

# The Oxford Academy

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135675
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	361460
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 October 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Kekshan Salaria HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	804
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	169
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Leslie Stephen
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Mike Reading
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Sandy Lane West Littlemore, Oxford OX4 6JZ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 36 lessons delivered by 34 different teachers. Meetings were held with academy leaders, groups of students, including those in the sixth form, members of staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. They observed the academy's work, and looked at the operational development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, records of monitoring and evaluation of the academy's work, policies and students' work. In addition, the inspectors reviewed responses to questionnaires completed by students, member of staff and 80 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the academy's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- How rigorous, effective and consistent are systems for monitoring and evaluating the academy's work and its impact on outcomes for students?
- Are the systems for tracking and reviewing progress ensuring all students achieve challenging targets?
- Is the inclusion of all learners central to the academy's vision and are leaders at all levels effective in helping the students to overcome barriers to engagement and success?
- How convincing is the academy's evidence that it demonstrates good capacity to improve?

## Information about the school

The Oxford Academy opened in September 2008 with students from the predecessor school and will move into its new building in January 2011. It has subject specialism in sports.

Most of the students are of White British heritage, but there are a few from a range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well-above average. An above-average proportion of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities relating mainly to their learning or behaviour. The academy's roll includes a few looked after children. The academy has significant involvement with local parents and carers and has secured a national gold standard for parental/carers engagement.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

The Oxford Academy is providing a satisfactory standard of education. It is improving rapidly. The principal provides clear educational direction for the academy. He has steered it successfully through a period of turbulence with many staff changes and has united the staff in his drive to promote improvement and raise attainment. A cohesive senior team has been created to focus firmly on raising standards and promoting the personal development and well-being of all students. The senior leaders have put into place strategies which are helping students to achieve challenging targets - evident in the rapid progress some students are beginning to make. Supported by external reviews, the academy's self-evaluation is robust. The priorities for action and individual roles and responsibilities for the timely achievement of success are understood clearly by staff. Regular monitoring and evaluation of professional practice, good opportunities for professional enrichment and sharing of best practice extended through teamwork, peer mentoring and coaching, contribute to the academy's good capacity to sustain further improvement.

Students join the academy with attainment that is exceptionally low, particularly so in English and mathematics. Although attainment at the end of Year 11 remains low, it is improving rapidly. Currently, students are making satisfactory progress, but this too is improving quickly and securely. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The emphasis on monitoring teaching and encouraging good practice has raised its quality. There are strengths in teaching. Students feel involved in their learning because they are given a clear idea of what they are expected to learn and achieve by the end of each lesson. Relationships between adults and students are good and help learners to tackle their work with confidence. Where teaching is less successful, particularly in Key Stage 3, it is because there is insufficient challenge, particularly for the more able. These teachers spend too much time talking, allowing insufficient time for students to develop their speaking skills or explore issues for themselves and consolidate their understanding. Some teaching does not always make the best use of assessment information to plan for students' individual needs. The number of students who are persistently absent has reduced considerably. The students generally behave well in lessons and around the academy because they know what is expected of them.

The curriculum is inclusive and responsive to the expressed needs and interests of the students and their families. To this end, new subjects and qualifications have been introduced. The introduction of hair and beauty studies is one such example. The curriculum includes specific interventions and special support programmes which lead to accreditation. In addition, students in Year 7, appropriately, focus on improving basic skills so that they can access the curriculum fully throughout Key Stages 3 and 4. The academy has invested heavily in information and communication technology (ICT) in the new

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building. The leadership and management and teaching and learning of this subject, however, are inadequate and high priorities for improvement.

Currently the impact of the specialist subject, physical education, is satisfactory. This, in the main, is due to the effective partnership with a local provider, which has developed many sought-after courses in this subject.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and, in particular, the use of assessment to improve students' attainment and progress by:
  - - using secure assessment information to plan learning activities that support individual learning needs well
  - - developing teachers' skills in the use of strategies to check that learning is taking place throughout the lesson
  - - providing greater challenge and pace to accelerate students' progress
  - - providing more opportunities for students to engage in active, participative learning.
- Improve students' achievement and progress in information and communication technology (ICT) by:
  - taking immediate action to eradicate inadequate teaching
  - establishing strong leadership that identifies the strengths and areas for further improvement accurately based upon secure evidence which is used to disseminate good practice and hold staff to account
  - engaging students through appropriate and challenging provision which meets needs and promotes rapid progress.
- Up to 40 of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

At the end of Year 11, the 2010 results showed a significant increase in the proportion of students gaining five A\* to C GCSE grades and in the percentage achieving five of these grades, including English and mathematics. Attainment is rising rapidly but inconsistently across subjects. Students' achievement, overall, is satisfactory and accelerating in relation to their low starting points. Students needing additional support, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make the same progress as their classmates because of the effective additional support they receive.

There is a close connection between the quality of teaching and the students' response and consequent progress. The majority of lessons seen in Year 7, for example, are lively, engaging and pitched at the right level. The students respond with enthusiasm and growing confidence. Added to this, they understand clearly how they are doing and what they must do next. The inspectors also observed good learning and progress delivered through well-planned lessons in English, mathematics and drama, particularly in Key Stage

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4, when teachers used assessment, including target grades, consistently well to assess students' grasp of the work and to provide extra support or explanation if there were misconceptions. Faced with satisfactory teaching, students' progress slows, their concentration slips and their motivation drifts.

The students feel safe. Any rare incidents of bullying are effectively dealt with. The academy community is a harmonious one. There have been a few racially motivated incidents and the academy takes responsibility for ensuring that the students understand the implications of racial harmony. The students have a good understanding of moral issues. They know how to live healthily and many take up extra-curricular sport and other fitness activities.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

The teaching is satisfactory overall. There are good lessons in which teachers have high expectations, gain students' interest and involve them from the outset. Throughout such lessons, appropriate strategies are used to check for gains in knowledge and understanding. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards to engage and motivate students and they have opportunities to discuss their learning in pairs or small groups. However, the students are often passive recipients of information, expected to watch or to listen for too long. This slows their progress.

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Curriculum provision is improving. The students speak highly of the changes. However, very little evidence was seen of ICT being used to enhance learning across all subjects or to engage students through appropriate and challenging provision. A programme of enrichment opportunities helps to widen students' experiences and includes a good number of sports and music clubs.

Strong, well-organised systems for care, guidance and support benefit all students, including those who are most in need. Support and advice are readily accessible for students. The students rate the support from the pastoral team highly and know to whom they can go for help. They value the good advice and guidance, such as visits to colleges of higher education that raise their aspirations and help them make well-informed choices about their future education and careers. The academy has improved attendance to average through a range of effective strategies, including conveying to both students and their parents and carers the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The principal provides leadership that is both challenging and clearly focused on improving standards, while maintaining an inclusive and caring ethos. His vision for the academy is shared by colleagues and the governing body. The principal is ably supported by his senior team and, together, they have taken significant action to ensure improvements. The inclusion of all learners and a desire to make a difference are strong drivers for the team's vision for the academy.

Strong systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the academy are in place, with the result that the senior members of staff have a good understanding of their relative strengths and weaknesses. All are held firmly accountable for the achievement of the students. There are effective middle leaders who, through rigorous and precise evaluation, maintain high standards. Not all are as effective. This is particularly the case in ICT.

The governing body is an enthusiastic supporter of the academy and has vigorously challenged senior leaders to improve students' achievement. It is aware that recent improvements are not yet securely embedded throughout the academy.

Partnerships, such as those with colleges, universities, companies and charities, contribute well to promoting students' well-being and learning. There is little bullying and any sign of discrimination is tackled with vigour. Good, secure safeguarding procedures and practices are in place. Checks on new staff are carried out correctly and recorded well and members of staff are confident and well trained to ensure students' safety. The promotion of

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equality and improving the life chances of students is at the heart of the academy's work. The academy makes good use of intervention sessions, which support and enable the students most in need to make satisfactory progress from their starting points. Additionally, senior leaders analyse performance data on all groups and ensure appropriate action is taken.

Community cohesion has been considered carefully and the involvement of the academy in an international project with other schools and community groups has helped to promote this. Financial management is sound. The students' satisfactory outcomes mean that resources are deployed to achieve an equivalent value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Sixth form

The students achieve well and make good progress from their starting points to complete their courses and gain qualifications. The teachers' secure subject knowledge and good relationships are strengths of well-planned and carefully structured lessons. The teachers make good use of information about students' target grades and current achievement when they plan their lessons. Consequently, students of different abilities are challenged appropriately. A positive ethos ensures that the students enjoy their studies. The students receive well-structured guidance both prior to entry into the sixth form and for their futures. They are conscientious and hard working. They make a strong contribution, both to the life of the academy and in the wider community, for example, by supporting younger students in lessons and by helping to develop sport in the academy's partner primary schools. They provide positive role models in the academy. The students are cared for and supported well and their attendance has risen sharply and is now high. The academy does much to raise their aspirations and to encourage and enable them to progress to university.

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The curriculum is a weaker aspect of sixth form provision. The number of students limits the size of the programme that the academy is able to offer, although partnership work with local schools and colleges helps to widen the range of available courses. Sensible decisions are being made about the expansion of the curriculum as student numbers increase. The sixth form is well led. Although it is smaller than the average sixth form, numbers are increasing. The senior leaders recognise the sixth form's strengths and weaknesses and understand the students' needs. The leaders are taking a pragmatic and sensible approach to the sixth form's growth, carefully managing its development in a way that is measured and financially viable.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

A very low proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Their responses were largely positive, in particular about the recent improvements. Parents and carers value the support provided by the academy when their children transfer from primary school. A few raised concerns about how well the academy communicated with them. The inspectors investigated these concerns and found that programmes to involve parents and carers in the life of the academy, as well as systems to act on their views, were wide ranging and regularly evaluated in order to improve further. Some parents and carers raised concerns about the quality of students' learning and their progress. The inspectors found that a good deal of attention is given to meeting students' academic needs and their welfare. A few parents and carers also raised concerns about students' behaviour. The inspection team found behaviour to be satisfactory.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Oxford Academy to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 80 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 804 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	29	45	56	9	11	2	3
The school keeps my child safe	18	23	57	71	3	4	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	15	19	55	69	9	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	20	52	65	11	14	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	15	19	53	66	9	11	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	14	49	61	15	19	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	6	8	55	69	11	14	2	3
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	9	11	55	69	9	11	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	16	52	65	7	9	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	15	42	53	17	21	3	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	10	44	55	15	19	3	4
The school is led and managed effectively	13	16	54	68	7	9	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	16	56	70	7	9	2	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



22 October 2010

Dear Students

**Inspection of The Oxford Academy, Sandy Lane West, Littlemore, Oxford OX4 6JZ**

I write to you on behalf of the inspection team to share our main findings.

We really enjoyed meeting you. Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaires and for talking to us so honestly about the academy and the progress you are making. Your parents or carers will have a copy of the full report should you wish to read it.

The overall effectiveness of the academy is satisfactory. The leaders and managers are doing a good job in bringing about improvements. Your examination and test results are improving and standards are rising. We were impressed by your positive attitudes to learning. Most of you enjoy academy life and appreciate the wide range of extra activities available to you.

You told us you feel well looked after. You really value the positive relationships you have with each other and with staff. Many of you welcome responsibility and take up the opportunities to make a positive contribution to the academy and the wider community, especially in the sixth form.

Everyone is determined to keep on improving and we talked with the staff and governors about some things they will be working on to help the academy to improve even further:

- strengthening the quality of teaching by helping teachers plan lessons that allow you all to make good progress in learning and share their best practice
- making sure that the most able of you are provided with more challenging tasks so you achieve the highest possible grades
- improving the leadership and management and teaching and learning in information and communication technology.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all the very best for your future studies. Enjoy the new building.

Yours sincerely

Kekshan Salaria

Her Majesty's Inspector

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