

Queen Elizabeth Humanities College

Ashfields, Bromyard, Herefordshire HR7 4QS

Inspection dates

6–7 October 2015

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Since the previous inspection, governors and leaders have not done enough to secure improvements. Weaknesses have not been tackled successfully and key aspects of the academy's work have declined.
- Governance is inadequate. Governors have not understood how poorly the academy has been doing and they lack the skills to challenge leaders.
- A lack of effective middle leadership has considerably impeded the academy's ability to implement improvement. In this respect, the academy has not responded adequately to the findings of the previous inspection.
- Changes to systems and procedures introduced by senior leaders since their arrival in September 2014, have not had a sustained impact in improving standards to demonstrate the capacity to improve.
- Outcomes for pupils are inadequate. GCSE attainment dropped sharply in 2015. Over time, too few pupils have made the progress they should have done across a range of subjects.
- Achievement varies widely between subjects. Progress is poor in mathematics, science, humanities and modern languages.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are too low. Pupil premium funding has not been used effectively and has had little impact.
- Arrangements to keep pupils safe require improvement. Although pupils are safe, not all staff understand the most up-to-date guidance issued by the government.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. Weaknesses in teaching over time have meant that some pupils, and groups of pupils including the most-able, do not achieve well enough. Some better teaching is quickening pupils' progress. However, it has not yet had a sufficiently sustained impact to improve outcomes.
- Not all teachers have high enough expectations of their pupils. They do not use the information they have about pupils to plan challenging, interesting activities that build on pupils' prior abilities, skills or understanding.

The school has the following strengths

- Parents, pupils and staff have favourable views of the work of the academy.
- Changes to the curriculum, including to the choice of subjects offered at Key Stage 4, have been positively received by pupils.
- Pupils behave well and their attendance is above average. Their personal development benefits from involvement in extra-curricular activities, opportunities for pupil leadership, and involvement in charitable causes.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently increase the impact of leadership and management at all levels to secure rapid and sustained improvements in pupils' outcomes by:
 - ensuring that governors receive further training so that they have the necessary skills to challenge leaders and hold them to account for the performance of the academy
 - setting clear targets in improvement planning so that the success of leaders' actions can be measured in terms of their impact on outcomes for pupils
 - continuing to review and refine the deployment and monitoring of pupil premium funding so that it is used effectively to close the gaps between the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils and others
 - monitoring rigorously the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, including that of different groups of pupils in all year groups, so that underachievement is identified and arrested swiftly
 - strengthening the skills and abilities of middle leaders in monitoring pupils' progress in their areas and in checking the work of their teams
 - ensuring that information on pupils' attainment and progress is accurate in all subjects
 - making sure that all staff have read and are fully conversant with statutory guidance to keep children safe
 - drawing on leadership support from good and outstanding schools in order to build leadership capacity.

- Improve teaching so that the progress of all pupils, and groups of pupils, continues to accelerate by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have the highest expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
 - planning lessons and setting activities that take into account the prior knowledge, understanding and skills of pupils and enthuse them to do well
 - ensuring that all teachers have the confidence and skills to respond to how well pupils are learning and adapt their lessons accordingly
 - ensuring that pupils act on teachers' feedback to improve their learning and work
 - sharing the best practice in the academy so that all teaching matches that of the best.

- Urgently improve pupils' outcomes by:
 - raising the achievement of all pupils and groups of pupils, including that of disadvantaged pupils and the most able
 - ensuring that pupils achieve well in all subjects, and by reducing gaps in pupils' attainment and progress between subjects.

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 academy's use of the pupil premium should also be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Key aspects of the academy's effectiveness and performance have deteriorated since its last inspection. The weak progress of pupils in a number of subjects has not been tackled successfully. As a result, too few pupils have achieved what they should have done by the time they leave the academy. Leaders have been unable to arrest the decline in outcomes or secure robust improvements.
- A lack of middle leaders has hampered the academy's ability to bring about improvements. A number of subject and faculty leaders have been appointed this academic year. This is a positive move. However, these leaders are unclear on the key areas that the academy needs to improve. Most of these leaders have not been in post long enough to have made a difference in their area of responsibility. The need to secure strong middle leadership was an area for improvement set by the previous inspection. Leaders and governors have failed to act upon this, to the detriment of the academy.
- In the past, leaders have focused too much on overall attainment measures, without tackling weaknesses in the progress of pupils in different subject areas. The headteacher, supported by the deputy headteacher, has introduced systems to set more challenging targets and track pupils' progress across the curriculum. This, and an increased focus on routine assessment practices, has raised teachers' awareness of the need for all pupils to make at least expected progress from their starting points. However, too much assessment information is unreliable, and in some cases gives an over-optimistic view of pupils' progress. The monitoring of this information is not yet consistently or systematically used by subject leaders to hold their teams to account.
- Although current leaders have implemented a broad range of new policies, systems and initiatives, they are not yet able to demonstrate the successful impact of these changes. This is because many of these changes are recent. As a result, leaders have yet to demonstrate the capacity to improve.
- The academy improvement plan identifies and focuses on tackling a range of weaknesses. However, at the time of the inspection, this plan had not been fully shared with middle leaders and did not feature easily measurable criteria against which the success of leaders' actions could be gauged. This plan does not therefore enable leaders, and new leaders, to hit the ground running in raising standards in the new academic year.
- Pupil premium funding has been deployed ineffectively and has failed to raise the achievement of those pupils eligible for it. Some recent changes, in response to an external review, have led to clearer thinking about the use of this money to provide additional support to meet the academic needs and raise the aspirations of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have appropriately raised teachers' awareness of the need to improve outcomes for these pupils by including their achievements in the teachers' performance management targets.
- Leaders are using the Year 7 catch-up funding to provide support, especially in reading, through one-to-one sessions and a stronger focus on phonics (letters and the sounds that they make).
- Leaders are now using performance management more systematically to hold teachers to account for improving their teaching, based on the national Teachers' Standards, and for ensuring that the pupils they teach make good progress. For example, a number of teachers and leaders have not received performance-related pay awards because they have not met their targets.
- Leadership of teaching is developing and is beginning to make improvements in the quality of teaching within the academy. However, it has not overcome the decline in teaching quality since the last inspection. Leaders are increasingly making routine checks on the quality of teaching across the academy and of pupils' books. They are also using performance information to identify and work with teachers who need support. Recent training has been positively received by teachers. However, academy leaders are aware that further work needs to be done if they are to secure consistently good teaching across the academy.
- The curriculum has undergone considerable changes recently in order to raise achievement in English and mathematics and increase the choice of subjects that pupils can study at Key Stage 4. This includes the opportunity to study the single sciences, reallocating the time devoted to some key subjects and the introduction of groupings based on pupils' abilities. As a result of these changes, the curriculum better suits the needs, interests and aspirations of pupils. Year 10 pupils, for example, spoke positively about the range of subjects that they could select in their option choices. However, it is too early to gauge the impact of these changes on pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils benefit from a broad range of well-attended extra-curricular opportunities. These positively

enhance the learning and skills of pupils, and enable them to develop and pursue new interests. Assemblies and personal, health and social education days provide pupils with an opportunity to develop their awareness of how to keep safe. They also, coupled with the study of religious education and visits, successfully promote modern British values of tolerance, respect and understanding of cultural, faith and ethnic diversity.

- Leaders have enhanced provision for the development of pupils' employability skills in the curriculum, including the introduction of work experience placements in Year 10. Pupils speak highly of the opportunity to experience the work place and how this had enhanced their understanding of the world of work.
- The wide gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers, and between boys and girls, mean that the academy's work to promote equality of opportunity is ineffective.
- Leaders are increasingly forging links with other schools and agencies to bring in much needed support, although this has happened too slowly to arrest the academy's decline. For example, a recent visit from the local authority provided leaders with a useful report to inform their evaluation of the academy's performance. However, leaders recognise that further support is needed if they are to secure improvements at the rate needed.
- The large majority of parents are supportive of the work of the academy, and staff at the academy acknowledge the quicker pace of change under current leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governance of the academy is inadequate.
 - Governors' lack of understanding of performance information and inability to challenge leaders has allowed a decline in the academy's performance to take place.
 - Governors are aware of these deficiencies and are currently undertaking training to improve their skills. They are now receiving better quality information from current leaders.
 - Regular reports on safeguarding enable governors to keep a sound check on this aspect of leadership and management.
 - Governors ensure the academy's finances are well managed.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are generally effective. Clear systems are in place to report concerns and strong partnerships with local agencies' leaders support these. However, leaders have not ensured that all staff are sufficiently aware of the latest statutory guidance, or have received 'Prevent' training to ensure that pupils are kept safe from radicalisation and extremism. As a result, some staff are not sufficiently aware of the signs of the range of risks that pupils may face.
- Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers until improvements are judged to have taken place.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- Instability in teaching staff and weaknesses in teaching since the last inspection have had a detrimental impact on pupils' progress. The quality of teaching is improving and is helping current pupils to make better progress than they have done in the past. However, these improvements have not been sustained long enough to enable pupils to make up the ground they have lost.
- Because of slow progress in the past, some of the work teachers set is below that of age-related expectations. A minority of teachers continue to not have high enough expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving.
- Teachers now have access to a broader range of information about their pupils' abilities and needs to support their lesson planning. This is increasingly used by teachers. For example, they think carefully about where to sit pupils in their class to help them to learn. However, they do not always have a detailed enough understanding of what pupils already know or can do. Too often, teachers adopt a 'one size fits all' approach. As a result, the work set, particularly for the most-able pupils, is not always stretching enough to enable pupils to make the progress that they should. At times, the progress of the most-able pupils is inhibited when they support the less-able pupils, and when teachers do not ask them questions that demand that they think more deeply about their learning.
- When teachers do not plan work that captivates pupils' interest, pupils make slower progress. For example, in some mathematics lessons, pupils do not have the opportunity to make links to how

mathematics works in the real world in order to enhance their understanding. Pupils' work is generally well-presented and pupils receive regular written feedback on their work. These comments do not always support pupils' progress as pupils are not given time to consider and act upon these comments, in line with the academy's policy. When pupils are given clear feedback about their learning, and opportunities to discuss their work, they are able to articulate clearly what they need to do to improve.

- Where strong teaching is found in the academy, it is characterised by the teacher's good subject knowledge, enthusiasm and the ability to respond to the information that they gather about what pupils already know, understand or can do. In these cases, the teachers carefully check how well pupils are learning and use this to adjust their planning so that they can help pupils to learn better. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson, the teacher abandoned the lesson she was intending to deliver because she had realised, when marking pupils' work, that some pupils had not fully understood the concepts of metaphor and symbol. As a result, the lesson was skilfully targeted to enable pupils to secure these skills and fill in the gaps in their learning.
- The extent to which teachers systemically secure pupils' basic skills across the curriculum is variable. There is an increased focus on literacy in the academy, particularly reading, and pupils are now provided with opportunities to read on a daily basis. Progression in reading skills is not, however, systematically monitored for all pupils. Although pupils have more opportunities to write in an extended way across a range of subjects, not all teachers have the skills to ensure that the level of demand in the writing produced is high enough.
- The academy's homework policy does not always enable pupils to consolidate their learning and skills. The use of independent study tasks at Key Stage 3 is beginning to ensure that pupils receive more regular homework, but inspectors still found that this does not always build on, and extend, their learning from lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- The curriculum has not equipped pupils with a sufficient understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. As a result, pupils are not attuned to the full range of risks that they may face.
- Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of some of the risks that they may face, including the dangers of using the internet, drugs and alcohol from personal, health and social education days, and through assemblies.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and trust members of staff to deal with any concerns that they may have. For example, pupils feel that pupil support services offer an accessible point of contact that they can use to report any issues. Pupils are also aware that they can raise any concerns through the academy's website. The large majority of parents also felt that their children were safe.
- Academy leaders are committed to developing the wider skills and aspirations of pupils. This has resulted in a number of changes to the pastoral system, opportunities to develop employability skills, and for pupil leadership. Pupils are proud of, for example, the impressive amounts of money these have raised for charity.
- The proportion of pupils progressing successfully to further education, employment or training when they leave the academy is above average.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the impact of bullying. This is given a high priority in assemblies, and pupils are encouraged to tackle discriminatory behaviour. For example, during the inspection, Year 7 pupils undertook a series of workshops that taught them about discrimination against people with disabilities or special needs. The academy's records and the views of pupils and parents also confirm that bullying, including discriminatory bullying, is rare and tackled effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' good behaviour is well supported by the pastoral system. Pupils say that the academy feels like a 'community' in which pupils and teachers get on well.
- Pupils are smartly dressed and wear their uniforms with pride. They are polite and courteous, and generally behave sensibly and responsibly at informal times of the day, in spite of the narrow corridors that can become crowded.

- The academy's 'Conduct for Learning' policy is applied systematically and consistently. Pupils say that this has 'raised the bar' in terms of how they are expected to conduct themselves.
- Pupils' good attitudes to learning are nurtured by positive relationships between staff and pupils. These attitudes have a beneficial impact on pupils' progress in lessons. However, sometimes when lessons do not sufficiently spark their interest, although pupils get on with their work, they do not engage enthusiastically.
- Attendance is above average and rising. The effective work of the attendance officer is successfully reducing the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from the academy, and intervention now takes place much earlier.
- The proportion of pupils who are excluded from the academy is reducing and below that of other schools nationally. This is because current leaders manage pupils' behaviour better than previously.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- In 2014 and 2015, the outcomes of pupils completing their examinations in Year 11 declined in relation to those of pupils in other schools nationally in a range of measures. The academy's records of provisional examination results for 2015 indicate a sharp drop in performance in some areas in relation to the previous year. Although these pupils had much weaker attainment on entry to the academy, the key reason for this decline is the lack of progress that they have made during their time in the academy.
- The progress pupils have made in mathematics by the time they leave the academy is inadequate. Less than half of pupils made the progress that they should have done by the time they left in 2015. In the previous year, the proportions of pupils making better than expected progress from their starting points were well below that of other schools nationally. As a result, the progress made by pupils was in the bottom 10% of schools nationally. Pupils are therefore not well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- The progress pupils make in science, the humanities and languages has also been significantly below that of other schools nationally and is regularly in the bottom 10% of all schools.
- Past leaders relied on multiple entries into examinations to secure results, as opposed to bringing about real improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Policies for early entry into examinations have restricted pupils' achievements in some subjects. For example, pupils have been entered for GCSE English literature in Year 9 and GCSE religious education in Year 10. This has meant that pupils have not been able to achieve their potential in these subjects. Current leaders have ceased using this practice.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils declined in 2014 and 2015 in relation to that of their classmates and of other pupils nationally. In 2015 only a very small proportion of disadvantaged pupils secured five or more A to C passes in GCSE, including in English and mathematics. The progress that disadvantaged pupils make in mathematics has been particularly weak. In 2014, for example, they attained two grades less than their classmates and other pupils nationally. In 2015, only a quarter made the progress that they should have done. Although these gaps are not as wide lower down the academy, disadvantaged pupils generally make slower progress than their classmates.
- Boys do less well than girls in the academy. In mathematics, boys underperform both in relation to girls in the academy and in relation to other boys nationally. In 2015, the records show that only just over one third of boys had made the progress expected for them in mathematics when they left the academy. This gap between the achievement of boys and girls is also wide in English and some other subjects, including at Key Stage 3.
- In 2015, teachers' assessments of what pupils would achieve in their GCSE examinations were inaccurate. Leaders have begun work to strengthen assessments for current pupils in English and mathematics. However, in the case of mathematics, this information is not yet based on a wide enough range of evidence as the subject leader and some teachers have not been in post long enough. Work has not yet been fully undertaken to address inaccuracies in other subjects. This means that information presented about current pupils, which demonstrates marked improvements, is not reliable. Leaders are, however, increasingly using assessment information to identify pupils who are falling behind, and implement programmes to help them to catch-up.
- Although pupils did not achieve as well as they should have in their GCSE English examinations in 2015, they have generally made good progress in English by the time they leave the academy. Pupils also achieve well in media studies, food technology and resistant materials.
- The academy's tracking information and the work in pupils' books are demonstrating some improvements in the learning and progress of some pupils. However, in a number of cases, better teaching has not been

in place long enough to enable pupils to achieve as well as they should. For example, pupils in Year 9 are performing below their targets across a number of subjects. This is because they are still catching up against a legacy of past underachievement.

- The most-able pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Too few pupils secure the highest grades in a range of subjects. This is because teachers do not always present them with challenging enough work or have high enough expectations of them. As a result, the most-able pupils in Key Stage 3 are not making good progress in relation to their targets in a number of subjects.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs typically perform better in English than they do in mathematics. An increasing focus on phonics is enabling those pupils with below-average attainment on entry to the academy to catch up more quickly than before in their reading skills, and is supplemented by one-to-one sessions in literacy and numeracy.

School details

Unique reference number	137703
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	10006551

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	317
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Burt
Headteacher	Martin Farmer
Telephone number	01885482230
Website	www.qehc.org.uk
Email address	admin@queenelizabeth.hereford.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 December 2011

Information about this school

- Queen Elizabeth Humanities College is a much smaller-than-average secondary academy.
- The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, who are those eligible for support from the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and children looked after by the local authority), is broadly average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- There are more boys than girls in the academy.
- There have been considerable changes to the leadership of the academy since the previous inspection. The current headteacher, deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher took up post in September 2014. A new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed in September 2015. A number of middle leaders have been appointed who started in their roles in September 2015, including a new head of the mathematics department.
- No pupils attend providers away from the academy site.
- In 2014, the academy met the floor standards, which are the government's minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 18 lessons or parts of lessons. They carried out some observations jointly with the school's senior leaders. Observations of other aspects of the academy's work were also made, such as tutor time and assemblies.
- Inspectors also looked at pupils' books and folders during lessons.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and academy staff, including senior and middle leaders. Informal discussions also took place with staff and pupils. A discussion was also held with the local authority's school improvement adviser and with other agencies who work with the academy.
- There were 42 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire that provided evidence for the inspection.
- Questionnaire returns from 17 members of staff were analysed.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the academy's self-evaluation and improvement plans, academy policies, external reviews of the academy and minutes of meetings of the governing body. Information about pupils' progress, attainment, attendance and exclusions was also examined, as were the academy's records of safeguarding, checks on the quality of teaching and marking, and information about the way teachers' performance is linked to salary scales.

Inspection team

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