

Dixons Allerton Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135866
Local authority	NA
Inspection number	381941
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Jane Austin HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
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	1,156
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jo Williams
Principal	Rachel Kidd
Date of previous school inspection	NA
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 50 lessons taught by 49 teachers and made nine shorter visits to sessions. Meetings were held with the principal, staff, groups of students, the chair of the governing body and the executive principal of the sponsoring academy. Inspectors observed the academy's work, and looked at planning documents, data on students' progress, information about community projects and the procedures for safeguarding students. Questionnaires completed by 86 parents and carers, as well as 91 staff, were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the academy's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of measures to raise students' attainment and achievement.
- The quality of teaching and its impact on students' learning and progress.
- The level of students' attendance and how well their behaviour supports learning.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers in driving improvement.

Information about the academy

This academy, sponsored by Dixons City Academy, opened in September 2009. It is larger than the average secondary school and has more boys than girls on roll. A very substantial proportion of students are from minority ethnic groups, with about two thirds coming from Pakistani backgrounds. A significant number have arrived recently from Eastern Europe, some with limited experience of formal education. English is an additional language for about half of the students, a very high proportion compared with the national picture. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average although the number who have a statement of special educational needs is below average. The academy's specialisms are health and science: it has gained Healthy School status. The academy is recognised as an Investor in People and has recently gained the Investing in Community Engagement award.

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

3

Main findings

The academy provides a satisfactory education for its students. Since opening, there have been wide-ranging improvements resulting in the establishment of a calm and ordered learning ethos. As a consequence, attainment is rising. In 2011, there was a significant increase in the proportion of students gaining at least five GCSE passes at grades A*–C including English and mathematics. Students' achievement is satisfactory because, although their attainment remains low, their progress is accelerating securely. Students' behaviour is satisfactory and their attendance has risen to broadly average. Generally students are punctual and wear their uniforms with pride. As a consequence of clear-sighted leadership and effective planning, there have been rapid improvements to the sixth form which is good overall. Thorough monitoring has helped to ensure that students stay on track so that they make good progress to reach above average results.

Under the principal's resolute leadership, key systems and structures have been put in place, providing a firm foundation for improvements to date, as well as ensuring the academy's capacity for further development is satisfactory. Pivotal is the system for tracking students' progress and intervening rapidly to support those who are falling behind: staff at all levels play an essential part in this. Clear lines of accountability and communication enable senior and middle leaders to discharge their roles and responsibilities satisfactorily. The satisfactory leadership of teaching and learning is increasingly sharply focused on precise areas for development. Regular opportunities for professional development are welcomed by staff, many of whom attend voluntarily. The positive impact of training is progressively more evident in lessons.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory: it is improving and, consequently, students' learning is gaining momentum. However, in some lessons students maintain a passive approach to their learning because activities do not promote the skills for independence sufficiently. Regular opportunities to moderate judgements ensure that assessments are increasingly accurate. Nonetheless, information about students' learning is not always used effectively in planning lessons with appropriate levels of challenge for all. At times, opportunities to develop students' oracy and literacy are missed because a structured approach to this is lacking.

Following a recent restructure, the curriculum, while satisfactory at present, is flexible and highly responsive to students' needs. A strength of the curriculum is the

contribution it makes to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is good. There is a broad variety of opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills, for instance through becoming a 'hero' as part of the 'humanutopia' programme. Students act as role models within the academy and as ambassadors without, devising and delivering their own programmes in partner primary schools, for example. Students make a good contribution to the community locally; for instance, through involvement in a local project to radically revamp the facilities in a nearby park and, further afield, through regular financial support for young people in Nepal. The curriculum is enriched well through the 'study+' programme which broadens students' horizons and experiences: students say they enjoy this.

The care, guidance and support for students are good and make a significant contribution to their improved learning. Effective support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as for those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, ensures that they make the same satisfactory progress as their peers. The academy works with great sensitivity to understand the circumstances and to accommodate the needs of students recently arrived from Eastern Europe.

The strategic leadership of the governing body is good. Governors are very well placed both to challenge and support the academy. Governance forms a key link between the academy and its sponsor. This strong partnership has benefited the academy greatly, providing considerable support, for instance, for data analysis, quality assurance and financial management. The academy provides satisfactory value for money.

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.

What does the academy need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' learning in order to raise attainment by:
 - ensuring that teaching is at least good
 - increasing structured opportunities to develop oracy and literacy
 - making better use of assessment information to plan lessons with high levels of challenge that promote sustained engagement
 - fostering students' independence in learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

From low levels of attainment on entry, students make satisfactory progress. Their attainment at the end of Year 11 remains low. Although there is some variation in the attainment of groups, notably girls attaining more highly than boys, all groups make similar rates of progress. Overall, rates of progress are increasing as teaching improves and assessment becomes more accurate. Target-setting is being used more effectively to focus on rates of progress; this has raised teachers' expectations of students. Frequent monitoring of individual student's learning, accompanied by carefully monitored, staged interventions, has been established so that staff can

respond quickly to any barriers to learning. Good relationships between staff and students contribute well to students' generally positive attitudes to their work. They enjoy learning most when it is practical and linked to real life situations. However, when tasks are too abstract or lessons are dominated by teachers' discourse, students adopt a passive approach to learning. Increased rates of attendance, now broadly satisfactory, and the much reduced incidence of persistent absence, also contribute to students' improving progress.

The house system, with its all-age tutor groups, ensures that students are known as individuals and feel safe. It provides the structure within which they develop the skills for adult life and make a good contribution to the community. In this context students develop a good, broad-based understanding of healthy lifestyles, reflecting the academy's specialism. They take up the opportunities to participate in a wide variety of sporting activities, such as zumba and ju-jitsu, as well as sharing in the development of an allotment. Through their houses, academy council and 'humanutopia' programme, students' opinions are voiced and taken into account. Such experiences, along with confidence in the use of information and communication technology, mean that students' preparation for employment or the next stage of their education is satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Overall, teaching and the use of assessment are satisfactory. The accuracy of assessment is improving, more strongly at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3, as a consequence of training and a regime of regular moderation. Where lessons are better, teachers have high expectations of both learning and behaviour, and their classroom management is good. Lessons are planned well so that a variety of activities and groupings helps to maintain a brisk pace and secure students' sustained engagement. Well-structured questioning makes students think deeply and demands fully-articulated answers. Students know their targets: opportunities for peer- and self-assessment help them to understand what is required and how to

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

reach them. Where lessons are less successful, activities are not closely enough matched to students’ needs so their interest wanes, learning slows and there is sometimes some ill-mannered behaviour. Opportunities are missed to promote students’ speaking and listening skills, for instance, when one-word answers and inaccurate use of English are accepted. Across the academy, marking is variable in quality so students are not always sure how to improve their work.

The satisfactory curriculum is increasingly responsive to students’ individual needs. Recent changes mean that support for Key Stage 3 students with limited literacy skills is more systematic. However, the development of basic skills, including oracy and literacy, across the curriculum is not sufficiently structured. At Key Stage 4, an innovative model, recently introduced, allows considerable flexibility in the pathways available to students. Across the academy, a well-structured programme to foster students’ personal and social development is delivered through Learning Family Time. While offering a broad range of pertinent experiences, the variation in the quality of delivery limits its full effectiveness. A notable strength of the curriculum is the many and varied enrichment activities available to students. The introduction of ‘study+’ sessions enables students to extend their experiences, for instance, by trying horse riding and scuba diving.

The care, guidance and support for students are good. Strategies to raise attendance and improve punctuality are proving effective. Restorative practices are supporting better behaviour. Thoughtful approaches to understanding barriers to attendance for recently arrived Roma students are paying dividends. The nurture programmes for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are closely matched to individual needs and helpfully focus on raising levels of oracy and literacy. Students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable receive good support, including from specialist agencies that work in partnership with the academy. There are comprehensive transition arrangements for prospective Year 7 students, some facilitated by students who are designated ‘heroes’. New sixth form students receive a good quality induction.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The principal is ambitious for the academy’s students. With determination, she has built a cohesive leadership team who share the vision for the academy. Although comparatively new, essential systems have been put in place which are having a positive impact on students’ attainment and progress. Leadership is distributed effectively so that middle leaders are clear about what is expected of them and staff are held to account for the performance of students. Tried and tested systems developed by the sponsor academy, for tracking students’ progress and quality assurance provision, have been adopted and adapted successfully. The very frequent

review of students' progress, which resulted in improvements to attainment for the outgoing Year 11, has been extended to all year groups. The expertise of a wide range of staff is drawn upon to support those whose progress is faltering. The teaching and learning group is proactive in identifying where improvements to practice are needed and providing carefully targeted support and training.

The governing body ensures that statutory requirements are met, including those regarding safeguarding students. There is a rigorous programme for reviewing and updating policies. Equal opportunities are promoted satisfactorily, with no marked difference in the performance of the various groups of students. The academy works hard to tackle discrimination, for example, in developing an understanding of the culture of Roma students. The promotion of community cohesion is good. Within the academy, this is fostered well through the house system, all-age tutor groups and 'study+' activities. Further afield, good partnership working with a wide range of community groups and projects is extending students' experiences well. In addition, it is having a very positive impact on local perceptions of the academy so that it is now over-subscribed. International links are sustained and informed. Partnerships with parents and carers are good, supported by regular and frequent reports on students' progress. The academy ensures that families are kept informed, not only when there are difficulties but also when praise is due.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

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

Sixth form

The leadership and management of the sixth form are good with a clear vision and strong drive for improvement. This is evident in the marked improvements in students' progress, attendance and retention rates. From attainment on entry that is lower than typical for school sixth forms, rates of progress increased markedly in the last academic year. Students now make good progress towards challenging targets in academic and vocational courses. This is reflected in the significant improvement in results, with pass rates rising from well below average overall in 2010 to above average in 2011. This enabled many students to reach the universities of their choice. Attendance has increased substantially and is good.

Teaching is good, fostering a strong work ethos and independence in learning. The range of courses available is enhanced considerably by the array of opportunities for students to develop their personal and leadership skills. Sixth form students play key parts in the house system, all-age tutor groups and in the 'humanutopia' programme. Through this, for example, they lead sessions in primary schools and activities to smooth the transition of primary pupils into the academy. Some regularly deliver sessions to younger students as part of the timetabled 'study+' courses. Students are supported well through individual mentoring sessions and guided effectively, sometimes with the help of external partners, towards the next stage of their education or employment.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth Form	2
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

Fewer questionnaires were completed than is usual. Overall responses were less positive than is found nationally in academies. However, almost all parents and carers who returned questionnaires believe that their children enjoy academy life. Inspectors investigated areas of concern identified in responses and found that the academy provides frequent and regular reports on students' progress. There are a wide variety of ways in which healthy lifestyles are promoted successfully. Support for students as they join the academy and move through the stages of their education is good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dixons Allerton 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 86 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,156 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	34	52	60	3	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	25	29	53	62	4	5	3	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	23	27	47	55	12	14	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	22	52	60	9	10	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	24	28	52	60	6	7	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	21	49	57	12	14	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	20	47	55	16	19	2	2
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)	24	28	46	53	10	12	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	16	54	63	12	14	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	34	41	48	11	13	4	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	16	47	55	19	22	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	18	21	51	59	11	13	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	35	49	57	5	6	1	1

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



14 October 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Dixons Allerton Academy, Bradford, BD15 7RU

Thank you for making us welcome when we inspected your academy recently. We appreciated the opportunity to talk to some of you, including a group of heroes. Your views and comments helped us to reach our conclusions. We found that the academy provides you with a satisfactory education.

Since the academy opened your behaviour, attendance and punctuality have all improved and are satisfactory. There is a calm and purposeful working atmosphere. The house system and all-age tutor groups help to foster a sense of belonging. You make a good contribution to academy life, for instance through the humanutopia programme and regular charitable fundraising. You have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles and avoid risks. Some of you told us how much you enjoy the wide range of sporting activities on offer including zumba, horse riding and boxing.

The sixth form is good. Students make good progress and pass rates in academic and vocational qualifications are strong.

GCSE results rose substantially in 2011 but attainment remains low compared with the national average. So we have asked your principal and the staff to make the following improvements so that you make more rapid progress and your examination results improve.

- Ensure that teaching is good.
- Increase the opportunities for you all to improve your oracy and literacy.
- Plan lessons that challenge you all and keep you motivated to do your best.
- Encourage you all to work independently and take responsibility for your learning.

You can all help by consistently working hard, behaving well, and attending as much as possible.

Good wishes for your future success.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin
Her Majesty's Inspector

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