

Inspection of The Ilfracombe Church of England Academy

Worth Road, Ilfracombe, Devon EX34 9JB

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's values of hope, kindness, courage, integrity, trust, respect, responsibility and resilience are well known to staff and pupils. They are reflected well in the personal development curriculum.

Students in the sixth form are positive about their experiences, including the quality of the learning environment and the teaching they receive. They develop a deep understanding of their subjects and achieve well. Pupils in key stages 3 and 4 learn a broad range of subjects, but the curriculum and how it is assessed does not always help pupils to learn effectively.

Pupils mostly behave well towards each other and to staff. Pupils can usually get on with their learning. However, there has been a rise in suspensions, especially among pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders are taking action to address this, but this has yet to have an impact.

Some pupils are concerned about bullying. While staff deal with bullying, pupils are not always confident that it stops. Too many pupils are regularly absent from school, which impacts negatively on their learning.

Pupils value the work of the pastoral team. Staff provide useful advice to help pupils manage concerns and to support their well-being.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have designed a curriculum with the intention that it supports the school's aim to prepare pupils for 'life in its fullness'. Pupils learn a range of subjects, both academic and vocational, with this aim in mind. However, the curriculum does not always help pupils to build knowledge over time, so it does not have the desired impact. While pupils are supported to learn examination techniques, they do not always have the secure knowledge needed to perform well. Leaders have not clearly identified curriculum goals for pupils at each step from Year 7 to GCSE.

Students in the sixth form are taught well. Teaching in the sixth form encourages rich discussion of important knowledge. Students appreciate the support teachers give them. They are well prepared for their next steps.

Leaders ensure that there are formal checks on pupils' learning, such as assessments, which requires pupils to recall content they have studied. However, pupils are not always able to recall and explain their learning. Teaching does not use assessment well to check that pupils are securely learning new content. This means that gaps in knowledge and the reasons for these are not always understood.

Leaders have responded to published outcomes in core subjects that indicate pupils' progress has been below national averages. They have begun to address this by

making changes to the curriculum, such as developments to the mathematics curriculum and a reading strategy to improve the school's reading culture. To support pupils learning and encourage pupils to work independently, leaders have introduced after-school 'prep'. This does not yet have the intended impact, as the quality or accuracy of pupils' learning sometimes goes unchecked.

Leaders identify pupils with SEND and share strategies with staff to support pupils' learning. When this information is used well, pupils with SEND develop their knowledge and confidence. However, this is not always the case. Sometimes, teaching is not adapted well, so pupils with SEND do not always gain the knowledge and understanding they need to become confident learners.

Pupils understand the school's expectations for behaviour. However, pupils with SEND appear more frequently in behaviour records than their peers. Pupils do not attend well. Leaders have developed new approaches to improve attendance. However, the number of pupils who are persistently absent continues to be high. This means they miss valuable learning, which affects their outcomes.

Leaders have created a personal development programme that reflects the school's religious character. Pupils learn about important issues such as relationships and positive mental and physical health. Leaders have carefully mapped spiritual, moral, social and cultural themes so that these are taught throughout the curriculum. This supports the development of pupils' characters. Pupils in Year 10 undertake work experience that provides a greater understanding of career opportunities and workplace skills. Students in the sixth form benefit from careers guidance, which draws upon the experience of former students and provides useful advice about opportunities for work or study beyond school.

Governors understand their roles and the school's strategic aims. They also understand the challenges for the school and support leaders in school improvement. However, parents do not always understand leaders' reasons and the intended aims of school improvement. They would appreciate greater communication.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained to identify pupils at risk of harm. The safeguarding team ensures that pupils receive support. When necessary, the team secures appropriate support from outside agencies. Leaders put the needs of pupils first and work hard with other agencies to ensure the most vulnerable are supported.

Leaders ensure that pupils are aware of risks and how to keep safe, including when online. The school's programme for personal development helps pupils to understand what healthy relationships look like.

Leaders have appropriate systems in place to manage the recruitment of staff safely.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Assessment is not always used effectively. It does not help pupils to improve their knowledge, skills and understanding. Leaders should ensure that assessment is more effective in identifying knowledge gaps and their causes. This is so staff understand how the curriculum and teaching can be adapted so that pupils learn more effectively.
- Pupils with SEND do not always learn effectively, and they appear more frequently in behaviour records than their peers. While leaders are improving the resourcing and support for pupils with SEND, they need to ensure that this has demonstrable impact.
- A significant minority of pupils do not attend well and are persistently absent from school. This hinders their learning, and they do not achieve well. Leaders should strengthen systems to deal with non-attendance so that attendance improves.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	139553
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10256663
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,090
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	152
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Bailey
Headteacher	Stephen Rogers
Website	www.ilfracombeacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 and 26 April 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The number of pupils with SEND is above average.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school makes use of alternative provision through two local providers.
- The school is currently a standalone academy in the St. Christopher's Church of England (Secondary) Multi Academy Trust and is part of the Diocese of Exeter. Its sponsor is the Exeter Diocesan Education Network.
- A Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools was undertaken in February 2017.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in the evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders and representatives of those responsible for governance.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and reviewed plans for support of pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead, examined school records and discussed cases relevant to safeguarding.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, science, history and art. Inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors considered responses to staff and pupil surveys and the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 170 free-text responses from parents.

Inspection team

John Weeds, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Lovett	Ofsted Inspector
Deborah Wring	Ofsted Inspector
Gill Hickling	Ofsted Inspector

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