

The Ilfracombe Church of England Academy

Worth Road, Ilfracombe, Devon EX34 9JB

Inspection dates

25–26 April 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Directors, governors and leaders have transformed the culture of the school. As a result, this is a good and improving school.
- Directors of the multi-academy trust are secure in their rigour of holding governance to account. In turn, governors have a clear and strategic view of their role in challenging robustly the operational management of school leaders. This influential level of leadership has enabled the school to sustain its path to improvement through challenging times.
- The headteacher has been instrumental in changing the ethos of the school. Her vision for the school to be a central point in the community while providing aspirational and purposeful education for pupils is coming to fruition. Pupils are well prepared for life in the 21st century.
- The evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school is assured. However, planning for improvement is not focused sharply enough on the impact of actions. This has hindered the pace of change at times.
- The personal development and welfare of pupils are strengths of the school. Pupils are safe and know how to keep themselves safe, including in the use of the internet.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to plan well and provide pupils with enriching learning experiences. Occasionally, these are not adapted to cater for individuals and groups of pupils, such as the most able, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Although this school is deemed to be coasting, according to the Department for Education definition, there has been a steady incremental improvement in the outcomes of pupils. In the past, more rapid progress was hampered by a lack of consistently good teaching with high enough expectations, particularly at key stage 4.
- Pupils understand and respect the values of the school and their importance. Behaviour is much improved and pupils are engaged in learning. However, for a few, there is room for improvement, as their commitment to the school principles is not shown through their appearance and pride in their work.
- Middle leaders are enthusiastic in their roles. However, in some areas, teachers are not held enough to account. This has led to some poor teaching in science, mathematics, languages and business studies, which has affected standards and outcomes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that standards continue to rise by planning improvements in teaching with a focus on learning.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - middle leaders have the capacity and skills to monitor the work of teachers more stringently so that progress is rapid and expectations of pupils' work are consistent
 - the most able pupils in all year groups, including those who are disadvantaged, are provided with learning that is sufficiently challenging and deepens their thinking
 - learning, when necessary, is adapted to meet the needs of individuals and groups of pupils to improve their outcomes
 - pupils understand consistently what they need to do to improve their learning and the presentation of their learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- When the school became part of a multi-academy trust in January 2015, leaders embraced the Christian obligations of being a church school and the impact is tangible. The key words – hope, kindness, courage, integrity, trust, respect and responsibility – are the stem of the actions taken by the school. Pupils respond to them well.
- The strong and respectful relationships between staff and pupils foster the growing confidence in successful achievement. This is evident in pupils' learning, especially at key stage 3.
- Leaders strive for the best for pupils. A new school building will be opened in February 2018. Despite the limitations of the old building and the construction site, pupils and staff are resiliently persevering and succeeding in overcoming any obstacles so that achievement continues to rise.
- The impact of the funding for disadvantaged pupils has been evaluated well. Currently, particularly in key stage 3, disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving significantly and in some cases, such as in humanities and English, pupils are doing better than their peers. Similarly, pupils who have special educational needs and/ or disabilities are making good progress from their starting points. This is because their funding is spent wisely and supports their particular needs.
- There are effective systems for managing staff performance. Teachers are provided with bespoke professional development to help them make further improvements to their practice. Staff appreciate the personalisation of this system and it has helped teaching to improve. Leaders are aware of the need for further challenge in some areas, as well as careful consideration of specific tasks for certain pupils. Peer coaching is used well to support teachers in developing better practice.
- The curriculum is strong and caters for the needs of the full range of pupils. In addition, it tackles the demographic consequences of living in an isolated rural coastal town and provides bespoke courses that prepare pupils thoroughly for their next steps in employment, education and training. The curriculum is reviewed every year to satisfy the requirements of the differing cohorts. For example, Year 10 are taking the full complement of subjects at key stage 4 for the English Baccalaureate. Close links with primary schools have helped teachers prepare effectively for the changes to the key stage 3 curriculum and the majority of pupils are doing well in their learning.
- There is a comprehensive range of enrichment activities that pupils can attend at lunchtimes, at the end of the school day and on activity days. Leaders make sure these are accessible to the pupils who are bused in, to disadvantaged pupils and to those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupil is denied an opportunity of attending. The activities provide stimulus, competition and creative opportunities that enhance pupils' imagination, health and social skills.
- Pupils are well supported by the spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum that is tied closely to British values. As a result, pupils develop self-confidence and self-respect and understand the fundamental values of democracy and law as they move through the school.

- Strong and impartial careers advice is provided to pupils from Year 8 onwards. Pupils feel that they are given sufficient information to make valid choices in Year 9 before moving to key stage 4. Their choices are linked with potential careers and pupils find this invaluable. The careers guidance in Year 11 is pupil-focused and there is good support throughout the transition process to post-16 educational choices.
- Leaders promote equality of opportunities through the range of courses in the school and sixth form. Pupils are very clear about the importance of the key words and their impact on daily life in school. Prejudicial behaviour is not tolerated. Foundation degree courses for adults in the community are taught in the school by a local further education provider. This opportunity reflects the school leaders' and governors' determination to support the aspirations of every member of the community.
- Leaders are clear about the next steps to secure better outcomes. They understand the necessary actions but do not always consider the expected impact on learning in their planning. Staff are trained in all aspects of the 'Prevent' duty, including in keeping pupils safe from the influence of radical or extreme views, and in how to keep pupils safe from abuse and sexual exploitation.

Governance of the school

- Governance in the school is strong. Led by the directors of the multi-academy trust, the governance arrangements have become more robust in recent years. Not only do governors and directors have a full understanding of the current situation in the school, they have an ambitious yet practical view of the future.
- The chair and vice-chair of governors provide strong leadership. There have been two external reviews since the last inspection, because the governing body wants to maximise its effectiveness. A skills audit has been undertaken and new governors provide an enviable range of skills and proficiency with which to challenge and support the school. The reputation of the school is such that, though the full quorum for governors has been met, prominent community members are willing to stand as associate governors.
- Governors have a good understanding as to how pupil premium funding and the funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is spent. They challenge leaders on the impact, while being ready to learn of different ways to maximise efficiency.
- Governors understand the arrangements for managing the performance of staff and the entitlement to pay. They support the headteacher well in any necessary competency arrangements. However, the pay committee is not involved in evaluating the target-setting arrangements and ensuring they are fit for the relevant responsibilities. They are not providing the objective evaluation needed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders have created a culture where assessing risk is the norm. This is very pertinent at present, as there is a building site adjacent to the school. However, there are effective safety checks, secure fencing and protection. Staff are vigilant in ensuring pupils are safe and able to continue school life with minimum disruption. The personal safety and well-being of pupils are secure. Records of any safeguarding issues are of

high quality and detailed. Staff work sensitively with parents and external agencies to monitor and support vulnerable pupils and have had great success in this area.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers' expectations for conduct are high and their subject knowledge is good so pupils respond well and their learning is consolidated well.
- School leaders have put systems in place to support pupils who start to fall behind in their understanding or have missed work. Each subject department has a specialist teaching assistant who takes responsibility for this action and it is very effective. More pupils are making better progress as a result.
- In the best teaching, questioning is skilful and used to probe pupils' knowledge. When any misunderstandings occur, teachers are able to rectify them by exploratory and secondary questioning.
- Teachers set homework that is part of the ongoing units of work so it is meaningful and builds on learning.
- Pupils are well supported in their studies from Year 7 onwards with good practice in reading and writing across a range of subjects. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to discuss aspects of their work as a class or in groups. The confidence of the pupils underpins this and they are not afraid to ask for help when needed from teachers or peers, so their learning develops accordingly. Literacy prompts are provided in all subjects, so pupils become familiar with different styles of writing and technical and specific vocabulary that enriches their wider comprehension.
- There has been much progress made in the teaching of mathematics in the last year. Practitioners are specialists in the subject and are sharing their expertise so that pupils benefit and acquire greater skills that can be used across the curriculum. As yet, unlike the situation with literacy, there is no formal, systematic process in place for developing numeracy skills.
- Parents are provided with regular updates on their children's progress in an easy-to-read and comprehensive format. The majority of parents, 93% on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, agree that they receive valuable information about their child's progress.
- There is zero tolerance of derogatory language and pupils recognise this.
- The practice of giving time for pupils to reflect on their learning and develop further is used variably. In the best teaching, pupils are proficient at proofreading their own and others' work and this is encouraged. Consequently, these pupils make more rapid progress and gain confidence in their expertise, as well as feeling certain about where to gain further advice.
- Most teachers provide feedback to pupils in line with the school policy. This is an area of inconsistency, which has led to the slower progress of some pupils.
- Teachers plan well for the needs of individuals and groups of pupils but some do not put the plans into practice often enough. This has led to pupils spending unnecessary time in catch-up sessions because of misunderstandings.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident in their abilities and able to articulate well what they are learning. They are responsive to teaching and willing to participate in lessons.
- The physical and emotional welfare of pupils is at the heart of the school's work. The very complex needs of a few pupils are understood well. School leaders have worked sensitively and productively with a range of external agencies to ensure that the very best outcomes can be achieved. Most of these pupils have academic success and social awareness as a consequence. When this is not the case, leaders have not shied away from making the decision that the pupils are not succeeding and need alternative provision.
- Pupils understand the different forms of bullying that can take place. They are clear about what steps need to be taken as and when it happens. They spoke of the school's proficient systems for dealing with the rare occurrences.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in a variety of ways, including the dangers of social media, sexting and other aspects of web communication.
- There is some laxness in the wearing of the school uniform and this lack of attention to detail is reflected in the sloppiness in presentation of some pupils' work, especially in key stage 4. This inconsistency is an area for improvement known about by senior leadership and steps are being taken to eradicate it.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In and around the school, pupils are courteous to each other, adults and visitors. Despite the limited outdoor areas because of the new building work, pupils are coping well in a more confined space. This reflects their tolerance and understanding.
- There is minimal disruption to learning and, on the very few occasions when it occurs, staff are applying the behaviour policy meaningfully. Pupils respond to this instantly and positively.
- The school environment is full of exciting art work created by current and past pupils. All exhibits are respected and there is no damage, even when they are large and intrusive within stairwells. The site is free from litter and graffiti.
- Attendance has improved for all pupils and is close to the national average. For the significant groups, such as disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, attendance is better now than the national average. There are still a minority of families who take children out of school for holidays and this has an impact on the persistent absence figures, which are just above national averages. Senior leaders are aware of the cases and circumstances and are working with these families to reduce this figure further.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- School leaders have responded robustly to the issue of coasting. There has been consistent improvement at key stage 4. All groups that were below the national average previously, such as boys, low- and middle-ability pupils and disadvantaged pupils, are working at levels that are closer to or in line with national averages. Progress in Year 10 is stronger than Year 11 and most pupils are already in line with ability-related expectations, including disadvantaged pupils.
- Current pupils are making strong progress in key stage 3 in a wide range of subjects, including mathematics and English. Middle leaders have worked with their primary colleagues to understand fully the skills, knowledge and understanding with which pupils will be entering Year 7. Schemes of work have been adapted accordingly, so that there is no lapse in the continuum of learning. So, regardless of starting points, the majority of these pupils are building on prior learning in a way that better supports the work done in key stage 4.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are working as well as their peers dependent on their starting points. Staff are more aware of these pupils' needs and skilful teaching assistants provide the necessary support to ensure that their progress is sustained.
- Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are given dedicated reading time in English lessons and tutor time. They are showing themselves to be avid readers and are challenging themselves with adult fiction when appropriate. Reading habits are logged by the librarian, so those who are not reading as much can be targeted and supported to read more widely. It is clear from texts studied in English that this groundwork benefits pupils tackling the complex and sophisticated texts in the English curriculum as they progress through the school.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next steps, whether that be from year to year or phase to phase. Transition processes are thorough and informative so that pupils can make seamless moves as they go on in their education, regardless of ability or group distinction.
- Progress has not been rapid because middle leaders have not been rigorous enough in holding teachers to account for underachievement in classes and groups. Current steps to mitigate this are bearing fruit and middle leaders are more aware of the necessity for this action.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders of the sixth form have high expectations of students and staff. They have maintained good standards over a number of years by ensuring that courses are appropriate for students' future aspirations and that the qualifications on entry are at the right level and suitable for extension into chosen subjects.
- Students have clear plans for their future and the leaders know what these are. The impressive quality of support in this area is shown by the many students who go on to attend Russell Group universities, apprenticeships and Oxbridge. There are no students who leave the school without the leaders knowing of their destinations. Last year,

leaders knew the whereabouts of every student in the terms following their departure and each was involved in a purposeful plan or work, training and education.

- Leaders recognise the prominent position of the school in the community and have created new courses, many of them vocational at levels 1 and 2, to enhance the employability skills of future leavers. These courses are productive because they ensure that students do not leave Year 11 without a career path, although sometimes the results are lower than those of academic achievers.
- Teaching is planned effectively and, as in the main school, subject knowledge is a strength, particularly in the single sciences. Teachers who are not subject specialists have trained and prepared themselves well so that students are not disadvantaged.
- There is a culture of positivity in the sixth form. Students are responsive and engage well with their learning, especially in the academic subjects, and the results show this. As groups have a mixture of abilities, there is some scope for further challenge for the most able so that more gain the highest grades and maximise their potential.
- Students are confident and self-assured; they speak highly of the teaching and support they receive. Students participate in work experience and appreciate the practical preparation this provides for the world beyond school.
- Students retaking level 2 qualifications to improve their English and mathematics GCSE results are achieving above national average outcomes. Many go on to study level 3 qualifications in the sixth form or neighbouring colleges.

School details

Unique reference number	139553
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10033145

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

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 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	954
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	184
Appropriate authority	Local governing body
Chair	Pat Glover
Headteacher	Sharon Marshall
Telephone number	01271 863427
Website	http://www.ilfracombeacademy.org.uk/
Email address	admin@ilfracombeacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 February 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets the Department for Education’s definition of a coasting school based on key stage 4 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about Year 7 catch-up funding on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Ilfracombe Arts College became The Ilfracombe Church of England Academy in May 2013 when it joined St Christopher’s Multi-Academy Trust. The Academy’s articles of

association were amended to church articles in January 2015.

- The Ilfracombe Church of England Academy is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average and, for those who have an education, health and care plan, is above the national average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress at key stage 4.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons, many jointly with senior leaders.
- A wide sample of pupils' work, from all year groups and a range of subjects, was scrutinised.
- Inspectors talked with groups of pupils from key stages 3, 4 and 5, as well as with pupils informally across the site.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a member of the governing body and directors for the trust. The lead inspector had a telephone call with the chair of governors.
- Documentary and other types of information were evaluated, including evidence relating to safeguarding, assessment, school evaluation and external reviews.
- Inspectors took account of the 136 responses to and 72 comments in the online Parent View survey, the parental survey undertaken by the school; the 62 responses to the pupil survey and the 87 responses to the staff online survey.

Inspection team

Kathy Maddocks, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Malcolm Davison	Ofsted Inspector
Non Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Stuart Ingram	Ofsted Inspector

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