

George Dixon Academy

Portland Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, West Midlands B16 9GD

Inspection dates

21–22 March 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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, in Years 7 to 11 make good progress from their starting points across most subjects. Progress towards good results at GCSE has been strong in every year since the last inspection.
- Leaders and staff pay great attention to pupils' welfare and provide many opportunities for pupils' personal development. Leaders have introduced good initiatives to give pupils a deep understanding of any risks that they might face. Pupils say they feel safe in school and that bullying is rare.
- Governors are well informed and offer appropriate challenge and support to school leaders.
- Leaders have designed a curriculum that allows pupils to take 'pathways' that meet their needs well. There is a variety of extra-curricular activities which pupils value.
- Pupils' behaviour is positive in almost all lessons and around the school site because leaders and teachers have consistently high expectations.
- Parents are given good opportunities to support their children's learning and to join in with the school community.
- Pupils are respectful of their teachers, each other and visitors. They listen to others' views intently and take an active part in their lessons.
- Teachers plan and teach their lessons carefully so that all pupils make good progress over time.
- Feedback to pupils from staff is highly effective. Pupils across subjects know how to improve their work and do so with consistency and commitment.
- Teaching and pupils' behaviour in key stage 3 geography does not match the high standards in the rest of the school.
- Students' progress on post-16 courses was weak in 2016, and the curriculum is not fully appropriate for some students. Non-qualification activity for Year 13 is not yet well structured or delivered.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in key stage 3 geography so that:
 - all pupils make at least good progress from their starting points
 - the behaviour in geography lessons matches the exemplary behaviour in other parts of the school.
- Rapidly improve progress in the sixth form by ensuring that:
 - teachers' assessments are accurate and interventions take place quicker when students fall behind
 - leaders have a clearer overview of the progress of students in the sixth form by using national comparisons when evaluating progress.
- Improve sixth-form study programmes by:
 - embedding the recent changes leaders have made to the post-16 curriculum
 - developing the curriculum further so that it meets the needs of all students, including the increasing number of Year 11 pupils who would like to join the sixth form
 - embedding the new non-qualification activity plans so that all students benefit from the recent improvements.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have created an inclusive, supportive, aspirational school culture. They have high expectations and the school is a calm, well-ordered environment. They have ensured that pupils' families are involved in the life of the school. Parents know how well their children are doing and what they need to do to improve, and benefit from a range of workshops to help them to support their children's education. At a recent parents' evening, over 90% of parents attended appointments to talk about their child's progress.
- Leaders have ensured that there is consistency in the quality of teaching across almost all subjects in school. They monitor teaching closely, taking into account pupils' assessments, alongside lesson observations. This means that training is carefully targeted, effective, and performance management takes into account pupils' progress.
- Leaders' work with newly qualified teachers is very effective. These new staff say that they are well supported and the training provided is of a high quality.
- Those eligible for pupil premium funding make good progress because leaders ensure that this funding is spent wisely on things that have the most impact. For example, new graduate teaching assistants who are highly trained in English, mathematics and science are ensuring that pupils who fall behind develop a good understanding of things that they are struggling with.
- Leaders spend extra funding effectively. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who enter the school having not secured a good level of literacy and numeracy make strong progress from their starting points.
- Where pupils cannot meet the high standards of behaviour that leaders require, they are well supported. Leaders have designed an effective six-week 'reintegration' programme to help pupils at risk of exclusion to succeed in school.
- Leaders place a strong emphasis on fundamental British values. The well-organised and effectively taught pastoral programme enables pupils to discuss issues about British values in detail. Inspectors saw numerous examples of pupils confidently explaining and discussing their beliefs and values, and those of other countries, cultures and traditions. Pupils do this in a respectful and mature way.
- Leaders review the curriculum annually to ensure that it meets pupils' needs. The new key stage 4 curriculum includes more subjects which create pathways to sixth-form study, and more vocational subjects. This means that pupils have a wide choice of courses appropriate to their aspirations and interests. It also provides highly challenging courses for the most able. Recent changes to the key stage 3 curriculum allow pupils to spend longer on project-based work in creative subjects. This leads to stronger progress in these subjects at key stage 3.
- A wide variety of extra-curricular activities complements the academic curriculum. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy these activities, though leaders do not yet monitor which groups take advantage of them and which do not.

- The newly appointed leader in the sixth form has made swift changes which are beginning to have a positive impact on students. Students told inspectors that opportunities and aspirations for them have improved markedly since September 2016. However, not all students have yet benefited from these recent improvements.
- Leaders do not yet have a clear understanding of the progress of post-16 students. While they do track these students closely through regular assessments, they do not put interventions into place early enough when students fall behind. Too little use is made of comparisons to national figures.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a wide range of very relevant skills so that they can effectively support and challenge the school to continually improve.
- They are well informed about most aspects of the school's performance. Records of governors' meetings show that they challenge leaders robustly, and hold them to account. They share and support the school leadership team's determination that all pupils, regardless of their starting points, can be successful.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the risks faced by young people in the locality and support the school in its work to safeguard pupils. For example, governors meet with pupils to see for themselves how well developed pupils' understanding of a range of risks is.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders place a strong emphasis on safeguarding. They have designed an effective curriculum for safeguarding so that pupils are well informed and know how to keep themselves safe from a range of risks. This curriculum includes, for example, visits from the police and theatre groups.
- Leaders are tenacious in following up concerns and ensuring that pupils get the support they need. Records are detailed and well organised and vetting checks for staff are comprehensive. Induction training on safeguarding is given to all staff before they commence work at the school.
- Staff are well trained and regularly updated to make sure that they have a good understanding of safeguarding and can effectively identify concerns. All have undertaken extra training in child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, and radicalisation and extremism.
- The safeguarding team has good capacity and includes an on-site social worker. This means that swift and effective support can be offered to pupils and their families when needed. This team meets formally and reviews each vulnerable pupil's progress and well-being fortnightly. This means that actions to safeguard and support pupils are well managed and monitored, including for those pupils who attend alternative provision.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Relationships between pupils and teachers are consistently positive. Pupils listen carefully and respectfully to teachers and one another. This enables teachers to focus fully on pupils' progress.
- Teachers plan lessons effectively. They take care to consider all pupils' starting points. Inspectors saw many examples of very effective support and appropriate challenge, particularly for high-ability pupils. This planning leads to pupils being very engaged in lessons.
- As pupils move through the school they gain independence. For example, in some lessons pupils work in teams, use peer assessment, and set their own challenges. This further develops their learning and maintains their engagement.
- Questioning is used well by teachers. They ask thought-provoking and challenging questions to develop pupils' understanding. Teachers also ask pupils to pose and answer their own questions, further deepening their understanding of topics.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is a particular strength. Inspectors observed this across many subjects. This depth of subject knowledge means that teachers explain concepts very clearly. For example, in a science lesson, inspectors observed a teacher explaining covalence and ionic bonding with clarity and detail. As a result, pupils became confident and understood this challenging topic well.
- Pupils told inspectors that they particularly value the feedback that teachers give to them. This feedback is precise, ensures that they know what they have to do next, and enables them to make good progress. During observations, inspectors saw many examples across subjects and year groups of consistently effective feedback over time. Pupils respond readily to the development points that teachers provide.
- Pupils agree that the quality of teaching is consistent across almost all of their subjects and lessons. Pupils say that they enjoy most of their lessons and are well motivated to work hard.
- In geography at key stage 3, teaching is weaker. In these lessons, pupils' behaviour is poor and little progress is made. As a result, some pupils do not enjoy this subject.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders' efforts to promote respect and excellent relationships between pupils are very effective. Pupils enjoy their lessons, are positive about school and value learning.
- Pupils show that they care about others and have a good community spirit through a variety of charity work. They raise money for a wide range of charities annually and pupils value the opportunity to be an active part of their local community.

- The school provides a full-time social worker and nurse. This means that pupils can easily access specialist social and health advice when they need it. Pupils feel safe and know who to go to if they have a problem.
- Teachers use tutorial time to explore current issues and develop fundamental British values. Pupils respond well in these sessions. For example, in one session on sex and pregnancy, pupils discussed the topic sensibly and sensitively. In another Year 10 class which focused on the law, a large group of pupils discussed why laws are important and the value of the judicial system. While teachers facilitated these discussions, pupils were mature enough to challenge each other's views vigorously. They listened carefully and responded appropriately.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have a well-developed awareness of welfare issues. For example, pupils have had talks from high-profile speakers about a variety of topics, such as homophobic prejudice and female genital mutilation (FGM). Some pupils have trained as FGM prevention ambassadors and work with younger pupils to raise awareness of this issue.
- Leaders have planned personal health and well-being sessions for sixth-form students. However, some Year 13 students have not yet fully benefited from these elements of their study programme.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In lessons and around the site pupils move around in a mature and considerate way. They are polite and greet visitors warmly. They are friendly and polite to one another and staff.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and when it does happen they are confident that staff deal with it well. Leaders have a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of bullying.
- Attendance overall is around the national average. However, for some groups of pupils, absence is a significant issue. Leaders have set themselves challenging targets for attendance and have effective plans in place to improve attendance for these pupils. Their attendance is beginning to improve. Attendance in the sixth form is good.
- In a small minority of lessons where teaching is less effective, pupils do not behave well. In these lessons their progress is poor.
- Leaders make regular checks on the attendance and behaviour of pupils who are educated in alternative provision to ensure that these placements are going well.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In each year since the last inspection, progress at GCSE overall and for groups of pupils has been strong. In 2016, progress overall was significantly higher than the national average. Pupils enter the school with lower than average attainment and make good progress over their time at the school. Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, made similar progress to other pupils nationally with similar starting points. Pupils

who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made similarly strong progress.

- Progress in mathematics in 2016 was particularly positive. Pupils made significantly better progress than other pupils nationally with similar starting points. Progress in English, in 2016, dipped. Leaders have already taken very robust action in English to remedy this. Evidence from inspectors' observations and analysis of pupils' work shows that attainment and progress in English are now good. Lessons in English are interesting and well planned, and teachers' subject knowledge is strong.
- In 2016, pupils' progress in the English Baccalaureate element was in the top 10% of schools nationally. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make exceptional progress in this area.
- Pupils typically enter the school with reading ages well below their chronological age. They progress well in their reading and this ensures that they can make good progress across their subjects. Leaders' well-designed interventions and teaching that systematically develops literacy skills lead to most pupils closing this gap considerably by the end of Year 9.
- Progress for students in the sixth form did not match the good progress made at key stage 4. This was particularly the case for female students. Students in psychology and English made particularly weak progress. Overall, students' progress was below the national average. Current students in the sixth form are making better progress because their teachers are planning lessons that better meet their needs.
- The school prepares pupils well for their next steps. The percentage of Year 11 pupils going on to sustained destinations improved in 2016 so that all were in employment, education or training. Pupils value the careers advice that they get and say that it has improved recently. The on-site careers adviser gives assemblies to all year groups, attends parents' evenings and ensures that all pupils have access to a range of support to help them make decisions about their next steps.
- Leaders meet with pupils who attend alternative provision to review their placements. As a result, leaders have an accurate view of these pupils' overall progress and can plan effective interventions when required.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Leaders have made many recent changes in the sixth form, including new leadership. These changes have had a swift, positive impact, especially for Year 12 students.
- Progress in the sixth form is not as good as that made by pupils at key stage 4. Progress for Year 13 in 2016 was below that of other students nationally with similar starting points. Leaders have not yet fully established the reasons for this weak progress. They have designed an action plan, but it is not yet sharp enough to have a swift impact on improving progress. This is because too many of the actions are not prioritised or carefully monitored.
- A minority of students have not yet benefited from the recent, positive changes in the sixth form. For example, some have not had access to work experience, or support with study skills, stress management and health education.

- Leaders have planned some changes to the current, almost entirely academic, courses that are on offer. New vocational courses are planned so that all students can do courses that match their needs and aspirations. Retention improved in 2016 and is now high because leaders have ensured that students are on the courses which match their prior attainment. However, these new courses have not had enough time to be monitored and evaluated to check on their success.
- The small number of students who enter the sixth form without a higher grade in GCSE English make good progress and gain C grades in this subject.
- Inspectors' observations and analysis of students' work show that pupils currently in the sixth form are making progress appropriate to their starting points across their subjects because teaching is strong. Students in lessons discuss their work collaboratively, are highly engaged in their studies and determined to do well.
- Recent changes to careers advice have been effective. An action plan to improve careers information, advice and guidance is in place and actions taken so far have been valued by students. A careers adviser has assessed all pupils' work experience needs to ensure that they get placements which match their aspirations.
- Most sixth-form students say that the recent changes have had a marked positive impact. They say that the opportunities that leaders have provided are now numerous and useful, and that aspirations for them are much higher. For example, some Year 12 students are science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) ambassadors. They work with younger pupils to promote a love of STEM subjects.
- In 2016, almost all students went on to higher education. Every student in Year 13 has completed their university application and has an offer of a university place. Support for university applications is effective and valued by students. It includes, for example, input from local universities on how to write a strong application.

School details

Unique reference number	138695
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10025287

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.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
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	915
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	56
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Sir Robert Dowling
Headteacher	Mr Anthony Hamilton
Telephone number	0121 566 6565
Website	www.georgedixonacademy.com
Email address	a.hamilton@georgedixonacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	15–16 January 2013

Information about this school

- George Dixon Academy is a medium-sized school. Pupils enter the school with starting points significantly lower than the national average. Many pupils begin attending the school at times other than the start of Year 7.
- Six pupils are educated at St George's Academy, a local school for alternative provision.
- The school has a small sixth form. Almost all students in the sixth form are from Year 11 at George Dixon Academy.

- The percentage of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is well above the national average, as is the percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for progress and attainment.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, inspectors met with senior leaders, governors, subject leaders and teachers. They also met with groups of pupils from all year groups.
- Inspectors observed lessons across year groups and subjects, some jointly with school leaders. They reviewed pupils' work over time, and observed tutorial lessons and assemblies.
- During break, lunchtimes and between lessons, inspectors observed pupils' behaviour. They also evaluated behaviour at the start and end of the school day.
- 35 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, were considered.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, policies, and minutes of governing body meetings. Information about pupils' progress, attainment, attendance, behaviour and exclusions was also considered. They evaluated the school's safeguarding policies and documentation, vetting checks on staff, and checks on the quality of teaching and learning.

Inspection team

Dan Owen, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Nigel Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Ellis-Martin	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Kent	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Spoor	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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