

Buckler's Mead Academy

St. John's Road, Yeovil, Somerset BA21 4NH

Inspection dates

9–10 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Teaching is not yet consistently good in English, mathematics or science. In some English and science lessons tasks are not appropriate for every student. This means that in these lessons, progress is slower and some students become passive.
- Some students with special educational needs do not make as much progress as others. Teaching is not always appropriately challenging for the most able students, or supportive enough for the least able.
- While the use of data to raise achievement has improved, the academy does not use all information about students to ensure that all achieve as well as they might.
- Students' achievement requires improvement, especially in mathematics for the highest and lowest attainers, and in science.

The school has the following strengths

- The staff and board of directors are committed to ensuring the success of all students in the academy and are tackling weaknesses with increasing success.
- The academy's leaders and teachers, with the board of directors, have successfully taken actions to improve teaching across the academy. As a result, achievement is improving. More students gain higher grades in GCSE English and mathematics as a result.
- Students enjoy their time at the academy and are polite and well mannered.
- Behaviour and attendance have improved substantially over the last year. Students particularly like the new rewards system, which is a good motivator.
- Students feel very safe in the academy and bullying is rare. The academy ensures that all forms of discrimination are tackled effectively.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with half a day's notice.
- Inspectors observed 36 lessons taught by 35 teachers, including six lessons observed jointly with senior leaders. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with two groups of students, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board of Directors, and academy staff, including senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors took account of 12 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). Responses to staff questionnaires were taken into account.
- Inspectors observed the academy's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the academy's own data on students' current progress, a review of recent examination results, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Ann Cox, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Colin Money	Additional Inspector
Joanna Pike	Additional Inspector
Paul Sadler	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is one of four serving Yeovil. It opened on the site of the previous Buckler's Mead Community School in September 2011. The governing body was re-formed on the conversion to academy status and a new Chair elected.
- The headteacher is relatively new in post, having taken up the appointment in September 2011. Following the arrival of the headteacher, there have been numerous changes in the structure and personnel of the senior leadership team.
- The academy is of average size. The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. A lower than average number of students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs, or who are supported at school action or school action plus, is below average.
- The academy includes a local authority resource for students with special educational needs in language and communication. On the same site, there is an independently run pre-school.
- Almost all of the academy's students live within walking distance of the academy, and the on-site sports facilities are used extensively by the local community in out-of-school hours.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standard which sets minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so it is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring that all lessons are conducted at a brisk pace
 - responding to students' needs by providing activities and resources that meet their learning needs and ensure that they make good progress throughout the lesson.
- In order to raise the achievement of students, especially in mathematics and science:
 - strengthen the use and analysis of data to more readily identify where students, or groups of students, make slower progress and then take appropriate action in order to boost their achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Historically, students entered the academy with standards of attainment in English and mathematics that were significantly below average.
- The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE grades at C or above, including English and mathematics, has improved over the last three years but has yet to reach the national average.
- This trend of improving achievement is a result of improvements in the quality of teaching, but inconsistencies remain between groups of students, particularly high and low attaining students, and those with special educational needs and between subjects, especially English, mathematics and science. This is because the quality of teaching across the school is not consistent.
- In English, students' achievement is consistently good, with an above average proportion making at least the expected progress. In mathematics, there have been rapid improvements in the progress of students with average starting points however, the progress of those of higher and lower attainment requires further improvement.
- Achievement in science is improving but requires further improvement as it is not yet good. There is good achievement in some subjects, such as physical education, which is very popular with students, and in information and communication technology (ICT). The latter subject makes a valuable contribution to the good development of students' literacy skills, for example when students in Years 10 and 11 design websites suitable for younger children.
- While some groups of students, for example those of high prior attainment or low prior attainment, do not make progress at a rate comparable to that of other groups, good use has been made of pupil premium funding to ensure that students at risk of making slow progress in mathematics achieve well, and the gap with other students' achievements is closing.
- Students in the local authority special educational needs resource make good progress, especially in developing their literacy and communication skills. This is due to the high-quality support they receive from the team of teachers and teaching assistants to whom they are attached.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Students' achievement is getting better because of improvements in teaching. Inspectors saw examples of good and outstanding teaching, but the inconsistencies across the academy mean that it is not yet good overall. In English, inspectors saw some inadequate teaching in Year 10 and Year 11 classes, and in science there was some inadequate teaching in Year 8 and Year 11. Some outstanding teaching was seen in design technology, mathematics and physical education.
- High quality teaching is not yet typical. For example, in Year 10 mathematics lessons and Year 11 English, the tasks are not always well matched to the individual student's needs and activities are not adjusted according to students' progress during the lesson. Where lessons lack challenge, students become passive and make slower progress.
- Where teaching is most effective, students engage in challenging tasks at a brisk pace. Helpful comments in marking allow students to make improvements in their learning, and there are high expectations from teachers which raise aspirations in students.
- The introduction of a robust system of target setting for students has focused on raising expectations and, where they receive extra good quality support from teachers and teaching assistants, there is a positive impact on achievement.
- The teaching of reading, writing and communication skills is good, with appropriate displays of words and terms in classrooms. In history, particular attention is given to the use of correct terminology. The teaching of mathematical skills is not as strong; there is no evidence of

numeracy work across the curriculum.

- Teaching in the local authority special educational needs resource is good, with well-adapted resources and support from dedicated teaching assistants.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are polite and well-mannered around the academy. They are respectful to each other and to members of staff and visitors. They move well around the school buildings even when space is constricted, and arrive punctually to lessons.
- Pupils and staff confirm that behaviour has improved since the academy was established. A new system of behaviour management was introduced in the last academic year and this has had a positive impact. Students particularly like, and feel motivated by, the new rewards system.
- Students told inspectors that they feel very safe in the academy, and that bullying is rare and is dealt with effectively on the small number of occasions when incidents arise. All students are aware of different forms of bullying and are confident that there were no incidents of racism in their academy. They are aware, for example, that homophobic name-calling should be reported to staff.
- Attendance has improved significantly over the last year and is now above average. There are fewer instances of persistent absence due to improved systems for monitoring attendance.
- Safeguarding is a strength; robust systems are in place to check and monitor all aspects, such as the identity of staff and visitors.
- Exclusions are now infrequent. There are effective systems which avoid exclusion when managing rare incidents of serious misbehaviour.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because attitudes to learning are not always exemplary. In a few lessons in Years 10 and 11, students sometimes engage in idle chatter when the pace of the lesson is slow.

The leadership and management are good

- The drive, ambition and determination of the headteacher, supported by the senior managers, results in improvements in the quality of teaching and in outcomes, particularly in mathematics for students of average starting points, and improvements in students' behaviour and attendance. The academy has already made progress in improving the achievement of students, though achievement is not yet good.
- Teaching is improving as the result of a good programme of training for senior and middle leaders in lesson observations, with a regular cycle of management of teachers' performance, which has a positive impact on students' achievement.
- The regular checks made on the quality of teaching and students' progress help drive up standards, although insufficient attention has been given to the use of data analysis for the identification of groups of students with high or low prior attainment in order to ensure that all students make good progress.
- The inspectors' assessment of teaching closely matched judgements made by senior leaders.
- Performance management has been more finely tuned to improving teaching and is linked to professional development of staff in order to raise students' achievement. Appropriate actions are taken to deal with any underperformance.
- Effective steps have been taken to safeguard students and to tackle discrimination. As academy leaders recognise, inconsistencies in the achievement of certain groups, such as the more able, need to be rectified in order to ensure full equality of opportunity.
- The self-evaluation system is accurate and the academy has a good quality long-term development plan.

- The curriculum is appropriate for the students and includes vocational courses and off-site provision for a small number of students. The 'Inspire to Achieve' programme successfully supports students to enable them to prepare for the world of work. Students are given a good range of opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding; for example, some students have participated in visits to London, with a focus on religious activities, and visitors to the academy have given opportunities for students to learn more about other cultures.
 - The leadership and management of the local authority special educational needs resource requires improvement as there is insufficient integration with other special educational needs provision within the academy, which leads to some duplication.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - This is good, as it is committed to the academy's success and has successfully challenged senior leaders to make improvements. Guidance from external consultants has a sharp focus on the improvement of teaching and students' achievement. Directors scrutinise the use of pupil premium funding and monitor its impact on closing achievement gaps.
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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	137193
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	406659

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	951
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Hunt
Headteacher	Sara Gorrod
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01935 424454
Fax number	01935 431088
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