at students' work, and talk to staff, parents and students.
- Governors are very rigorous in the support that they give the headteacher in managing staff performance. They are clear about the link between the quality of teaching and the success of students, and they make sure that pay awards are linked closely to the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- Governors ensure that all statutory child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures are in place, and regularly undertake relevant training to keep abreast of changes nationally. They make sure that the academy promotes the British values of respect and tolerance, and that students are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Governors manage the resources of the academy very well. They closely check the use of additional funding and monitor the effectiveness and impact of their decisions, and those of senior leaders, to ensure best value.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students are very proud of the academy. There is a happy and friendly atmosphere around the site. Students are polite and considerate towards adults and towards one another. They are smartly dressed in their uniform, respect their surroundings, and there is no evidence of litter or graffiti in classrooms or around the building.
- Attitudes to learning are excellent. Attendance is above average, students are prompt to lessons, bring the correct equipment and display a pleasure in learning. They thoroughly enjoy working with each other and respond very positively to staff. As a result, they make outstanding progress.
- Students say that it is unusual for anyone to misbehave. They say that lessons are enjoyable, run smoothly and that rules are applied consistently and fairly by staff. The academy's records show that incidents of poor behaviour are low, as is the number of students excluded from the academy.
- Sixth form students are excellent role models through their positive attitudes and focus on study, their high profile and excellent behaviour around the academy, and their mentoring of younger students.
- The behaviour and attendance of the small number of students following part-time courses off-site are checked closely by staff, and are typically very good.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students are very positive about relationships that they have with their teachers and the support that they get from all of the staff. They told inspectors that the relationships are built on trust. One student said of the form tutors: 'Tutors are very helpful, kind and supportive.'
- Students value the information that they gain through assemblies, tutor time and special days devoted to personal and social development. They are clear about how to stay safe, the dangers of alcohol and substance abuse, and the advantages of a healthy lifestyle. They are very positive about the help they receive in understanding how to use the internet and social media safely.
- Students are clear about the different forms that bullying can take. They say that bullying is uncommon, incidents of racist and homophobic behaviour are rare, and on the few occasions that they do occur the academy deals with them promptly and effectively. They spoke knowledgeably about the need to celebrate different cultures and of British values of tolerance and respect, and understand what constitutes extremist behaviour.
- The academy's systems for health and safety and safeguarding are very thorough, including checks on the suitability of adults applying to work in the school. Safety procedures are closely monitored by senior leaders and applied consistently by all staff.
- The academy closely checks the safety of the students who attend off-site courses.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire believe that students are safe and well cared for, behaviour is at least good, and the academy deals with bullying effectively.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The vast majority of teaching across subjects and year groups, including the sixth form, is outstanding. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, high expectations, and most teach with a passion and enthusiasm that captures students' interest and leads to outstanding progress. One student told inspectors: 'Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects, they are fair and make learning fun.' Another

said: 'Learning is joyful.'

- Teachers use assessment information well to plan tasks that are at the right level for students' different abilities. They provide work that stretches the most-able students, including challenging homework, and make sure others get the support and help that they need. As a result, almost all students make outstanding progress.
- Questioning is used very well to gauge understanding and to extend students' knowledge. In a Year 9 English lesson, students were working in groups analysing different poems. The teacher skilfully questioned individual students encouraging them to give their ideas, challenged others to contribute and extend discussions, and was relentless in making sure that students spoke in sentences and used the correct terminology. As a result, outstanding learning took place.
- Feedback to students on how to improve work is varied and very effective. Teachers give good explanations in lessons, sometimes to groups or one-to-one, on how to improve. There is excellent use of self- and peer-assessment so that students are made to think hard about what they have achieved and how they can make work better. Teachers' marking gives clear guidance about what students need to do to improve, and students are provided with opportunities to reflect on teachers' feedback and to respond to the advice they have been given.
- Whole-school policies for literacy and numeracy are used very effectively. Students are given many opportunities to practise their writing, speaking and mathematical skills across a number of subjects. They are encouraged to read widely at home and in lessons, and have access to a very popular, well-resourced library.
- In most lessons, teaching assistants make a strong contribution to students' excellent progress. They work collaboratively with teachers to provide extra assistance for disadvantaged students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and the very small minority who speak English as an additional language. They know the students well, provide the right balance of support and challenge, and help ensure that these students make the best possible progress. However, in few lessons teaching assistants are not always clear about their role or used effectively by teachers.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- For the last three years the proportion of students gaining five GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics has been well above the national average. This represents outstanding achievement.
- Results in GCSE examinations in mathematics over the last three years show that the proportion of students making and exceeding expected progress is well above the national average and represents outstanding progress. Current assessment information shows that this success is set to continue.
- There is a similar picture in English for expected levels of progress. However, the proportion of students exceeding expected levels of progress in 2014 dipped to be in line with the national average. The academy has put in place a number of support strategies, including more rapid intervention, additional teaching, and has revised the way students complete controlled assessments. Current assessment information, and work seen during the inspection for Years 10 and 11, suggests that the proportion exceeding expected progress in English is now well above the national average, and that progress in English is outstanding.
- The academy makes good use of additional funding to provide extra support for disadvantaged students. In 2014, their GCSE results in English and mathematics were similar to all students nationally. They were around half a grade behind their classmates in English and around two thirds of a grade behind in mathematics. Current assessments suggest that the in-school gaps in both subjects are narrowing.
- Academy assessments show that the progress of disadvantaged students is improving quickly across all year groups.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make outstanding progress because of the specific and well-targeted help that they receive. They benefit from individual one-to-one teaching and effective in-class support.
- The most-able students make excellent progress. Staff plan more demanding work in lessons and adapt homework so that it is more challenging. As a result, the number of the most-able students attaining the higher GCSE grades of A* and A is well above the national average, and is increasing year-on-year across a wide range of subjects.
- There are only a small number of students who speak English as an additional language. They make excellent progress because of the effective individual support they receive.
- The small number of students who attend part-time work-related courses progress very well because they are studying courses that are better matched to their abilities and interests.
- The few students eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding make outstanding progress in developing their basic

skills in literacy and numeracy. This is because of effective teaching and additional one-to-one support.

- The academy does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.

The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- Students join the sixth form with attainment that is above average. Attainment at A level has been well above national average for three years, particularly the proportion of students gaining the higher grades of A* to B. This represents outstanding progress. At AS level, results dipped slightly from 2013 to 2014. However, current assessment information shows that attainment at AS level is improving at a rapid rate and the attainment of current Year 12 students is well above the national average. This represents outstanding progress. The sixth form meets the national 16 to 19 interim minimum standards.
- Teaching in the sixth form is outstanding. Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge, and their passion for their subjects, to plan work carefully to cater for and challenge the different abilities across groups and subjects. This ensures that progress rates are similar for all groups, including the small number of disabled students, those who have special educational needs, and disadvantaged students.
- Leadership of the sixth form is outstanding. The head of sixth form, along with other leaders, has looked closely at the range of courses on offer, has introduced more relevant courses for some students and has removed other courses at AS level which were not appropriate or successful. He monitors the quality of teaching closely, alongside student tracking information, to identify underperformance quickly. He makes sure that there is swift intervention to prevent students falling behind in their studies. This is having a very positive effect on students' progress, particularly at AS level. As a result, the proportion of students staying on from Year 12 to Year 13 has increased greatly and is now above the national average.
- Students' behaviour around the academy and their attitudes to learning are exemplary. Their attendance and punctuality are excellent and they provide very positive role models for younger students.
- Students are provided with many opportunities to take part in a variety of enrichment activities including clubs, education trips in this country and abroad, and work experience. They are encouraged to take on leadership roles within the academy and make a considerable contribution to supporting other students by listening to them read and mentoring younger students. They carry out duties around the building early in the morning, at break and lunchtime, and after the academy day. They visit primary schools to deliver lessons alongside teachers, and are outstanding ambassadors for the academy. Many were quick to tell inspectors that they felt they were respected by staff and treated as adults.
- Students receive high quality support and good careers guidance. The vast majority who complete their courses go on to study at universities of their choice, or move on to further study, apprenticeships, training or employment. The few students who enter the sixth form without at least a grade C at GCSE for English and mathematics are given good support to enable them to do well in their GCSE retake examinations.
- Students are given a wide range of advice and guidance about keeping themselves safe in a variety of situations. They told inspectors that this was very much appreciated, particularly information about use of social media and the internet.

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	136292
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	453396

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1261
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	255
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amanda Everitt
Headteacher	Will Morgan
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01451 820554
Fax number	01451 810658
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