

Burford School

Cheltenham Road, Burford, Oxfordshire, OX18 4PL

Inspection dates 1–2 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected.
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good academy

- Students reach standards that are above average, including in English and mathematics. The most able students achieve very well. The gaps between the achievement of different groups of students have closed or are closing swiftly.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the academy is excellent. They are smartly dressed, polite and very proud of their academy. They know how to keep themselves safe.
- Teaching is consistently good and increasingly outstanding. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to students' learning. Staff have a strong work ethic.
- The headteacher leads by example in pursuing excellence for every student. Senior leaders and governors are highly effective. Middle leaders are experts in their areas of responsibility. The capacity for the academy to become outstanding, therefore, is good.
- The sixth form is good. Students follow appropriate courses, achieve well and are good role models for younger students.
- The thriving range of extra-curricular activities is a major strength and students' participation rates are high. Fundamental British values of tolerance and respect define the ethos of the academy.

It is not yet an outstanding academy because

- While boys' achievement is improving, they do not yet achieve as highly as girls.
- Students do not make the same rapid and substantial progress during Key Stage 3 and Year 12 as they do during Key Stage 4 and Year 13.
- Teachers' marking is inconsistent, especially in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. Students do not always make necessary improvements to their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 lessons, 11 of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors made short visits to a further eight lessons.
- Inspectors analysed a wide range of students' work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, academy leaders, teachers and four governors including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors met with five groups of students in addition to observing students' behaviour and talking to students around the academy. Inspectors also heard four Year 7 students read.
- A range of the academy's documentation was scrutinised closely, including information about students' achievement, the academy's own checks on its performance, the academy improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, a wide range of policies and the academy's arrangements to keep students safe.
- Inspectors analysed responses from parents, including five emails, 74 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire and 20 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also met with a group of eight parents.
- Sixty eight responses to the staff survey were analysed.

Inspection team

Matthew Haynes, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Charlotte Evers	Additional Inspector
Annette Rhodes	Additional Inspector
Maureen Hill	Additional Inspector
David Wolfson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this academy

- This is a larger-than-average-sized secondary academy with a sixth form.
- Burford School converted to become an academy in August 2012. When its predecessor school, Burford School and Community College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority) is about half of the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students or those with special educational needs supported at school action is below average, as is the proportion of students supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those who speak English as an additional language, is well below average.
- The academy has boarding provision which will be inspected independently of this inspection. When boarding provision was last inspected in May 2013 it was judged to be good overall.
- A small number of students study a vocational qualification in construction during Key Stage 4 which involves them attending alternative provision at Synolo for half a day a week.
- The academy is part of the West Oxfordshire Learning Partnership along with six other secondary schools.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress.

What does the academy need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement further so that it is outstanding by:
 - increasing rates of students' progress during Key Stage 3 and Year 12 so that they match the substantial progress students make during Key Stage 4 and Year 13
 - making sure that boys' progress accelerates further so that they achieve as well as girls
 - implementing a consistent and rigorous approach to marking students' work across the academy, so that students know what they have got to do to improve and are expected to make these improvements.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is tenacious in her pursuit of excellence for every student. She has the highest expectations of all students and staff. She has improved leadership across the academy and she holds all leaders strongly to account.
- Senior leaders are highly effective and follow the headteacher's example. They constantly strive to improve all aspects of teaching and students' achievement. They have an accurate view of the academy's strengths and they know what needs to improve further. Information about students' achievement is used well to closely track students' progress. When students at risk of underachievement are identified, leaders take quick and effective action.
- Checks on teachers' performance are thorough, regular and lead to constant improvement. Teaching that is less than good is not tolerated and is dealt with quickly and effectively. Only good performance is rewarded. Training for teachers and teaching assistants is well focused.
- Middle leaders, including heads of department and heads of year, lead by example. They are experts in their areas of responsibility. They play a full part in monitoring students' work and the quality of teaching.
- This very strong leadership has led to rapid improvements in teaching and students' achievement. In particular, gaps in the achievement of different groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs and students eligible for the pupil premium, have closed or are closing swiftly. Standards achieved by the most able students are high and rising. Teaching is consistently good and improving. Consequently, there is strong potential for the academy to become outstanding in the future.
- The curriculum meets students' needs well. It is particularly effective in Key Stage 4. As a result of improvements to the Key Stage 3 curriculum over the last year, students' progress is accelerating, including making a better start in Year 7.
- Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is excellent. Their understanding of fundamental British values, especially of tolerance and respect, is very strong because these values define the ethos of the academy. The vast range of thriving extra-curricular activities, including high quality opportunities in sport, music, drama, art and travel, is a huge strength of the academy. Participation rates in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme are high.
- Parents receive useful, regular communications from the academy, including about their children's progress. Parents are, overall, highly satisfied with the academy. The parents spoken to during the inspection said that any issues they might have are dealt with very effectively by leaders and teachers. They also commented that the academy takes great care to ensure that students' transition from Year 6 to Year 7 is smooth.
- The quality of information, advice and guidance for students is very good in Year 8 to Year 13. Students value the effective work of the dedicated careers adviser. Consequently, the majority of students have a clear view of their aspirations for future education, employment and training and know what they need to do to achieve these.
- Leaders make very good use of an external consultant who regularly visits the academy, providing the right support and challenge to help leaders make further improvements.
- The academy is an active member of the West Oxfordshire Learning Partnership, within which leaders share good practice and visit other schools to help evaluate their effectiveness. The academy rightly works closely with feeder primary schools.
- Leaders ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - is highly effective. Governors know the academy really well, including the strengths in teaching and what needs to be improved. They regularly receive detailed data about students' achievement which allows them to challenge leaders strongly. For example, when governors identified those students eligible for pupil premium funding did not achieve as well as other students, they ensured that effective and swift action was taken. They challenge the headteacher to improve and manage her performance well. They also ensure that leaders' management of all staff is effective, making sure that any underperformance is dealt with quickly. Governors visit the academy regularly in order to check that improvements are made at the right rate. Governors manage the academy's budget effectively and they ensure that additional funding, such as the pupil premium, is spent well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding.
- The vast majority of students behave excellently in lessons. They are hungry to learn and ambitious to do very well. They work together purposefully. Students who achieve highly gain the respect of others.
- Very occasionally students lose concentration but teachers act quickly to remedy this. The number of incidents of poor behaviour is extremely low.
- Students' pride in their academy is shown by the way they dress smartly. They are extremely polite and show high levels of respect for adults and other students. Litter is rare. Inspectors heard no examples of bad or inappropriate language during the inspection. Students often hold doors open for adults and each other.
- Students move around the academy in a calm and orderly fashion. Punctuality at the beginning of the day and to lessons is superb.
- Students do not tolerate any forms of discrimination, including racism, sexism and homophobia. The ethos of the academy actively encourages students to understand, accept and respect people from all nationalities, backgrounds and beliefs.
- Students are invariably happy at school. Attendance is above average overall. Although the attendance of students known to be eligible for free school meals is lower, it is improving rapidly because of leaders' effective support and action.
- Both parents and staff believe students behave well.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding.
- Bullying of any kind is incredibly rare and is dealt with very swiftly when it occurs. Students know about the different types of bullying and how to spot the signs that it might be happening. They take steps to prevent it happening.
- Policies to keep students safe are appropriate and implemented rigorously. Staff training is up to date.
- Levels of adult supervision at break and lunchtime are high. This ensures that students are kept safe at these times.
- Students are taught how to keep themselves safe, including on the internet. For example, inspectors observed an assembly during which Year 10 students were taught effectively about e-safety.
- Leaders make appropriate arrangements to ensure that the small number of students who attend alternative provision with a local company for half a day every week are kept safe while they are there.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good. Some is outstanding. Teachers and teaching assistants have a strong work ethic and constantly seek to improve.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers use their strong subject knowledge to challenge students well by giving them difficult work and by questioning them skilfully. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson lower ability students were expected to use sophisticated technical language to analyse a section of a novel. Through careful questioning by the teacher and because of the high level of challenge, students made excellent progress.
- The most able students are challenged very well. Teachers set them difficult work and often inspire them to reach high standards, for example in a Year 9 science lesson in which students made excellent progress because the work was complex.
- However, in some lessons, particularly in Key Stage 3, teachers sometimes put a ceiling on students' achievement and do not stretch them fully. This means they do not make as much progress as they could.
- Teachers establish a very positive atmosphere in lessons. Relationships are good and expectations of behaviour are high. Students know that teachers are there to help them to achieve well.
- In most lessons, students know what they are learning and what they need to do to succeed. Teachers often give students feedback during lessons about how well they are doing and what they need to improve, which helps them make good or better progress. In a Year 11 art lesson, for example, the teacher gave constant feedback to students throughout the lesson and required them to review each other's work at the end of the lesson.
- Teachers regularly use high quality examples of students' work to exemplify high levels of achievement. This helps students to know what they are aiming for.
- Teachers' marking is often very effective, especially during Key Stage 4, but this is inconsistent across the

academy. Many subjects are exploring ways to mark effectively, such as the good work in mathematics, but there is not yet a common approach in all subjects. Where marking is highly successful, such as in English and geography, students get clear guidance about what to improve and are expected to make these improvements. However, some marking lacks specific detail, consisting instead of simple comments that praise students without being clear about what they have done well.

- Homework is set regularly and is mostly challenging. Parents and students feel that it makes a valuable contribution to students' learning.
- Teaching assistants support students' learning well, providing students with effective guidance and help. They do not do too much for students.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Provisional 2014 GCSE results show that achievement has risen overall. From starting points that are generally above average, students reach high standards, including in English and mathematics. Students achieve highly at GCSE in a number of other subjects, including geography, French, music and art. However, achievement in some subjects, for example design and technology and science, is more mixed.
- Students make very rapid progress during Key Stage 4. In the past, students have made much slower progress during Key Stage 3. This has improved substantially over the last year and their progress is now good overall, although students' achievement is better in mathematics than in English.
- The achievement of the most able students is very strong in both Key Stages 3 and 4. They make rapid progress and attain highly because of the effective challenge they receive in lessons. Regular extra-curricular opportunities, including times when they can meet together to solve problems and debate issues, enrich their achievement.
- Students take pride in their work. As a result, standards of presentation are high.
- Students eligible for pupil premium funding make as much progress as other students in English and mathematics, and sometimes more. Gaps between their achievement and that of other students have closed rapidly. Pupil premium funding has been used very well, for example to provide students with extra one-to-one tuition or small group teaching. These students attain more highly than similar students nationally.
- Year 7 students who start at the academy with levels below those expected in English and mathematics make accelerated progress during Year 7. This is because additional funding, the Year 7 catch-up premium, is used to provide effective interventions for these students in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Boys do not achieve as well as girls. While their achievement is rising and is generally above that of boys nationally, they do not yet make as much progress as girls.
- The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs is improving fast and is generally in line with other students. Extra help and support given to these students have a very positive impact because teachers and leaders precisely identify students' needs.
- Students' reading and writing skills are developed well across subjects. Students are regularly required to write at length and with care. Students who need extra help, for example with their reading, get effective support. While students report that they like reading and that they read often, the library is underused by students to borrow books to read for pleasure. At the time of the inspection, for example, only 101 books had been borrowed since the beginning of term, 28 of which had been borrowed by boys.
- Students from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those whose first language is not English, make good progress. The academy helps these students in a range of ways, including by providing regular effective support in class.
- All students have equal opportunities to succeed.
- The academy does not have a policy of entering students early for GCSE examinations.
- The small number of students studying a vocational qualification in construction who attend alternative provision for half a day a week attend regularly and make good progress.

The sixth form provision**is good**

- Students make good progress overall in the sixth form because of consistently good teaching based on teachers' strong subject knowledge. By the end of Year 13 students reach standards that are generally above the national average.
- However, students' progress during Year 12, while improving, is not as rapid as during Year 13.
- Achievement varies across subjects. For example, it is very high in subjects such as geography, economics and art, but lower in subjects such as business studies, physical education and computing.
- The curriculum is largely academic with a small number of vocational qualifications. This meets students' needs well. They are given very good advice in order to make the right decisions about what to study after completing their GCSE examinations. Retention rates are good.
- While much work by students is marked well by teachers, this varies. Sometimes, for example, teachers' comments do not tell students what they need to do to improve. Consequently, students do not always make necessary improvements to their work.
- Students who did not achieve a GCSE grade C in English or mathematics make good progress and are given the right tuition to achieve these standards.
- Students make an excellent contribution to the life of the school. Participation rates in schemes such as the Community Sports Leaders Award are high. Students take responsibility for the behaviour and safety of younger students and act as an example to them. For example, the head boy, head girl and their deputies, democratically elected by all staff and students, walk the academy at lunchtimes to help supervise younger students. When asked what motivated him, the head boy answered: 'The school has given so much to me and I want to give something important back.'
- Students know how to keep themselves safe. For example, they have a very good understanding of the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse through taking part in programmes such as 'Stay Alive'.
- Leaders know what needs to improve in terms of teaching and achievement and they have the right actions in place to make these improvements.

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>

Boarding/Residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	138289
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	449116

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

Type of school	Secondary
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	1144
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Jagger
Headteacher	Mrs Kathy Haig
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected.
Telephone number	01993 823303
Fax number	01993 823101
Email address	admin.4040@burford.oxon.sch.uk

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