

# The Elizabethan Academy

Hallcroft Road, Retford, DN22 7PY

## Inspection dates

19–20 March 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Students make good progress in a range of subjects. Achievement in modern foreign languages is particularly strong.
- Teachers develop students' literacy skills well. There is some outstanding teaching in a number of subjects, including English, drama and science.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress because they receive high-quality support.
- Behaviour and safety are good because students get on well with their teachers. Mixed-age tutor groups help develop students' social skills well.
- Senior leaders' plans for improvement identify the correct priorities. Subject leaders check the quality of teaching through a robust programme of monitoring activities. As a result the school is improving.
- Governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. Link governors hold subject leaders to account well.
- The sixth form is good. Students achieve well and many go on to study at leading universities.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, lesson activities are too easy for some students and too hard for others.
- Marking is not yet consistently effective across all subject areas.
- Boys and the most able students do not achieve as highly as other groups of students.
- Not all school improvement plans identify measurable targets.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 lessons, four of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors undertook a thorough work scrutiny that examined students' progress in a number of subjects across several year groups.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and subject leaders, groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors.
- Inspectors considered the views of the 34 parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the school's own surveys of parents.
- Inspectors looked at the school's data on students' progress, lesson plans, minutes of meetings and records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance. They also reviewed the school's checks on how well it is doing and school improvement plans.

## Inspection team

Lisa Fraser, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Paul O'Shea	Additional Inspector
Gwendoline Onyon	Additional Inspector
Annette Patterson	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is larger than most secondary schools.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is broadly average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority and those with a parent in the armed services.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- Twenty students in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 attend off-site alternative provision for part of their learning at a range of providers including North Notts College, Retford College of Motor Vehicles, Yasig in Gainsborough, Wetlands in Sutton Cum Lound, Northern Racing College, Cast Angling project in Newstead Village and Getahead in Retford.
- The Elizabethan Academy converted to become an academy school in November 2012. When its predecessor school The Elizabethan High School was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school works in partnership with Retford Oaks Academy and North Notts College to offer courses in the sixth form at The Retford Post-16 Centre.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that the achievement of all students, particularly boys and the most able, improves by:
  - making sure that work provides sufficient challenge for the most able and is not too difficult for others
  - sharing the good practice in marking which exists in some subjects more widely across the school.
- Improve the quality of leadership by making sure that:
  - all school improvement plans identify measurable targets so that governors can better hold senior leaders to account when evaluating their success.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school with average skills in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2013, in its first year as an academy, the proportion of students achieving five GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, was in line with the national average. The proportions of students making and exceeding expected progress from Year 7 to Year 11 were below national averages. However, the school's data and evidence from the inspection indicate that both standards and progress have improved in the current year, and that students are on track to achieve much better results in 2014.
- Inspectors observed students' good progress in lessons across a range of subjects. Students achieve particularly well in languages as a result of strong subject leadership which ensures that students begin to develop the skills they need to be successful in the GCSE examination from Year 7. In the past, boys have not achieved as well as girls, but leaders have collected data which show that the gender achievement gap is now closing.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress because they are supported well by teaching assistants in lessons. Their overall achievement is tracked and monitored well by the head of special educational needs because school leaders are committed to securing equality of opportunity. Weaker readers are supported in learning phonics (linking the letters to the sounds they make) by outstanding teaching which is helping them to make rapid progress.
- Gaps in attainment between students supported by the pupil premium and their classmates remain. In 2013, the results of these students at the end of Year 11 were around a grade lower than those of their peers. However, more effective use of the additional funding is reducing the gap. For example, students in Year 10 who are supported by the pupil premium are now just over half a grade behind their peers in both English and mathematics. Additional funding is spent on a range of initiatives, including one-to-one support sessions, music tuition, instrument hire and providing access to cultural activities such as trips to London museums and the National Space Centre.
- Year 7 catch-up funding has been used to provide weaker readers and students below Level 4 in mathematics with intensive 10-week programmes of support. As a result, both students' reading ages and number skills have considerably improved.
- Students are entered early for GCSE examinations in some subjects including English and mathematics. In mathematics, the proportion achieving A\* and A grades is below average. Although they make good progress in some lessons, the most able students have not made consistently good progress over time.
- In the sixth form, students are well prepared for the next stage in their learning because achievement at A level is good. Many go on to study at a range of universities on courses which include medicine, veterinary science and engineering. Students perform less well at AS level. Good leadership ensures those who are underachieving receive extra help and support. In geography, students make excellent progress as a result of teachers' expert subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject.
- A small number of students in Key Stage 4 study off-site for part of their learning with other providers. Their attendance and progress are monitored closely by school leaders to ensure most achieve well.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- The quality of teaching is typically good and there is some outstanding teaching in a number of subjects, including English, science and drama.
- In the large majority of lessons, relationships between students and teachers are good because teachers plan lessons carefully. Teachers use good questioning techniques to probe the most able students for more detailed answers.
- Some teachers provide particularly imaginative and creative activities to stimulate and interest students. For example, GCSE students from a mix of year groups made outstanding progress in their understanding of character when working on imaginative activities in a drama lesson. In a science lesson in Year 10 on power, students were inspired by the teacher's excellent subject knowledge and high aspirations. As a result, students made outstanding progress.
- Teaching assistants are linked to particular subjects and give good support to disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- Senior leaders' initiatives to ensure that all teachers develop students' literacy skills have made a difference. Inspectors observed good reinforcement of literacy skills across the range of subjects, particularly in history and geography where students are often asked to write imaginative extended pieces of writing.
- Students commented that the school's online 'virtual learning environment' helps them to organise their homework tasks.
- There is not yet a consistent approach to marking across the school. In most subjects, but not all, marking lets students know what they need to do to improve their work, but they are not always expected to respond to this feedback.
- In a few lessons, work is not pitched at a suitable level for all students to make rapid progress. It is too easy for some and too hard for others, and teachers do not always keep a close check on students' understanding in order to adjust the difficulty of work as the lesson progresses.
- Teaching in the sixth form is characterised by a positive working atmosphere and strong relationships.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of students is good. Students have positive attitudes to learning as a result of the school's encouraging ethos. In lessons, students are nearly always cooperative and keen to do well. Around the school students are polite, well-mannered and friendly. Punctuality to lessons is good and students behave responsibly at lunch and break times in the dining hall.
- Attendance is improving and is in line with the national average. Fixed-term exclusions are reducing as a result of better and more consistently applied systems of sanctions and rewards. Leaders have also introduced an 'inclusion centre' which offers extra support for students who may be falling behind in lessons.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say they feel safe at school and their parents agree. Students have a good understanding of the different types of bullying. Students commented that sometimes they overhear racist comments but inspectors

found that these instances are taken seriously by school leaders and meticulously logged.

- Leaders have focused on developing leadership opportunities for students. There are numerous examples of students supporting younger pupils in primary school events and local sports activities. One student explained that she was a 'pastoral ambassador' who had received training to help sort out the problems of other students.
- Although the great majority of students are positive about their learning, there are a few, often boys, who choose to sit quietly and not fully take part in lessons. Students do not behave quite as well in lessons led by temporary teachers as with their regular teachers.
- Sixth formers say they enjoy their learning, feel well supported and are happy at school.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The school's monitoring and evaluation indicate that senior leaders know the school well. Plans for improvement have already been effective in improving the quality of teaching and students' achievement. The current school improvement plan identifies appropriate priorities for further development.
- Systems for checking the quality of teaching are good and improving. Assessments of teachers' performance are used to inform decisions around pay and to reward good performance. Teachers' pay rises and promotion are linked to students' good progress.
- Subject leaders make a good contribution to monitoring the quality of teaching through an effective programme of activities throughout the school year. This includes scrutiny of homework and students' work, visits by governors and checks on students' progress with senior leaders.
- Staff benefit from coaching by experienced colleagues. Some staff have been supported to improve their teaching through the school's 'Improving Teacher Programme'. All staff have at least two formal lesson observations. In addition, leaders make regular unannounced 'drop-in' visits to lessons.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, clearly seen in the numerous high-quality displays in corridors and reinforced well in several subject areas. For example, in an art lesson in Year 8 on African masks, students made outstanding progress because they had the opportunity to improve their work following discussion and review with their classmates.
- Powerful assemblies help students develop compassion and a sense of empathy with others. Students demonstrate good levels of respect for each other and staff. Mixed-age tutor groups are popular with students and help to develop their social skills.
- The range of subjects on offer has recently been reviewed. Students are now taught in mixed-age groups from Year 9 onwards in some subjects. Leaders are monitoring this closely to make sure that all students make the progress expected. The overall choice and range of subjects meet students' needs and interests.
- Senior leaders have a wealth of data available to them but they are not always using this in their improvement planning to identify specific and measurable targets. This makes it difficult for the governing body to hold leaders to account over whether these plans are making as much difference as they should to students' attainment.

- As an academy the school is no longer obliged to work with the local authority, but good links have been maintained.
- The school takes all reasonable steps to ensure good behaviour and the safety of students when attending off-site provision.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have an appropriate knowledge of published data about the school's performance. Link governors contribute to raising standards in all areas of the school's work by examining the work of subject departments closely. Governors are well briefed on the arrangements for the management of teachers' work and understand the link between good teaching and salary progression. The governing body receives regular reports on how additional funding is being used to support students eligible for the pupil premium. Governors seek to update their knowledge and skills by attending appropriate training. The governing body makes sure that arrangements for keeping students safe are secure and meet national requirements.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138076
<b>Local authority</b>	Nottinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	440691

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1098
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	174
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ronald Parry
<b>Principal</b>	Lynn Kenworthy
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01777 713700
<b>Fax number</b>	01777 713711
<b>Email address</b>	office@elizabethan.notts.sch.uk

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