

North Oxfordshire Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135365
Local Authority	NA
Inspection number	345500
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Scott HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	865
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Payne
Headteacher	Ruth Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Drayton Road Banbury OX16 0UD
Telephone number	01295 224 300
Fax number	01295 224302
Email address	enquiries@northoxfordshire-academy.org

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 39 lessons. Meetings were held with groups of students, governors, and staff. Inspectors observed the academy's work, looked at documentation, including policies and minutes of governors' meetings, and the academy's analysis of its own information on students' performance. Questionnaires from students, teachers and from 57 parents were also considered.

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

- achievement of more-able students
- how well students are now progressing in English
- the extent to which new technologies impact on outcomes for students.

Information about the school

North Oxfordshire Academy opened in September 2007 with the sixth form opening to Year 12 students in September 2008. It is slightly smaller than most schools and has a growing number of students on roll. Compared to national averages there is a greater proportion of students eligible for free school meals and fewer students from ethnic minority groups or who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The range of students' needs include moderate learning and behavioural, emotional or social difficulties. The academy has both media and communications, and business and enterprise specialisms. The academy's accommodation has been enhanced considerably by extensive building and refurbishments completed in September 2009. The Principal has led the academy since it opened. It gained International School status and recognition as a Careers Academy in September 2009.

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

North Oxfordshire Academy is a rapidly developing school with the success of students at the heart of its work. The learning environment is positive and well resourced with very good use made of a wide range of technologies to enhance the learning of all students.

Teachers overwhelmingly feel valued and are proud to be a part of the academy's development. They are clear about how they contribute to building further success. Teachers are committed and enthusiastic and demonstrate the caring and positive ethos of the academy. There are many strengths in the teaching, particularly how well teachers know the students, good subject knowledge and the quality of planning. The large majority of teaching is good or outstanding and leaders are clearly focused on reducing the inconsistencies in practice.

The academy has strong and effective senior leaders and is quickly developing middle leaders who demonstrate an increasing capacity to secure sustained improvements. The impact the Principal has demonstrated and the growing effectiveness in all areas show the academy has good capacity for sustained improvement. The academy has had great success in engaging parents and improving relationships between home and school. The trend of improving standards is already clear. Although attainment is low, there is an established, rapid rate of improvement. Progress made by students is good. There are no significant differences between the achievements of different groups of students and the school monitors this effectively. Attainment in English and mathematics is improving, particularly in Key Stage 3. Continued improvement in these subjects remains crucial to securing higher standards, and the academy is implementing a well thought out strategy to address this.

The sixth form has successfully encouraged students to continue their learning journeys and inspired them to consider university and other higher studies. Many students from all year groups now aspire to further study after age 16. A small minority of sixth-form students do not demonstrate the high level of commitment to studies found in the rest of the academy and their attendance is low.

The academy's governing body is devolving responsibilities to the Local Governing Body (LGB). This is in a transitional stage. The LGB has already demonstrated clearly how they are holding the academy to account and challenging its performance. The monitoring of policies and analysing impact on stakeholders is at an early stage and is satisfactory and moving forward.

North Oxfordshire Academy is a happy and forward-looking place of learning with many strengths and a clear strategic plan, based on accurate self-evaluation of its

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performance, to improve opportunities for all of its students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement of all students by ensuring:
 - the percentage of students obtaining the equivalent of five or more GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics is at least in line with that found nationally
 - improved engagement of students in the sixth form
 - the teaching of all lessons is as inspiring and effective as existing good and outstanding practice
 - middle managers drive improvements and develop their capacity to identify and implement appropriate interventions particularly with raising the quality of teaching further.
- Ensure that governors rigorously monitor and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of policies to bring about sustained improvements for all stakeholders.
- About 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

Most students enter with Key Stage 2 test results that are well below average. The academy has inherited a legacy of underachievement, particularly among the older students. Despite this, students now have positive attitudes to learning and share the academy's culture of success. They embrace the new opportunities and enjoy caring and supportive relationships with the teachers.

There is a strong trend of improving attainment in the academy. The academy has worked hard to improve students' performance in English and mathematics. Although GCSE results in 2009 did not reach the very challenging targets set, many more able students in Year 11 have already achieved good GCSE grades in these subjects through an early-entry strategy.

Students' use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively. They enjoy practising their ICT skills in a variety of activities. They are aware of their academic targets and how well they are doing. They show great enthusiasm for learning. Outstanding lessons reveal how effectively teachers and students work in partnership to make exceptional progress together. These lessons are exciting and individual students competently analyse questions and challenges. Students show good skills of teamwork, organisation and empathy for others. A few of the lessons observed were less successful, and students' progress was not always sufficient.

Students behave well and understand teachers' expectations. The very large majority of students enjoy the academy and feel safe. They say any bullying incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. Students understand what issues affect their health and how to

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live healthy lifestyles. They are aware of the dangers of alcohol, drugs and issues relating to sexual health. Students contribute to the academy community, for example through its council, raising money for charity, and time helping in a local residential home for the elderly.

Students' artistic, cultural and spiritual development is good. They respond well to the opportunities to gain knowledge of the wider world. For example, students were keen to gain deeper moral understanding from the thought-provoking assembly on Holocaust Day. Students also gain a wide range of cultural experience through the Personal Enrichment Programme (PEP).

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	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Leaders have a clear focus on, and are successful in, securing good teaching. There is much good practice across the academy. Teachers use a range of tracking and progress information with increasing impact to improve results. Challenging targets are set and, in the best lessons, teachers give students opportunities for independent learning with clear guidance and appropriate support. Lessons are well planned and clear learning

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

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objectives are set for students of all abilities. Plans are not always implemented consistently and assessment during lessons does not always promote higher levels of progress particularly for the more able students. Good use is made of the wide range of technologies available. For example, voting pads are used to consolidate knowledge in summaries at the end of lessons, and video editors to produce multimedia presentations. Teachers enthuse students with their good subject knowledge. Relationships are positive and teachers know students well.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of individuals well. It is enhanced with the personal education programme, coaches, mentors and partnerships with other providers. Curriculum planning and innovation are good. An appropriate focus on literacy is effective in improving achievement. The academy offers a good range of vocational courses and the International Baccalaureate. Numeracy across the curriculum is not yet a major focus but is part of the medium-term planning completed by the academy, as is the development of greater creativity in the curriculum. Students enjoy the element of choice and variety of opportunities on offer in the PEP. They also enjoy working with students of all ages. The academy provides a range of extra-curricular activities but students and the academy would like a greater variety of opportunities to be available. The specialist status is used effectively in enhancing provision and ensuring students have access to high quality resources and a wider learning context.

The academy is a caring environment, and a high priority is given to the welfare of all students. Students and parents very much appreciate this. A wide range of strategies and well-trained staff ensure an inclusive community. Good systems for identifying the needs and supporting students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are in place They are successfully encouraging students to continue their learning journey. Almost all students surveyed felt the academy helped them to prepare successfully for the future.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

North Oxfordshire Academy has a clear identity and ambition for success that is well understood by its community. The Principal and senior staff are successful in developing this among middle leaders. The positive response of parents, carers, students and staff is ensuring that the improvements that have already taken place are sustainable. There are clear strengths in the leadership of several departments. This is not the case for all

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subjects, but the successful strategy for development of middle leaders is well underway. Morale is high and staff feel valued and supported in their professional development. Parents, carers and students express strong preference for places at the academy and it is oversubscribed for new Year 7 students.

The LGB have taken on a wide range of responsibilities this year and is developing well. They have balanced the need to support the developments of the academy with appropriate challenge and critical engagement with leaders, staff and students. The governors recognise the need to review and assess the impact of policies with greater depth. The academy meets current safeguarding regulations. The academy is inclusive, promotes equality, and challenges discrimination.

The academy has assessed the needs of its community within a wider national context. It has an ongoing strategy to develop community cohesion through the curriculum and engagement with others. Opportunities to engage with other schools nationally and internationally has ensured student have a wider appreciation of diversity and culture and are better prepared for life in a multicultural world. The academy's impact on significantly improving students' opportunities for learning has had a direct impact on the local community and its engagement with education.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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

North Oxfordshire academy has an 11-18 approach to learning and as such the provision in the sixth form and the leadership of the sixth form are similar to that found in the main school.

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The curriculum is developing quickly to meet the needs of students. The sixth form is increasing in popularity and enables students who previously would not have considered continuing in education to remain on a formal learning pathway. Students are supported well through the process of university applications and are given clear guidance in moving forward. Students appreciate the opportunities and the high level of care they receive in the academy.

Students make good progress. They complete courses and attainment is broadly average. Sixth form students are positive and enjoy learning. A few students do not engage in lessons enough and attendance is low.

The sixth form is led well and within a very short period a thriving community within the academy has grown. Clear planning and evaluation by the leadership, increasing examination success and the willingness of students to contribute to the wider academy are all factors in the positive development of the sixth form.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Positive responses were received from the very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the survey. This was the case for all of the questions asked. Parents and carers agreed with students that the academy helps them to prepare for the future. There was a limited response to the questionnaire with only 55 parents responding. The academy has undertaken its own survey recently and this indicates that parents are happy with their children's experience.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at North Oxfordshire 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 57 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 865 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	15	26	35	61	5	9	2	4
The school keeps my child safe	16	29	37	67	1	2	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	16	28	37	65	3	5	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	29	36	64	3	5	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	11	20	43	77	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	25	39	68	3	5	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	14	41	73	6	11	1	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)	15	28	37	69	1	2	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	18	44	77	2	4	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	26	31	54	9	16	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	11	39	70	9	16	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	13	23	40	71	3	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	41	30	54	2	4	1	2

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 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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">■ 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 pupil's 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.



1 February 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of North Oxfordshire Academy, Banbury OX16 0UD

I would like to thank you all for the very warm and friendly way you welcomed the inspection team to your academy and the help you gave to us during the inspection.

Your academy as you know is changing rapidly and cares for you well. You are achieving more and more each year. You have accepted the challenging targets set, demonstrated your enthusiasm for learning, and willingly worked with your teachers to succeed.

We think that you can achieve even more and have asked the academy to make sure you achieve good GCSE grades particularly in English and maths. Teachers work hard to plan exciting lessons. We know that some lessons are outstanding and help you to think for yourselves and make rapid progress. Other lessons are not as successful, and we recommend that heads of department and senior staff work with teachers to improve these learning situations. You have some impressive facilities and new technologies to work with and you are using these well. Teachers also use new technologies well in lessons, and when they encourage a variety of active learning opportunities, lessons are very successful.

The attendance of those of you in Key Stages 3 and 4 is commendable, as is your behaviour and attitudes to learning. This is not as strong in the sixth form, and attendance of sixth-form students is also low. The strong leadership of the academy has brought about improvements and you say how much you appreciate them, but we want governors to monitor the impact of the academy's policies more rigorously.

Please continue your hard work and make sure you are as successful as you can be.

I wish you well in all that you choose to do.

Yours sincerely

Paul Scott

Her Majesty's Inspector

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