

Hertswood Academy

Cowley Hill, Borehamwood, WD6 5LG

Inspection dates 8–9 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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 improvement in 2013 examination results has been sustained and further extended. Most students make good progress in a range of subjects in all key stages, including English and mathematics.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge and the information they have about what students know and can do to set learning activities that build on their knowledge and help them make good progress.
- Students eligible for additional government funding, disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve well because of well-planned support that closes gaps in their learning.
- Students feel safe. They are confident, engage well with visitors and behave with maturity around school. They are keen to learn and are developing high aspirations. They want to be the best that they can be because they are encouraged to pursue excellence.
- The headteacher leads the school well, with strong support from senior leaders, governors, staff and parents. Since the previous inspection, leaders have improved the quality of teaching and learning, and extended the range of subjects students can study.
- The sixth form is good. The curriculum is broad and accessible to students of all abilities. Good teaching, behaviour and safety, and leadership and management support students' good achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teachers do not consistently check that students correct their work in response to the comments made in marking.
- Some teachers do not use the school literacy and numeracy policies in planning or marking.
- The most-able students are not set challenging enough work in some classes.
- In lessons, students' understanding is not always checked carefully enough to quickly identify gaps in learning and move them on.
- Students do not experience enough examples of different styles of writing to clearly demonstrate the high standards they should aim to achieve.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 43 lessons. Eight of these observations were completed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also observed students at breaks and lunchtimes and attended tutorial periods.
- Discussions were held with students, staff, governors, a representative from the local authority, the Chief Executive of the Meller Educational Trust and the headteacher.
- Inspectors took account of the 72 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and letters from parents. They also took account of the 89 responses to staff questionnaires.
- A wide range of documents was examined, including samples of students' work, information about students' progress, the school's development plan and evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses, governing body meeting minutes, records of any poor behaviour, and safeguarding documents.
- Inspectors listened to students read, and observed reading support lessons and the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make).

Inspection team

Sherry Gladwin, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Angela Podmore	Additional Inspector
Lynn Kenworthy	Additional Inspector
Clive Allen	Additional Inspector
Heather Housden	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school. In September 2012, it joined the Meller Educational Trust.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average and an above-average proportion of students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is above average. This is additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy pays for work-related courses at Barnet College and the London Academy of Hairdressing for 12 students in Key Stage 4.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching and raise achievement for all groups of students by:
 - ensuring that teachers check that students act on the comments they make when marking
 - checking that teachers use the literacy and numeracy policies to plan students' learning and mark their work
 - setting consistently challenging work for the most-able students in lessons so they are stretched to make the progress of which they are capable
 - checking students' understanding carefully during lessons to assess gaps, clarify understanding and refocus learning so that they progress more quickly
 - using good models of different styles of writing in lessons to clearly show students what they should aim to achieve.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students currently in the school are making good progress and achieving well. Data for the current Year 11 show they are on track to reach much higher standards than the 2013 Year 11s, even though they entered the school with standards at about the same well-below-average level. The 2013 results had been much better than those of 2012, and more students left with five good GCSEs grades A* to C, including English and mathematics. The improvement trend is set to continue because younger year groups are also doing well.
- A less than expected proportion of students made good progress in English and mathematics in 2013. Even so, there was a noticeable improvement in English. Leaders have successfully used a range of effective strategies such as Saturday school and after-school additional classes to improve students' knowledge and understanding in a range of subjects, particularly English and mathematics. Information shows that Year 11 students are on track to make good progress in English and mathematics in 2014.
- The attainment of students eligible for the pupil premium funding has been lower than that of other students. In 2013, they left Year 11 a GCSE grade behind others in both English and mathematics. Their progress has improved due to well-planned use of the pupil premium, for example to purchase better resources, and good checking by leaders of the effectiveness of the quality of support provided. School information shows that progress of these students is good and the attainment gap is quickly closing.
- Students who study construction and hairdressing courses on other sites make good progress in their learning and successfully achieve level 1 and level 2 qualifications.
- In 2013, some more-able students did not make expected progress. The school has improved the quality of teaching and support for this group of students to ensure they receive appropriate challenge and help to reach their full potential. Tighter checking of their progress and improved support are now enabling more-able students to make at least expected progress, with the vast majority making better than expected progress. However, learning activities in some classes do not consistently challenge and stretch the most able.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress throughout the school because teachers plan learning with the ability of students in mind and carefully track their progress to spot underachievement. The provision and support for Year 7 'catch-up' groups in English and mathematics are focused on addressing identified gaps in students' learning, so they quickly develop their literacy and mathematical skills.
- The progress of minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is good and often better than that of other students in the school. This is because of their positive attitudes to learning and the good-quality teaching and support they receive with reading and writing.
- In 2013, some students were entered early for GCSE mathematics to give them the opportunity to extend their studies and improve their grades. This strategy did not prove beneficial to students and is no longer used.
- Students make good progress in the sixth form. In 2013, they achieved below-average standards in academic courses but above-average standards in work-related subjects by the end of Year 13. There was no significant difference in outcomes for different groups of students. The slight

decrease in results in 2013 was due to curriculum changes and accepting a lower entry standard for some courses. Additional support is available to help these students make good progress. Students are on track to attain higher standards in 2014, in both academic and work-related courses.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers ensure high levels of cooperation and respect from students. They exercise good behaviour management skills, managing the classroom well because they are vigilant and treat students sensitively. As a result, students respond positively and maintain good relationships with their teachers and others. This positive environment in the classroom generates openness and confidence. Students are keen to ask questions and learn from each other through discussion and peer assessment. They work sensibly when working on their own or in small groups to produce good work.
- Routine and careful checking of students' progress identifies those who do not make the progress they should. These students are discussed during regular student progress meetings. Teachers plan and take quick action to help students improve their work. A wide range of strategies are used, including the close involvement of parents, and these are effective in raising standards.
- Teachers make good use of questions to support students' thinking and to help them to find solutions to problems. Students respond to teachers' questions thoughtfully and show good recall of prior learning. Teachers sometimes check students' understanding and identify gaps in their learning, but this does not happen enough during lessons. Students are not always clear about the focus of their learning, nor do they benefit from sharing the experiences and learning of others.
- The teaching of reading, writing, communication and mathematics is improving. Students make good progress because of the good range of additional support available. These include supplementary schools and enrichment activities, such as educational visits and trips to universities like Yale and Oxford to raise aspirations. Reading is taught well and those requiring additional support receive additional lessons to improve their reading, writing and spelling.
- The whole-school literacy and numeracy policies are not applied by all staff. Teachers do not make consistently good use of these policies when they plan and mark students' work to help secure and accelerate progress. Students do not have opportunities to use a wide range of writing styles, and the most able readers are not always guided to choose challenging books.
- Teaching assistants are used effectively to support learning in the classroom. There is good collaboration between teachers and teaching assistants to plan work in small groups and in-class support for students who are disabled or have special educational needs. These are successful, particularly in English and mathematics, and help these students make good progress.
- Teachers mark students' classwork and homework regularly and accurately. They provide helpful comments to students. Marking is good in some areas of the school but it is not consistently good because teachers do not check that students act on the good advice and make the corrections necessary to improve the quality of their work.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge and the information they have about students to plan learning with clear objectives. Students respond well and find the learning tasks stimulating and engaging. As a result, they make good progress over time. However, teachers do not always provide the most able students with tasks of varying difficulty so they attempt challenging work

and make the progress of which they are capable.

- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers plan learning which engages students and encourages them to take personal responsibility. Students are well motivated and present their research well. They work well, whether individually or in small groups, sharing their ideas and knowledge with confidence. The setting of precise expectations and teachers' tracking of students' progress are rigorous. Marking is precise and clearly identifies next steps for students. The range of subjects available to students has been extended to cater for the broad range of abilities entering the sixth form.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students have positive attitudes to learning and relationships in the academy are harmonious. They develop a good understanding of right and wrong, and behave in a mature, polite and friendly manner. A good level of consideration is shown, such as holding doors open for others. Students listen politely to teachers and each other, taking turns to make contributions to discussions. They value the opportunities to serve the academy as prefects and house captains.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure, including internet safety, is good. Students feel safe. They spoke with pride of the good improvements to behaviour and the positive attitudes to learning in classrooms. They say that bullying in its various forms is uncommon and that teachers deal with incidents of a racist and homophobic nature firmly and quickly. School records show that there are few instances of this kind. Parents are largely supportive and few expressed concerns about bullying or behaviour.
- Rewards like the 'vivo points' are used to motivate students to work hard and achieve good standards. The vast majority of students respond well to the rewards system across all the key stages. Students spoke with pride of receiving the 'student of the week award' and vivo points, which can be used to purchase rewards. The sharp reduction in fixed-term exclusions seen in 2013 has continued so that fixed-term exclusions are now low. Care is taken to record and report unacceptable behaviour and keep parents and carers informed.
- Students enjoy coming to school. Attendance is slightly below the national average but the improvement in attendance has been sustained and there are no significant differences between groups of learners. Students attend school punctually and move between classes on the split site quickly so that lessons start on time and continue without disruption. The pupil premium funding is used effectively to improve the attendance of eligible students.
- The academy works well to support disabled students and those who have special educational needs and/or challenging behaviour. Good links with parents and carers and external agencies, and the full involvement of students in decisions about the support they receive, result in clear individual support plans and consistent approaches to behaviour management. Students develop good self-management techniques and progress well towards becoming self-regulating, responsible adults.
- The behaviour and attitudes to learning of those in the sixth form are good. Students demonstrate maturity and exercise personal responsibility. Attendance is good and students are punctual to lessons.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher uses performance targets and coaching for staff effectively to improve teaching and learning, and to raise achievement. The school's evaluation of its own work is rigorous and accurate. The headteacher's careful analysis of the academy's strengths and areas for development is followed through in its development plan. This systematic approach leads to good improvement.
- The headteacher is well supported by governors, staff and parents. The Meller Educational Trust and the local authority support the school well.
- The academy monitors the quality of teaching and learning systematically. The leadership team regularly completes joint lesson observations with subject leaders. The close scrutiny of students' work and the careful tracking of their progress quickly identify underperformance. Staff are focused on improving teaching and learning. Many engage in research projects, evaluating the extent to which these projects contribute to improving outcomes for students.
- The academy has addressed the key issues identified in the previous inspection report and better teaching has resulted. Provision for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good because of the careful tracking and evaluation of different types of support students receive. High-quality teaching, which takes account of students' individual learning needs, together with regular checking of their progress against targets, supports good progress.
- The academy has developed a range of 'learning pathways' for students so they can access learning according to their ability and achieve well. A range of academic and work-related subjects are available to cater for a variety of interests in both Key Stage 4 and 5. The length of Key Stage 3 has been reduced to two years to provide additional teaching time in Key Stage 4.
- The curriculum includes artistic, technical, cultural, mathematical and linguistic subjects. Classroom learning is enhanced through assemblies, and the Meller Educational Trust's values of 'aspiration, compassion and excellence' were evident in a Year 12 assembly about the Holocaust. Further enhancement comes through a wide range of lunchtime and extended day activities, including the many sporting competitions with local schools. In addition, educational visits to London and residential trips such as the Canada exchange develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural values.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted well because students are free from discrimination and bullying. Students from all backgrounds and abilities are helped to make good progress. The pupil premium is used effectively to provide extra activities and a range of academic support for eligible students.
- Parents and carers say that the academy is well led. They are supportive of the academy's drive to raise students' aspirations and improve results. Leaders have developed good relationships with parents. Communication is good and the weekly newsletter keeps parents informed of developments. Governors consult parents for their views and respond to any concerns they raise.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. It is popular and growing. Leaders use robust systems in place to track and monitor attendance and achievement. There is an inclusive approach and students can choose from a range of academic A levels and work-related

BTEC courses. Retention rates are good and achievement is improving. Students have access to high-quality advice, both through the academy and other sources, that prepares them well for the next stage of their education and later life. Sixth form students spoke highly of the support they receive with university applications

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors bring a range of experience, skills and professional backgrounds to the role. They are well organised in appropriate committees and receive good information from the academy to help monitor its progress towards targets. Minutes of governing body meetings record challenging questions about students' progress, behaviour and safety, and the quality of teaching. Governors know the academy well because they visit academy regularly and individual governors are linked to key areas of the academy and its development plan, which also helps to keep them closely informed of developments.
- Governors manage the headteacher's performance well. They set challenging targets linked to areas for development in the academy's development plan. These targets then feed into all staff targets and help to drive improvement across the academy. Governors appreciate that good teaching is necessary for students to achieve good standards. They do not award pay rises to staff whose teaching is not good and who do not meet their targets.
- Governors can account for the use of the pupil premium. They manage the finances, buildings and staffing effectively so that the learning environment and deployment of staff support students to learn well. The use of funding is checked to see which approaches are most successful in raising achievement so that value for money is obtained.

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	138747
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	442094

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
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	1350
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	300
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Taylor
Headteacher	Peter Gillett
Date of previous school inspection	16 October 2012
Telephone number	020 82387200
Fax number	020 82387290
Email address	admin@hertswoodacademy.org

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