

# The Ilfracombe Academy

Worth Road, Ilfracombe, EX34 9JB

**Inspection dates** 5–6 February 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	N/A
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Require improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Require improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Leaders and governors have not ensured that students have achieved consistently well over time, particularly in mathematics.
- Governors have not held the school robustly enough to account for standards and teaching.
- Not all middle leaders check effectively on the progress of students and the quality of teaching in their subjects.
- The attainment and rates of progress of disadvantaged students are below those for other students nationally.
- Teaching is not equally strong in all areas of the school.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectations of their students. Not all lessons are structured in a way that allows students to make good progress.
- The marking and assessment of students' work do not always provide clear guidance as to what students need to do to improve.
- Students' attitudes to learning are not always positive enough. Some become demotivated when learning is insufficiently challenging, which prevents them from achieving as well as they could.
- A few staff, and some students, are not confident that behaviour is managed consistently well by teachers.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and other senior leaders demonstrate high expectations and have clear ambition for the school. As a result of their drive and foresight, students' achievement and the quality of teaching are improving.
- The curriculum provides a wide breadth of experience for students. Students are given good advice about the next stages of their education and careers.
- Students achieve well in art, physical education and vocational subjects.
- Students generally conduct themselves well around the school, and enjoy positive relationships with their teachers. The school's leaders ensure that they are kept safe.
- The sixth form is well led and managed. Sixth form students make a strong contribution to the wider school and community and, in those lessons where teaching is strong, make good progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 50 lessons, a few jointly with school leaders. They attended an assembly and looked at how tutorial time was used. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body, the Chair of Governors, and three groups of students.
- Inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation documentation and the school improvement plan. They also examined information on students' progress, examples of students' work, and a range of policy documents, including governing body minutes.
- Inspectors took account of the 97 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). In addition, inspectors considered the 58 responses to a questionnaire for members of staff.

## Inspection team

Patricia Goodhead, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Ken Bush	Additional inspector
Howard Dodd	Additional inspector
Neil Gillespie	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Ilfracombe Academy is an average-sized secondary school, with a sixth form, which converted to become an academy on 1 May 2013. The academy is part of the St Christopher's multi-academy trust. When its predecessor school, Ilfracombe Arts College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory overall.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs, at 2.4% of the school's population, is broadly average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be entitled to free school meals, and children who are looked after) is just under a third, which is above the national average.
- About one tenth of Year 7 students are supported through separate 'catch-up' funding. This is for those students who had not reached the expected levels in English and mathematics by the time they completed Year 6 in their primary schools.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- A very small number of students attend vocational courses at Petroc College of Further and Higher Education in construction and hair and beauty therapy. The achievement of this group is not reported in detail in the report owing to the low numbers involved.
- The school does not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching to at least good by:
  - improving rates of progress for all students, including those who are disadvantaged, and particularly, but not exclusively, in mathematics
  - ensuring that teachers have consistently high expectations of all students
  - ensuring that teachers' planning and delivery of lessons are based on sound assessment of students' individual learning abilities, and take into account the needs of individuals and groups of students, including their literacy needs
  - providing appropriate support and challenge for all students so that they remain motivated to do well and remain on task
  - ensuring that marking across all subjects is consistent and thorough, and helps all students to improve the quality of their work.
- Raise attendance to at least the national average, and lower the rate of persistent absence.
- Increase the impact of leadership and management on raising standards by ensuring that:
  - policies, practices and expectations established by senior leaders to raise standards are consistently understood and applied by middle leaders
  - the best practice in the school is shared more effectively within and between departments
  - support and training for teachers address their individual needs, and directly impact on the achievement of students
  - self-evaluation at all levels is thorough and accurate and all leaders consistently employ the most suitable actions to secure rapid improvements in teaching and achievement
  - staff and students are more confident that the school's behaviour policy is implemented consistently, and that students know what is expected of them
  - the governing body is more rigorous in holding the school to account for its performance, in particular ensuring that assessments measure students' achievement more explicitly against published national standards.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management **require improvement**

- Leaders and governors have not ensured that students have achieved consistently well over time. Teachers' expectations of students are not always sufficiently high. As a consequence, some students are not consistently engaged in their learning.
- Insufficient comparisons are made with the nationally published performance information to enable the school to know how well it is performing in comparison with other schools nationally.
- Under the strong leadership of the headteacher, the academy has established a clear focus on raising achievement for all students. The school's self-evaluation is thorough. There is clear evidence that senior leaders are committed to improving standards and creating a culture in which teaching and good behaviour can flourish.
- The pace of improvement is limited by a lack of consistency in how these high expectations are implemented in practice. This results in too wide a variation in the quality of teaching and achievement.
- The school has established robust systems for the internal tracking and monitoring of students' progress, including frequent sharing of individual student progress information with middle leaders and governors. Middle leaders have not been sufficiently stringent in ensuring that all teachers use this information effectively when planning lessons.
- There is evidence of effective assessment practice in some areas of the school's work, most notably in English and the humanities. However, opportunities to share the best practice have not yet fully developed. As a result, assessment to set accurate targets is not yet sufficiently consistent within and across subjects.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school. In Key Stage 3 it has been adapted creatively to cater for students' differing needs, helping to ensure that lessons delivers work that is more appropriately directed towards students' abilities and interests. However, the school has yet to see the full impact of these changes and, while there is evidence of improved student progress, it is inconsistent, notably in mathematics.
- The school's clear focus on values has a strong impact on the ethos of the school. This, combined with a wide range of activities, contributes positively to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. The school's assembly and tutorial programme provides a wide range of opportunities for students to develop their understanding and appreciation of life in modern Britain.
- The school works closely with parents, and generally keeps them well informed.
- The school uses its additional funding well to provide a range of useful strategies to help disadvantaged students. For example, the system to support those who have difficulty with reading is proving effective. This, combined with good use of intervention groups to provide more targeted guidance, is helping improve performance and close gaps with their peers.
- The school's arrangements for helping young people make informed choices about their next steps are especially effective in guiding those in the sixth form towards appropriate courses.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is well informed about the school. Through a systematic meetings structure, governors understand the internal monitoring of student performance and have a clear view of what the school is doing to improve students' progress.
  - Governors have some understanding of how well students have achieved over time. They recognise the improvement that the school is beginning to demonstrate, and understand the areas the school has identified as weaknesses. However, governors have not been sufficiently robust in challenging leaders. They have not ensured that the school monitors its performance with equal rigour against published national standards. For example, by ensuring the performance of disadvantaged students is compared to all students' nationally.
  - Governors are knowledgeable about the school's use of additional funding to support disadvantaged students and the positive impact that strategies in the school are beginning to have on students achievement.
  - They have a clear commitment to ensuring that the explicit values of the school's ethos are understood by all.
  - The governing body has ensured that the school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements. Governors ensure that there is a clear commitment to equality of opportunity and that discrimination is not tolerated.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils** require improvement**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students requires improvement because students' attitudes to learning in some lessons are not consistently positive. This does not help them to secure the good progress in their learning.
- Students embrace the values on which the school is based, typically showing courtesy and respect for their teachers and for one another. Relationships across the school are generally very positive.
- Whilst there is evidence that conduct around the school has improved, students do not behave consistently well in lessons. Students' behaviour varies, depending on how well engaged they are with their learning. This is especially noticeable when students are not given work that is challenging enough and which therefore does not meet their needs or hold their interest.
- The views of parents and staff regarding behaviour are generally positive. A significant minority of staff feel that some teachers do not implement the school's behaviour procedures consistently, leading to some confusion as to what is expected. A few students who spoke to inspectors were of the opinion that students do not always know the school's expectations.
- Firmer action by senior leaders has led to a significant decrease in exclusion levels across the school. The school works well with parents and external agencies and provides additional support to students to prevent incidences of poor behaviour from escalating.
- Attendance is below average. The proportion of students who are persistently absent is also higher than that found nationally. The school has developed robust arrangements for following up poor attendance and there are some indications from the school's internal records that the overall percentage of attendance is beginning to rise.

**Safety**

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. The school has taken a wide range of effective measures to promote awareness of different types of bullying, including cyber bullying.
- Student's report that they feel safe and that, should bullying occur, they are confident it will be well managed.
- The school makes sure that the very small numbers of students attending alternative provision for their education are well supervised to ensure their safety.
- Students show respect for their environment, understanding the effect that a safe and well-ordered environment has on their learning. Displays of students' work are well presented, and school facilities are treated with respect.

**The quality of teaching** requires improvement

- Teaching does not consistently contribute to good progress for all groups of students.
- There is variability in quality within all subjects, which limits how well students achieve. The expectations that teachers have of different students are not always high enough. The level of challenge provided to students does not always enable them to progress rapidly. When this occurs, some students become disengaged.
- The teaching of mathematics does not secure students' knowledge, skills and understanding, solidly enough, especially in Key Stage 4. Consequently, students are often unable to apply the knowledge and understanding they have gained to help them make better progress.
- Not all teachers and department leaders make use of the school's extensive student information when planning and delivering lessons. Teachers do not consistently plan for the specific needs of individuals and groups, or base their strategies solidly on how to enable students to make good progress from their starting points.
- Teachers vary in the extent to which literacy skills are assessed in their subjects, and the quality of presentation in students' work is similarly inconsistent.
- Some of the marking, feedback and assessment by teachers is strong, clearly focusing on students' achievements, and indicating the next steps required in their learning. In such cases, students articulate their targets confidently and are clear about what they need to do to achieve them.
- Teaching strategies are often varied, creative and well conceived, and there is some very effective teaching across the school, notably in art and religious education. Students often show pride in their work and a desire to succeed.
- The promotion of reading across the school is strong, as is the school's commitment to improving students' literacy skills.

- Relationships between teachers and students are positive. Teachers willingly provide additional support to students to ensure they make better progress, which is appreciated by students and parents.
- Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good and contributes well to rising standards.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Not enough students have made consistently good progress or attained well in comparison with students nationally.
- Overall, the most able students achieve less well than other students nationally. The difference is more significant in mathematics, where the proportion of students who entered the school above average and achieved their expected progress at the end of Key Stage 4 was well below the national average. In English the more able students made progress broadly in line with the national average, although the number who achieved better than that is significantly lower than the national average.
- Both the attainment of students in mathematics and the proportion of students making expected progress in mathematics are significantly below the national average.
- In 2014, the proportion of students achieving five GCSEs at A to C, including English and mathematics, was significantly below the national average, and represented a decline on the previous year's figure. Students are given the opportunity to enter GCSE English and mathematics early in November. When the best result for students is taken into account, the proportion of students achieving five A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics, improves but still remains below the national average.
- Students are given the opportunity to enter English examinations more than once. Attainment in English has remained broadly in line with the national average when the students' best result is taken into account. Performance has declined in the 2014 measures, which reflect their first attempt at the examination. The marking of written work has developed and provides clear direction about what students need to do to improve. The use of reading initiatives is showing success in raising the standard of reading. The clear strengths in English are beginning to bring about improvements in other areas.
- Disadvantaged students have performed less well than other students nationally, and less well than other students within school, on most indicators. In mathematics in 2014, the gap between disadvantaged Year 11 students and other students nationally was equivalent to more than a grade at GCSE. In English, the gap was around half a grade. The in-school gap in attainment is narrower, with both mathematics and English showing a difference of just under one grade. Inspection evidence indicates that the school is now closing the gap between disadvantaged students and others in both English and mathematics.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs receive suitable support and, as a result, achieve broadly in line with their peers. The school's strategies for using 'catch-up' funding and the targeted intervention provided through the Year 7 curriculum are having an increasingly positive impact upon raising standards.
- There are clear strengths in other subjects, including art, physical education, and health and social care. Achievement in these areas is characterised by students showing good understanding, strong development of skills, and clear evidence of making progress.
- Those students who attend alternative provision benefit well from their vocational studies. Almost all complete their courses and receive accreditation, which helps them to progress to the next stage of education or training.

### The sixth form provision

### is good

- As a result of good teaching, students in the sixth form, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, make good progress. Students show very positive attitudes to their learning, enjoy excellent relationships with their teachers, and make a positive contribution to the rest of the school.
- Students affirm that they feel safe in school. They say that they are helped by their teachers to be conscious of risk in their lives outside of, and beyond, the limits of school.
- The programmes of study meet students' needs through the provision of both academic and vocational qualifications. All students also undertake non-qualification activities or work experience. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Retention rates are high. Students are well supported and speak highly of life in the sixth form. They appreciate the well-organised tutor system and appreciate the mature way in which their teachers treat them.
- Students are provided with opportunities to undertake programs in GCSE mathematics and English if they

have not already secured at least a grade C in either or both subjects. The success rate is better in English than in mathematics. The teaching and extensive support given to students ensure they receive the help and guidance to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding to achieve at least the minimum required grade C.

- Leadership of the sixth form promotes an ethos in which students are motivated to learn and teachers support them to make good progress. Students are well prepared for their examinations, and many students progress successfully to university and employment.
- Students speak highly of their learning in the sixth form. They are appreciative of the support given by teachers to ensure that they make good progress and succeed in their aspirations.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139553
<b>Local authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	449837

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	970
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	190
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Patricia Glover
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sharon Marshall
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23–24 November 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01271 863427
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