

North Oxfordshire Academy

Drayton Road, Banbury, OX16 0UD

Inspection dates 31 January–1 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- The number of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics has improved over the last three years. It is now in line with the national average. This is good achievement, given the students' below-average starting points.
- Teaching is good and helps students to achieve well.
- The Principal provides effective leadership. The senior leadership team are strongly focused on improving the school. They have been successful through their drive and ambition, particularly in improving students' achievement.
- The sixth form has improved and is now good. It provides an appropriate range of courses which meet the needs of its students.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is because of the strong support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.
- Students behave well, enjoy school and feel safe. They say that they feel valued and they appreciate the variety of activities provided for them.
- Governors are effective in supporting and challenging the school. They know the school well and are clear about its strengths and where it needs to improve.
- The issues highlighted in the previous inspection report have been successfully addressed.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although some marking is thorough and gives good advice to students about improving their work, this practice is not evident in all classes.
- There is variation in students' achievement between subjects; it is not yet consistent.
- Some strategies introduced to produce school improvement have not yet had time to show impact.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 30 lessons, of which 10 were jointly observed with a member of the school’s leadership team. Inspectors visited other learning activities and scrutinised samples of students’ work.
- Inspectors held meetings with four groups of students, school senior leaders, middle managers, a representative of the school’s sponsor, and the Chair of the Governing Body.
- A variety of school documentation was examined, including minutes of governors’ meetings, school self-evaluation, strategic plans, departmental plans, behaviour and attendance logs, and records relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors looked at records showing the development of skills in reading and heard the reading of a number of readers in Year 7.
- Inspectors took account of a questionnaire completed by 92 staff, together with the 27 responses submitted by parents and carers to the online Parent View website.

Inspection team

Sean Thornton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Paul O’Shea

Additional Inspector

Carol Worthington

Additional Inspector

Derek Wiles

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-size secondary school.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The school contains very small numbers of students from minority ethnic groups and almost all students speak English as their first language.
- An above-average proportion of students are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is average but the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A number of Key Stage 4 students receive part of their education off-site. These students are following work-related courses at Oxford and Cherwell Valley College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - all lessons proceed at a good pace and provide challenge for students of all abilities
 - all teachers provide a variety of activities in their lessons so that students' attention is sustained
 - there is a whole-school focus on improving students' reading so that they can read with understanding in all subjects
 - marking is thorough in all subjects so that all students are given clear written guidance on how to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When students join the school their levels of attainment are below the national average. Examination results are improving and the percentage of students gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics is now close to the national average. This represents good progress and achievement.
- Students achieve well across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, and vocational subjects such as hospitality and health and social care
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve as well as other students. This is a result of the good targeted support being provided by teachers and teaching assistants, who are well informed about these students' needs.
- The Key Stage 4 students who study off-site make good progress in their vocational courses because of good-quality, well-tailored provision. Arrangements for monitoring their progress, attendance and punctuality are good.
- The students who continue into the school's sixth form have GCSE results that are below the national average for school sixth forms. These students make good progress from their varied starting points and success rates are increasing. The number of students continuing to follow courses from Year 12 into Year 13 is increasing, as are the numbers gaining places at universities.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium also make good progress. The additional funding has been used effectively to provide a wide range of targeted support, including holiday schools, where extra teaching enables students to achieve higher grades, alternative provision and financial support to enable eligible students to attend activities that enrich their learning. These students have GCSE average points scores that are lower than their peers but the difference is reducing. Their rates of progress are much higher than similar groups of students nationally.
- The school has used a policy of early entry in mathematics, with most entries being made at the end of Year 10. This policy is now no longer being followed since the school found that it was reducing attainment.
- The rates of progress made by students show some variation between subjects and the school is working to bring about greater consistency. Students are making slower progress in science, history and geography.
- Many students join the school with low reading ages and this slows the rate at which they learn in some subjects. Standards of reading in the school are improving.
- The large majority of parents and carers responding to the online questionnaire believe that their children are making good progress; a view supported by the inspection team.

The quality of teaching is good

- Students' good progress is evidence of the impact of good teaching over time. Teachers show good subject knowledge, set high expectations and share enthusiasm for their subjects.

- Lessons are well planned and teachers use assessment effectively so that work is generally set at the right level for students. Lesson objectives set out expectations and teachers guide students as to the grades or levels to which they should be aspiring.
- In the large majority of lessons, teachers employ a variety of activities to engage and motivate students who respond well to opportunities to work in pairs or groups and take responsibility for their own learning. For example, in an outstanding Year 8 French lesson, students were enthused by lively teaching and worked well in pairs at different levels of challenge, developing a good understanding of complex verb tenses.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good or better. Class sizes are generally small and teachers take advantage of this in offering individual support and challenge to students at every opportunity.
- In a small number of lessons, teachers do not always plan activities that capture and maintain students' attention. This restricts the scope for students to make good progress.
- Literacy is a focus for the school and this priority is beginning to bear fruit in improving reading and written work. The school is increasing the use of phonics (sounding out words) to help students to improve their reading skills.
- Marking is regular and thorough in some classes but not in others; there is variation between and within subjects. This results in students not always being clear about how to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' behaviour is typically good in lessons and around the school. In most lessons, students concentrate well, showing positive attitudes and a desire to learn. Disruption in lessons is uncommon and is dealt with effectively.
- The school has a calm atmosphere and students move sensibly around the site. The organisation of the school day, where breaks occur at various times for different groups of students, helps to maintain this calm atmosphere.
- In the 2011 published figures, the rate of fixed-term exclusions is much below average. Since then, the school has increased its use of fixed-term exclusions so that fewer students suffer from disruption of their learning. There has been a marked reduction in repeat exclusions, showing the effectiveness of the school's support systems. A Year 11 student told an inspector that she had been badly behaved up to Year 9 but that the school had helped her to 'turn my life around' so that she was now making good progress and had a clear career plan for her future.
- Attendance has increased and is now average. The school puts great emphasis on the importance of attendance and employs outreach workers to work with families in order to improve it.
- Students feel safe in school and have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including when using the internet and mobile phones. They are aware of different kinds of bullying including racist behaviour and homophobia but report that incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with promptly.
- Sixth form students display mature good manners and act as excellent role models. They act as

mentors for younger students and support staff in their work.

- In their questionnaires, a small minority of parents and staff expressed concerns about poor behaviour in the school. The inspection team saw no evidence to support these concerns.

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal, supported by the senior leadership team, provides commitment, drive and ambition to improve all aspects of the school. There have been several changes of role within the senior leadership team so that there is good capacity for improvement.
- There is frequent monitoring and evaluation of students' progress, including for those in the sixth form. These systems now quickly show when students are not achieving their targets so that weaknesses can be remedied.
- Senior leaders evaluate teaching and its impact on learning. Their judgements on the quality of teaching are accurate and they identify where improvement is needed. The results of these evaluations are used well to plan an appropriate range of continuing professional development, which has led to raised standards.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and leads to a well-focused school improvement plan. However, some of the improvement initiatives have been in place for only a short time so have not yet produced sustained impact. For example, the school's improved system of focused lesson observations has not yet led to all teaching being good or better.
- The school has clarified the roles of its middle leaders and organised training in monitoring and evaluation for them. However, their checks on how well school policies and plans are put into practice in classrooms are not yet rigorous enough.
- The school offers a good range of subjects and courses, providing well for the needs and interests of its students. Staff work closely with primary schools to ensure that courses are well targeted in Year 7, and extra support is provided throughout the school in its nurture groups. Key Stage 4 students are offered a wide range of courses; the balance of this provision has been reviewed and more GCSE courses are now being introduced. The ranges of courses in the sixth form is also good; it is under constant review and responds well to the needs and aptitudes of its students. The innovative Personal Enrichment Programme enables all students to extend their learning through a wide range of enrichment activities.
- Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. A whole-school audit has been carried out and all subjects contribute to these important areas in addition to tutor-based activities, assemblies and religious education lessons. The school provides careers advice from Year 8 onwards so that students are very well prepared for the future. Students appreciate the range of activities that the school provides to assist their development.
- The school works hard to raise the aspirations not only of its students but also of their families, and dedicated staff are employed to ensure contact with them all. The school promotes all aspects of equality strongly.
- The system of performance management is effective and has been updated to respond to government changes. Salary progression occurs only when merited by sustained good performance.

- All aspects of safeguarding are fully met.
- The leading sponsor works closely with the school's leaders and governors and has a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Its representatives provide a range of support, including the construction of the school's five-year strategic plan and staff appointments.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have benefitted from regular training. They monitor many aspects of the school's work closely and ask challenging questions of school leaders. They also work in an effective partnership with the school's lead sponsor, with clear lines of responsibility. Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Individual governors work closely with particular subject areas and visit the school to hold discussions with middle leaders and to join lessons. Governors manage the school's finances well, for example by ensuring that the pupil premium is targeted and used effectively. Governors are fully involved in the performance management system for all teaching staff; all promotions, with their financial consequences, are discussed in a governor committee.

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

Unique reference number	135365
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	402696

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Community
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	1025
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Dennison
Principal	Sara Billins
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2010
Telephone number	01295 224300
Fax number	0871 2214565
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