

# Milton Keynes Academy

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	135665
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	381913
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Gill Close HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11-18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1166
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	98
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Young
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dara Carroll
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Fulwoods Drive Milton Keynes MK6 5LA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01908 341700
<b>Fax number</b>	01908 341800
<b>Email address</b>	info@miltonkeynesacademy.co.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	11-18
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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Gill Close	Her Majesty's Inspector
Pankaj Gulab	Additional inspector
Robert Parkin	Additional inspector
Jacqueline Pentlow	Additional inspector
Stephanie Preston	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 36 lessons taught by 36 teachers, and made brief visits to further lessons, support sessions and registrations. They observed break and lunchtime activity and assembly, and spoke with many students. They held meetings with students, discussed their work with them and listened to them read. They met with staff, governors and a representative of the sponsors. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, and evaluated questionnaire responses from 93 parents and carers, 77 staff and 150 students. They looked at records of students' attainment and progress, the academy's improvement planning, self-evaluation, lesson monitoring documents, policies, minutes of governing body meetings, behaviour logs, exclusion data and attendance figures.

## Information about the school

Milton Keynes Academy opened in September 2009 in purpose-built facilities. It is sponsored by Edge, an independent charity, and specialises in business and enterprise. The number of students on roll is above average for a school of its type. One third of them have minority ethnic backgrounds, of whom half are of African heritage. One quarter of students speak a first language other than English. A similar proportion is known to be eligible for free school meals. One quarter of students are disabled or have special educational needs. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs or supported by school action plus (students who require external support) is above average. The main needs are moderate learning difficulties. The academy's 2011 results do not meet the floor standard set by the government as a minimum expectation for attainment and progress. The executive headteacher and associate headteacher joined the academy in October 2011.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory academy. The recent strategic changes in leadership have built effectively on the academy’s strengths and increased the pace of improvement. The sixth form is satisfactory. The academy is not good because students’ progress from their below average starting points, and sometimes low literacy levels, is raising their attainment to closer to the national average but not reaching it, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- Students’ achievement is satisfactory. Recent improvements have raised attainment and progress across year groups, with indications that current Year 11 students are potentially on track to reach the floor standard. Girls are now making much faster progress than previously, while boys and White British students are catching up less quickly.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall, with much that is good, particularly in English. Teaching quality varies, with some that does not challenge or motivate students enough to make good progress and raise their literacy levels quickly or check carefully how well they are doing.
- Behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Most students behave appropriately in lessons and around the academy. There are occasions when some students do not remain focused in lessons or show a lack of self-discipline over disagreements with others. There are some inconsistencies in the way staff manage behaviour. Attendance remains below average and too many students are persistently absent.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The strategic changes in leadership brought about by the governors and sponsor have sharpened the focus on raising achievement, about which staff are very clear. Robust staffing decisions and development steps have been taken to improve teaching, particularly where it was inadequate.

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

- Raise attainment to at least average by increasing progress across year groups, particularly in English, literacy, mathematics and science, and for boys and

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White British students.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that the large majority is good or better, by ensuring that lessons:
  - challenge all students appropriately and meet their needs
  - overcome barriers to learning caused by levels of literacy and enhance literacy development
  - engage students interactively in purposeful practical and group activities
  - are adapted responsively through constantly monitoring students' learning
  - are evaluated sharply, focusing on these features and the progress of all groups of students.
- Improve the quality of behaviour and interaction to good through:
  - greater consistency of behaviour management at all levels
  - involving students in taking more responsibility for supporting each other
  - building a more cohesive community through increased mutual respect.
- Rapidly raise attendance overall, and of groups of students, to at least average and reduce persistent absence.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Achievement is satisfactory overall. In lessons where teaching is good, students make good progress and this helps them to catch up on previous underachievement. They participate keenly in challenging activities and know what they need to do to improve. In mathematics and science, less than half of the teaching is good, so students' progress in lessons is not as strong. However, careful tracking of each student's progress six times a year is used effectively to inform additional support that improves their progress.

Students respond well to the literacy sessions, which have helped bring their reading ages closer to their actual ages, but literacy levels remain below average. In some lessons literacy is developed effectively, but in others it is not and forms a barrier to subject learning.

The quality of support for lower attainers enables them to make better progress in English than others. Disabled students and those with special educational needs receive carefully targeted support that helps them to make similar progress to their peers. Students with a first language other than English make faster progress, and attain more highly, than others.

Students study a range of vocational and academic subjects that contribute to their average attainment overall, but the proportion that achieved five GCSE grades A\* to C, when English and mathematics are included, was below the floor standard requirement of 35% in 2011 because attainment in these two subjects was low.

In the sixth form, students make satisfactory progress on courses at Levels 1, 2 and

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3, which prepares them effectively for the future, as shown by the high proportion moving into education or employment. They are most successful on vocational courses.

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agreed that their child was making good progress. Inspectors found that while students' progress has improved and is compensating for previous underachievement, it remains inconsistent in lessons, resulting in achievement being satisfactory overall. The academy's records and students' work show that students' progress has improved across all year groups to sometimes above the expected rate, and that accuracy of assessment has increased following some overestimates last year.

### **Quality of teaching**

Teaching is satisfactory. It enables students to make satisfactory progress. Its quality varies, with much that is good, and occasions where it is outstanding or inadequate. It is also satisfactory in the sixth form.

In the lessons where teaching is good or better, teachers enthusiastically use their strong relationships with students and detailed understanding of their strengths and weaknesses to plan collaborative activities that interest them and match their different needs. They effectively build mutual respect and social skills, which contributes effectively to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers construct these lessons well, using short sequences of activity and clear modelling of expectations, ensuring that students know their targets and what they need to do to improve. Students assess their progress and that of their peers against these criteria and teachers monitor students' learning during the lessons then adapt their teaching accordingly. For example, in an outstanding mathematics lesson on percentages, the teacher developed students' cooperation and support for each other, as well as their literacy and mathematical understanding, through challenging activities and questions about explaining their methods that perceptively gauged their learning.

In the less effective teaching, which was generally satisfactory, work was not closely matched to individual needs so did not challenge all students, particularly the higher attainers. Students' progress was monitored at times but not checked carefully enough throughout the lessons to help them overcome difficulties, deepen their understanding or develop their literacy. For example, opportunities were missed to develop writing through building on oral work. On occasions, students became bored when activities were not organised or explained sufficiently clearly to involve them well and could not maintain concentration. In mathematics, some practical activities have been introduced to the curriculum but they are not used consistently enough to develop and check students' understanding of concepts and methods, so students sometimes apply techniques incorrectly.

Parents, carers and students agree that most teaching is good but they point to inconsistencies and to weaknesses in lessons taught by temporary teachers.

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Inspectors found much good teaching across the curriculum, particularly in English. They found a substantial amount of satisfactory teaching in a range of subjects, in particular mathematics and science.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Students are clear that there have been improvements, but there are not enough opportunities for students to take responsibility for helping to improve them further.

Parents and carers raised some concerns about inconsistencies in the management of behaviour. It is generally managed effectively in lessons and around the school, although there are some inconsistencies in the way that staff apply procedures and leaders follow up issues and use sanctions. In lessons where teaching is good, students' good behaviour is founded on strong relationships of mutual respect between teachers and students, but this quality of interaction is not consistent across all lessons.

A range of strategies has successfully helped students with behavioural difficulties to reflect on and improve their behaviour, although they still have some difficulties managing it. The number of fixed term exclusions has fallen substantially although it remains above average.

Students say that the academy's anti-bullying work has raised their awareness about preventing different forms of bullying. There have been improvements in the ways in which bullying incidents are dealt with, which are generally prompt and effective. Students understand about how to manage risk and stay safe, and generally follow safety procedures carefully in lessons.

Attendance is below average. It has risen for all groups and is above average for students who are looked after and those who speak a first language other than English. It is lowest for White British students and those who receive support through School Action Plus or are known to be eligible for free school meals.

### **Leadership and management**

Senior and middle leaders are effectively driving up teaching quality through targeted support programmes, whole-school training, and a teaching handbook that has increased the consistency of approach to lessons and the style of planning. Inspectors found that leaders' evaluation of teaching in lessons was generally accurate, although sometimes generous because too little weight was given to the progress of individuals and groups of students.

Data are used effectively to inform rapid action. Students have been set more appropriate targets, and the accuracy and moderation of assessment have been increased, so tracking of progress is more reliable. The careful checking of students' attendance has led to marked improvement, although syntheses are not in a form

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that enables leaders to monitor readily the overall and persistent absence of groups against previous or national figures. Leaders contribute to overall evaluations of provision and outcomes that are generally accurate but have not yet fed into a revised action plan. The systems in place and improvements in achievement, behaviour and attendance, demonstrate the academy's capacity for further improvement.

The curriculum is satisfactory. The range of academic and vocational courses, literacy support sessions, and links with employers through the specialism are matched to students' needs and prepare them adequately for the future, so a high proportion of them move on to education or employment.

In the sixth form, leaders have slimmed the range of A-level courses to match needs more closely and raised expectations of achievement and attendance. Teachers track students' progress closely and provide targeted support that is improving outcomes. Students' personal development and responsibility are enhanced through helping younger students with reading and the breadth of the enrichment programme.

Leaders promote equality and tackle discrimination effectively. This has closed gaps in achievement as a result of thorough tracking and intervention, and the support for disabled students and those with special educational needs and low literacy levels. It has enhanced students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development adequately, particularly through the specific programme delivered in curriculum areas and tutor time, such as the activities on International Women's Day.

The academy's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements. Child protection procedures are carried out effectively through good systems for working with a range of agencies.



## 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



9 March 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Milton Keynes Academy, Milton Keynes MK6 5LA**

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited the academy and for telling us about it. We found that it is a satisfactory academy.

The teaching in lessons, as well as extra support, is helping you to make satisfactory progress, but your attainment is below average. Staff are helping your achievement to improve more quickly since the new leaders placed more emphasis on it. Literacy sessions are improving your reading. You told us that much teaching was good, but sometimes it was not. We found that teaching varies in quality and is satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, there is interesting group work in an atmosphere of mutual respect, that challenges you to think hard and assess your progress against clear targets. In some other lessons, work is not challenging enough and does not improve your literacy well enough. You told us that behaviour and safety have continued to improve, but were inconsistent. We found that your behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Most of you behave appropriately in lessons and around the academy, but there are occasions when some of you do not behave as well. The way that staff manage behaviour has some inconsistencies. Attendance has risen, but remains below average and some of you have a high amount of absence.

We have asked the academy to:

- raise attainment and progress across year groups, particularly in English, literacy, mathematics and science
- improve teaching so that lessons consistently challenge you all, help raise your literacy levels, actively involve you and check frequently on your learning
- improve behaviour through greater consistency in managing it, giving students more responsibility for supporting each other and increasing mutual respect
- raise attendance overall and especially for those of you with high absence.

I wish you success at the academy and in helping it to improve. You can help by thinking hard in lessons, making sure what any new words mean and trying to exceed your targets, as well as contributing to improving behaviour and attendance for the whole academy community.

Yours sincerely  
Gill Close  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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