

Isle of Portland Aldridge Community Academy

Royal Manor Campus, Weston Road, Portland, DT5 2RS

Inspection dates 25–26 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The achievement of students has improved rapidly. Current pupils in the primary years are making good progress. GCSE results in 2013 were better than those in the predecessor school.
- The standard of teaching is good and improving rapidly, especially for the younger students in Key Stages 1 and 2. The new academy has made the improvement of teaching a priority and has successfully used several strategies. These have made a positive impact.
- Behaviour is good, most students are keen to learn and make the best of the opportunities offered. The academy has been successful in improving attendance rates.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make excellent progress, and teaching in this area is particularly good.
- The academy takes all necessary steps to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils and students of all ages.
- The principal has been outstanding in securing improvement in the quality of teaching and achievement across the academy. This has been particularly rapid in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- She is supported by strong senior leaders and the governing body who are united in the aim of improving the education and employment prospects for the academy's students.
- The new academy is bringing benefits to the wider community, including improved sports facilities.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The most able students are not always sufficiently stretched and challenged to meet their full potential.
- Some teachers do not do enough to probe students' knowledge and understanding to help the students think more deeply about their work.
- The skills of middle leaders are not as well developed as those of the senior leaders.
- The academy's leaders have not been entirely successful in gaining the full support of parents and the wider community for the wide-ranging changes and developments they have made to educational provision in the area.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 teachers in 43 lessons, nine of which were observed jointly with senior teachers from the academy. In addition, inspectors made some short visits to lessons and looked at the academy’s provision for students with special educational needs. Year 11 students were not present at the time of the inspection because they had completed their GCSE examinations.
- The academy is currently spread over four sites and each site was visited by at least three inspectors at different stages of the inspection. All inspectors observed some lessons at the campus for secondary-aged students.
- Meetings were held with three members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders, teachers, a small number of parents, and groups of students. An inspector had a conversation with a representative of the Aldridge Foundation and with a consultant who acts as an adviser to the academy. One inspector listened to individual students reading aloud and talked to others about their reading.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work, visited an assembly, and looked at samples of students’ work. They also looked at progress data, documents about the academy’s development and evaluation, safeguarding information and records about attendance and behaviour. The records showing the impact of professional development for staff were also examined.
- Inspectors took into account the views of over 100 parents who completed the online questionnaire (Parent View). All members of staff were also able to contribute their views in a questionnaire; 97 responses were received.

Inspection team

Ann Cox, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Neil Blundell	Additional Inspector
Martin Brown	Additional Inspector
Wendy Delf	Additional Inspector
Martin Watson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy opened in September 2012, following the merger of five schools on the Isle of Portland which were previously known as Brackenbury Infant School, Grove Infant School, Southwell Community Primary School, Underhill Community Junior School and Royal Manor Arts College. It is an all-through academy and currently pupils range in age from three to 16.
- As result of the merger, the academy is a large school and educates students from the Isle of Portland and the nearby area around Weymouth. In September 2014 it will open a sixth form in a new purpose-built campus.
- The academy is currently distributed over four sites, one of which was newly built and opened in September 2013 to accommodate some of the youngest pupils. Construction work has started on a further site, and it is anticipated that all the secondary-aged students and some primary aged pupils will be able to move there in September 2015.
- A new principal was appointed to take up the post in January 2013. Each campus has a senior member of staff with specific responsibility for leading it.
- The academy is jointly sponsored by the Aldridge Foundation and Dorset County Council.
- The vast majority of students are of White British heritage, with very small numbers from several minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of students with disabilities and special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion at school action plus or with statements of special educational needs is well above the national average.
- An above average proportion of students receives pupil premium funding. This provides additional funding for looked after children and students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- In Years 7 and 8, about a sixth of students benefit from additional help in mathematics and English, funded by the government's catch-up programme.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress, in both the primary and secondary phases.
- In Key Stage 4 a small number of students attend courses, including work-related training off-site at the Compass Unit in Weymouth or at the Dorchester Learning Centre based in Winterbourne Monkton.
- The academy has provision for child care before and after school hours, known as Island Kids. This facility is inspected separately by Ofsted and was not included in this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding so that all students make rapid and sustained progress by:
 - ensuring that the use of questioning by teachers encourages students to think more deeply about their work and helps them to solve problems themselves
 - planning activities so that students are always fully engaged and working on tasks which are suitably demanding, not too easy or too difficult.
- Strengthen the skills of all middle leaders to match those displayed by the senior leaders, especially in the use of assessment data, in order to further drive up standards across the academy.
- Improve communications so that parents and the wider community understand more clearly why changes are being made, and the potential benefits for students and the wider community.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- In the first year since it formed, the academy's 2013 GCSE results, including in English and in mathematics, were better than those achieved in the predecessor school, and were broadly in line with the national average. These improvements have resulted from the academy's relentless focus on improving teaching and developing the skills of all staff.
- The youngest children enter the academy with lower than typical starting points. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make outstanding progress, so that the majority achieve a good or expected level of development by the end of Reception.
- In Key Stage 1, current pupils make outstanding progress and their achievement has improved because of the excellent support that they are given.
- Current pupils in Key Stage 2 are making good progress, particularly in addressing previous weaknesses in their writing skills.
- The provision of laptop computers to every individual secondary-aged student and the use of an accelerated reading programme and tablet computers in the primary sites have enabled students to access a diverse range of materials with good effect. Older students told inspectors that the laptops enable them to access information more easily and so helps them to learn. The younger students enjoy using the quiz facilities in the reading software and this encourages them to read more frequently and improve their skills.
- Current students do not enter GCSE mathematics early, but the current Year 11 students did take GCSE English in the middle of the academic year. The results show that they made at least as much progress as is expected nationally by the end of Year 11. About a third of these students have now taken the GCSE English examinations again and many are expected to further improve their grades.
- Inspectors looked very closely at work and tracking data for current students of all ages throughout the academy, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Inspectors were satisfied that in this new academy all student groups in the primary and secondary phases are making good progress, which compares well with their peers nationally. These opinions were reinforced by evidence gathered when inspectors visited classes and saw students and staff at work.
- The academy is giving attention to increasing the proportion of students who achieve the highest grades at GCSE. Although some improvements are already evident, the academy is aware that there is still more to be done to reach the targets which have been set.
- Pupils who receive pupil premium funding are now making better progress. In the 2013 GCSE examinations, the gap between pupils in this group and their peers was about three quarters of a grade in English and half a grade in mathematics. Currently, secondary-aged students entitled to pupil premium funding are making progress at similar rates to their peers and gaps are closing.
- In the primary phase, numerous interventions have enabled pupils entitled to pupil premium funding to narrow the gaps in reading, writing and mathematics, and in some areas the gaps have been closed.
- Students from different ethnic minority groups make similar progress to other students, as do children from service families.
- The progress of individual students with special educational needs or disabilities is monitored closely and the academy deploys staff and other resources well to ensure that provision for these students is good and they are able to make appropriate progress.
- A number of students receive help from the government's Years 7 and 8 catch-up funding, and the academy has successfully put in place several forms of help, especially for numeracy work.

The quality of teaching is good

- The new academy recognised the need to improve the standard of teaching and has been relentless in addressing the issue. A wide range of measures has been used to give training and support to members of staff and, as a result, the standard of teaching has improved rapidly.
- The academy's staff and inspectors agreed their judgements about standards of teaching. They confirmed that current students are making better progress as a result of improved teaching.
- Alongside the training of teachers, there has been good attention given to developing the skills of other adults who work with pupils. This has complemented the work of the teachers very well, and specialist help has been of particular benefit to younger pupils, and to those of any age who have needed additional support.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, teaching has been exceptional so that children have made outstanding progress from low starting points.
- Younger pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 show high levels of interest and engagement. However, this is not always so evident with older students in all subjects. Where teachers have used information about the students' previous learning to plan tasks carefully, students make the best progress. Some older students are not given enough tasks which stretch them sufficiently so that they can achieve the highest examination grades possible. Some teachers use good questioning techniques to check the understanding of students, and to skilfully promote the thinking of students so that they develop well as learners. However, this is not always the case and the academy is aware that there is a need to improve staff training in this area.
- Looking at samples of students' work, inspectors found that most students take pride in what they do and that teachers' marking usually gives students helpful advice about what they can do to improve their work and achieve the next level.
- Under the new leadership, teachers have set more challenging targets for students to achieve. Generally, students have made a positive response and they are making more rapid progress, especially as they are encouraged to have more confidence in their abilities.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are being developed well across all subjects, and the academy has given particular attention to reading. The introduction of an accelerated reader programme has helped to improve reading across the academy. More attention has been given to teaching the younger pupils the early skills necessary to read well.
- An effective recovery programme has been introduced to help any pupils who have fallen behind with their reading following illness, or for any other reason. There is effective use of teaching assistants who have been trained so that they can help students with special educational needs to make good progress.
- The teaching of mathematics has also been a priority and current students of all ages are making good progress.
- A small proportion of students is educated at other centres and most spend some time on vocational, work-related training. Most members of this small group are engaged by these courses and they make good progress to leave the academy with useful qualifications.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students throughout the academy is good. Around the different academy sites students are usually polite and courteous to each other, to members of staff and to visitors. Students listen attentively in lessons, and usually respond quickly to instructions from teachers and other adults.
- Students have good attitudes to learning and arrive promptly for lessons with the appropriate equipment which helps to promote good progress. There was no litter on the sites.
- The new academy has worked very hard to bring about rapid improvements in attendance and now it is much closer to the national average, except for a very small proportion of students. A number of particular measures are being taken to help them and their families. The provision of breakfast facilities for all students has helped to improve attendance.

- The academy sensitively plans steps to help pupils to move smoothly from one stage to the next, which often involves moving to a different site.
- Throughout the academy students belong to one of four houses, identified by variations in uniform. Young pupils told inspectors that this helps them to feel at ease in the academy.
- A number of the adults who responded to questionnaires did not think that behaviour is always good. Inspectors did not find evidence to support this view.
- The need for exclusions is very rare and used only in cases of extreme poor behaviour.
- Students are well informed about different forms of bullying and the academy takes active steps to ensure that anti-social behaviour and unnecessary risks are minimised. Training is given to students in order to equip them to avoid cyber bullying.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. A few instances of bullying are reported and students say that on the occasions when there is an issue the academy usually deals with it quickly. A small minority of students do not understand that casual teasing can be upsetting for others.
- The academy makes sure that all students have equality of opportunity and it actively tackles potential sources of discrimination.
- When older students attend courses at other centres, their attendance and behaviour are carefully checked, as are all aspects of ensuring their safety and well-being.

The leadership and management are good

- The appointment of the new principal provided the newly-formed academy with outstanding leadership, strongly supported by other senior leaders, the governing body and the academy's sponsors. All senior leaders have been relentless in the pursuit of improvements to drive up standards and improving provision for the whole community.
- Senior leaders and the governing body have acted with determination and overcome obstacles to implement a far-reaching vision to create a single all-through academy for the Isle of Portland. The new buildings and current construction programme are providing much improved facilities for students. The next phase is the opening of the Isle's first sixth form in September 2014, in new premises.
- The senior leaders have instilled a self-belief in the academy's members. Teachers and other members of staff have responded positively to the challenge of improving teaching, accelerating students' progress and raising academic standards.
- Middle leadership across all key stages and subjects, although improving, is not as strong as at senior level. Middle leaders do not use assessment information consistently well to identify and challenge underperformance.
- Most members of staff have engaged well with opportunities for further training and development, which are reflected in improvements to teaching and achievement.
- The academy's curriculum has been developed so that older students can choose courses from a good range, appropriate for their abilities and future employment plans. Although at an early stage, the academy has a clear vision to develop entrepreneurial opportunities amongst the whole community. For example, it has developed a course to train older students in boat-building skills. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The academy has used the additional funding for physical education and sport to employ specialist teachers at the primary sites and to extend the range of opportunities available for participation in sports. This has resulted in more pupils using the facilities more widely and frequently, helping to improve their physical well-being and to accelerate the development of their physical skills.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body works very closely with the principal and other senior staff. Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching and its impact on students' progress and they have fully supported the actions taken to bring about improvements. Governors keep up to date

with appropriate training and examine information about the academy's performance so that they can evaluate the progress. They are well aware about its relative strengths and weaknesses and challenge to senior staff to bring about continuous improvements. The governing body consults other experts to confirm that everything possible is being done to raise standards.

- The governing body plays an active part in setting targets for the most senior leaders and has an overview of the targets set for other teachers to ensure that their salary progression is related to the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- Governors scrutinise the academy's finances and make sure that extra government funds are used to raise standards. The governing body seeks to engage parents and representatives of the community so that their views help to inform its decisions. The governing body fully meets its responsibilities with regard to safeguarding.

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	138388
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	440024

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Tizard
Principal	Alison Appleyard
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01305 820262
Fax number	01305 860417
Email address	royalmanoroffice@ipaca.org.uk

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