

John Kyrle High School and Sixth Form Centre Academy

Ledbury Road, Ross-on-Wye, HR9 7ET

Inspection dates 12–13 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Most students progress well in a large majority of their subjects.
- The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE has increased since the last inspection and is above the national average.
- The sixth form is outstanding because standards are improving very rapidly. It is increasingly popular and the course completion rate is exceptionally high. Hardly any student is without education, employment or training when they leave.
- Students have a very positive attitude to school. They behave exceptionally well and thrive on chances to take responsibilities. Attendance is high and there have been no permanent exclusions for many years.
- Leadership is highly effective. Led by the outstanding example of the headteacher and senior leaders, swift action has been taken to remove previously weak teaching.
- The school has made a number of rapid improvements. Almost all leaders are working very effectively towards the goal of ensuring teaching is always at least good and often outstanding and to raise achievement, particularly in English.
- The governing body is involved exceptionally well in leading the direction of the school and provides rigorous challenge to leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some students who are behind with reading and numeracy skills at the start of Year 7 have not made enough progress in order to reach the expected level for their age by the end of Year 11.
- There is some variability in the quality of French and Spanish teaching, particularly for lower-attaining students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons, of which six were joint observations with senior or middle leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with two groups of students, the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and other academy staff, including senior and middle leaders. Telephone discussions were held with the academy’s external support partner, the Chair of the Governing Body and a governor with responsibility for safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of the 19 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), one email and the school’s most recent parental survey of 2011.
- They took account of 90 questionnaires completed by members of staff.
- They observed the academy’s work and scrutinised a number of documents, including the school’s own data on students’ recent examinations and current progress. Inspectors also looked at documentation relating to school development, performance management and the monitoring of teaching, behaviour and attendance, safeguarding and evidence of interventions for students identified as potentially vulnerable. They also examined the minutes of the governing body’s meetings.
- The inspection took place in the second week of the new school year. As the school operates a two-week timetable some lessons observed were the first for the students with their new teacher.

Inspection team

Mark Sims, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Shahnaz Maqsood	Additional inspector
Terence Payne	Additional inspector
Peter Lawley	Additional inspector
Lesley Voaden	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection there has been a significant increase in the number of students on roll, including in the sixth form.
- The school, which has been an academy since January 2011, is much larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is below average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is broadly average, although the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below that found nationally. Their needs relate mostly to behaviour, emotional and social difficulties and to specific learning difficulties.
- Although the proportions of students from minority ethnic groups and for whom English is an additional language are low, the numbers of students in these groups have doubled over the last three years. Most of the new arrivals are from Poland, some of whom are at a very early stage of learning to speak English.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum standards expected for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that:
 - all teachers plan opportunities that enable students to take responsibility for their learning and make choices about their work
 - questioning is suitably targeted at individuals so that teachers know whether students have understood the work
 - students are regularly given feedback in lessons so they know how well they are doing
 - all modern foreign language teaching, particularly in lower sets, matches the quality of the very best language teaching.
- Sustain the rate of progress for those students who, when they join the school, are behind in their reading and numeracy skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Standards are broadly average when students join the school. Most students make good progress so that by the end of Key Stage 4 they achieve standards better than those found nationally in English and mathematics. Although the proportion achieving five or more good grades in GCSE is high, the percentage including both English and mathematics is broadly average. Standards in most other subjects are high.
- The latest unvalidated GCSE results show continuing improvement, particularly in English. School leaders have swiftly tackled previous inadequate teaching and made changes to the curriculum by introducing courses which are enabling most students to do well.
- Most groups of students exceed the expected level of progress compared to their peers nationally. The large majority of students make good progress. This is because most learning in lessons is, usually, at least good and often outstanding, which enables students to do as well as they can. The consistent high-quality provision for higher- and middle-attaining students ensures that they do particularly well. The achievement of students eligible for additional funding (who are either known to be eligible for free school meals or are looked after) is good and compares favourably with their peers nationally.
- Students who are disabled and those who have special educational needs make good progress in line with their peers. A small proportion of those who joined the school below the expected level for their age in English and mathematics did not make the expected progress. The school has recognised this and has put suitable measures in place and these are already making a difference.
- There are still a few areas where teaching does not allow these students to make rapid progress, notably in some lower sets in modern foreign languages. The school tracks closely those students who enter school in Year 7 below the expected level in literacy and numeracy and addresses their needs well.
- Students make good and, at times, outstanding progress in most subjects. There are some very high-performing departments, including technology and social studies. The school recognises that GCSE results in 2011 were low for modern foreign languages, but the unvalidated results for 2012 show improvement.
- The wide range of academic and some vocational courses on offer in the sixth form ensures that students, including the increasing number of minority ethnic students from Eastern Europe, do exceptionally well in A level and applied courses.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching over time is good. It is not outstanding because although the large majority of lessons are good or better the school's tracking highlighted previously inadequate teaching. This has now been eradicated.
- At its very best, teaching is outstanding. For example in one religious education lesson the skilful use of a multimedia presentation on the holocaust brought learning to life for a mixed-ability class. All students made rapid gains in their learning as they were given choices to decide how they recorded their notes and all had the opportunity in small-group discussions to share their ideas. The lesson made an exceptional contribution to students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- Assessment was at its best in lessons where teachers gave students good-quality oral feedback about how well they had done or, as in the case of one history lesson on the middle ages, where students themselves evaluated their own learning very effectively.
- Teaching in the sixth form is outstanding because it is never less than consistently good and often better. Lessons are planned very well to encourage students to work independently. Students' work is assessed regularly and accurately so that they know how to improve; this helps them to learn very well in lessons and over time.

- In almost all lessons, students are engaged well. They enjoy their learning and work very well with each other. Lessons usually move at a brisk pace. Students have a clear idea of what they are going to learn. Relationships between teachers and students are very positive.
- Students sustain their interest in learning even when occasionally there is reduced pace or sometimes where they have little opportunity to direct their own learning. Students for whom English is an additional language are integrated well into lessons. Teaching assistants are generally effectively deployed in lessons and use their time purposefully.
- In a small number of lessons, teachers do not give students sufficient feedback to inform them how well they are doing. Teachers' questions do not always find out whether students have understood their work. Additionally, some teaching gives insufficient opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- There is some variability in the quality of teaching for French and Spanish where upper and middle ability sets sometimes receive better teaching than lower sets.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The very large majority of students behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school, including in the sixth form. The school is a positive welcoming place. Even on the occasions where the quality of teaching drops, students respond well and remain focused and committed to their tasks. They take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour.
- The overwhelming majority of the large number of staff who responded to the questionnaire agreed that behaviour is good in the school. There have been no permanent exclusions for over eight years. In the most recent parental survey, a large majority of the parents agreed that behaviour in school is good. Students questioned in discussions agreed that behaviour is good in most lessons. Students identified as having behavioural difficulties when they join the school are successfully integrated into lessons.
- Students have a clear understanding of different kinds of bullying and how to respond appropriately to incidents, although these occur exceptionally rarely. Any occasional instances are dealt with very well by the school to avoid repeat occurrences.
- Students know how to respond to potentially unsafe situations when using the internet or on the street. Staff unanimously agreed that students are safe in school and the very large majority of parents surveyed by the school also agreed.
- Students get on well together in a happy caring environment. The increasing number of new arrivals from Eastern Europe is integrating well with other students.
- Attendance is improving and is high for almost all groups. Persistent absence is falling. Students report that they enjoy coming to school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- All of the staff who completed the survey fully support the vision and direction of the outstanding headteacher and senior leaders. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. Where weaknesses are identified, for example previously in teaching, they are very quickly dealt with. All of last term's identified inadequate teaching has been eradicated.
- Similarly, when last year's GCSE results showed a concern about lower-attaining boys' achievement in English, the school responded quickly to address this. Unvalidated English results for 2012 indicate that standards in English have risen. In response to a review of special educational needs, subject departments now successfully take on greater responsibility for learning support. The leadership of special educational needs is now effectively focused on academic achievement. Senior leaders have made a number of key leadership appointments to enhance the school's outstanding capacity

to improve further.

- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching are precise and rigorous. The school's monitoring records and joint lesson observations with senior leaders show that leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching.
- The school has successfully integrated a number of students learning English as an additional language. It has successfully developed strategies to include students who join the school with behavioural difficulties and there have been no permanent exclusions for many years. The school tackles all kinds of discrimination highly effectively, ensuring that students feel valued and enabled to learn in a calm and welcoming environment.
- Heads of departments know the strengths and areas for development very well and are fully involved in monitoring and evaluating teaching and achievement to bring about improvements.
- Performance management is used very well to ensure that teachers' pay is linked to the quality of their teaching through rigorous tracking and observation. The school is successfully managing the induction of newly qualified teachers who have joined this term.
- Leaders are highly self-critical and, as a stand-alone academy, they have ensured that there remains a process of external evaluation. This has led to good interim support from the local authority in addressing weak teaching and reviewing provision across a whole range of aspects of the school's work including safeguarding, performance management, provision for special educational needs and boys' achievement.
- The curriculum supports students' good achievement. Leaders are adept at making changes by which they can bring improvement through different courses or new examination boards. Literacy has a strong focus across the curriculum and, according to one boy; the library is 'a bookworm's heaven'. As a former specialist languages college, the academy retains a strong commitment to compulsory languages at Key Stage 4 and offers students a choice of three modern foreign languages.
- The curriculum prepares students well for life in a diverse society, for example through the study of different lifestyles in religious education and the Mayans in mathematics. Assemblies contribute very well to students' value and beliefs, for example one recently focusing on the Olympics and the school's link with Uganda.
- The school is monitoring the impact of the additional funding allocated to support the learning of those students who are known to be entitled to a free school meal.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- is highly effective in supporting the school and holding it to account; governors are well informed about the strengths and areas of development, which enables them to make strategic decisions about its future
- knows how well different groups of students are achieving and has taken effective action to address any identified areas of underachievement
- has an accurate view of teaching and was involved in measures to remove weak teaching from the school; governors know the strengths and areas for development within subject departments
- is rigorous in performance management; personnel and pay committees hold the school to account before recommending pay awards
- is very thorough in ensuring all requirements for safeguarding are met
- has invested well in securing external views of the school to ensure it can improve further.

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	136399
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	395684

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1416
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	310
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Frost
Headteacher	Nigel Griffiths
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2008
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