

Danum Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106780
Local Authority	N/A
Inspection number	386805
Inspection dates	19–20 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Deborah James

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1850
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	450
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eleanor Hammill
Headteacher	Kelvin Simmonds
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 84 lessons, observed 68 teachers and held meetings with staff, groups of students and the Chair of the Governing Body. They observed the academy's work and studied a range of documentation, including the academy's improvement plan, department monitoring evidence and records of students' progress. Inspectors also reviewed responses to questionnaires returned from students, staff and 236 parents and carers.

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

- What is the current level of attainment and progress for Year 11 students in English and mathematics?
- How effective is teaching in securing good progress for all students?
- How effective have the academy's actions been in increasing attendance and reducing levels of persistent absence?
- How effectively has the academy reduced the variation in attainment in different subjects in the sixth form?

Information about the school

Danum Academy is a larger-than-average school that converted to academy status on the 1 October 2011. The academy is based on two sites, one for students in Key Stage 3, the other for students in Key Stage 4 and sixth form. The majority of students are White British. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportions of students who have special educational needs and those coming from minority ethnic groups are broadly average. However, the percentage speaking English as an additional language is relatively low. The academy has gained the Investors in People award and Healthy Schools status.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good academy. Its strongly inclusive ethos is immediately evident in the friendly and welcoming atmosphere and in the students' positive attitudes and good behaviour. There is a strong sense of identity and belonging and students show high levels of respect towards each other. The academy places the individual well-being of all its students at the centre of its work. There is a strong concern for and commitment to ensuring that each student is supported to achieve their best. Provision for care, guidance and support is exemplary.

Students thrive in the safe, secure learning environment established by the academy. The academy's systems ensure that student's individual pastoral needs are met swiftly and effectively. Procedures to safeguard and care for all students, but particularly those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, are excellent. Students reported that any problems such as bullying are dealt with quickly and efficiently and there is always someone available to help them resolve any personal or academic concerns. They feel very well cared for.

Students arrive at Danum with attainment well below the national average and particularly low scores in skill areas such as non-verbal reasoning. Students make consistently good progress, supported by a strong innovative curriculum and good teaching. By the end of Year 11 attainment, although improving year on year, remains low in English and mathematics. However, students achieve well in a broad range of other qualifications that provide a secure foundation for their progression beyond Year 11. The academy's potentially most vulnerable students are supported very well by a highly personalised curriculum and considerable support and intervention and make outstanding progress. As a result, achievement is good overall.

Attendance has improved significantly over the last three years. Most students enjoy coming to the academy and demonstrate their commitment in high levels of attendance. However, despite the academy's best efforts a small-but-significant number of students do not attend regularly and, as a result, attendance remains broadly average overall. Students are well prepared for the next phase of their lives. They achieve above expectations and progress to suitable pathways. They develop a good work ethic and gain good information, communication and technology (ICT) skills. As a result of very effective guidance and support, they understand how to choose and access appropriate courses and training for the future. Consequently, far fewer students fail to secure further training, education or employment than is the

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case nationally.

There has been a successful drive to improve the quality of teaching since the last inspection. The large majority of teaching observed during the inspection was good or better. Teaching is characterised by secure subject knowledge and strong teacher-student relationships that make classrooms a motivating environment for learning. However, some lessons are not planned thoroughly enough to meet the needs of all students and teachers' questioning is not always sufficient to check students' understanding fully. The quality of marking varies between teachers and subject areas, so students do not always get clear guidance on how to improve their work.

Senior leaders know the academy's strengths and areas for development. Improvements in the quality of teaching and monitoring of students' progress have led to improved achievement. Care, guidance and support are now outstanding. The academy has excellent systems and procedures for safeguarding students' welfare and improved communication with parents and carers. There has been tangible progress made in tackling inconsistent practice across departments through the introduction of a well-structured self-evaluation process. However, there remains some variation between departments in the quality of teaching and in outcomes for students, including in the sixth form. The academy has securely maintained its areas of good performance since the last inspection and demonstrated a significant improvement in other aspects, demonstrating its good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the rate of pupil progress by ensuring that at least 85% of teaching is good or better by July 2012 through:
 - planning lessons that include learning activities for students of all abilities
 - improving questioning techniques so that teachers can assess students' learning accurately and adjust the lessons accordingly
 - ensuring that students know how well they are doing, and how to improve, through regular high-quality marking.
- Support middle leaders in taking responsibility for driving improvement and ensuring the quality of teaching and learning by
 - increasing the rigour of departmental systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and students' progress
 - sharing the good practice of the most-effective middle leaders, so that all department leadership is of a consistently high standard.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Behaviour is good, both in lessons and around the building, creating a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Students respond well to requests from staff and behave

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considerately towards each other. They have positive attitudes to learning and work hard and made good or better progress in the majority of lessons observed by inspectors. They focus well on tasks set and enjoy working together. For example, in a Year 8 art lesson, students worked in small teams to produce a piece of aboriginal art, confidently discussing colours and symbols as they worked. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress also. They benefit from an appropriately personalised curriculum and considerable individual support in lessons.

Students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They consider moral issues seriously, for example in ethics lessons, and develop well-considered opinions about right and wrong. Their spiritual awareness is promoted well through personal development lessons, for example in understanding their feelings. They gain a good cultural understanding of the United Kingdom as a diverse community although opportunities for first-hand experience of other cultures are limited.

Most students know how to live healthily and enjoy sport. A third of students take part in extra-curricular physical activities. Students are gaining a greater understanding of how to deal with stress through initiatives to support emotional intelligence. Students enjoy taking part in academy life and are keen to take up positions of responsibility, for example on the academy council or as ambassadors to support reading with younger students. Students are proud of their academy and are keen to be involved in activities that enhance the reputation of the academy in the local community. Students respond well to the mentoring offered by the on-site policeman and enjoy the activities, including a gardening project, which he organises.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
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	1
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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

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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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers provide lively and clear explanations and make good use of interactive whiteboards to interest and motivate students. Most lessons are well planned, for example, in English at Key Stage 4, teachers structure lessons carefully to build learning systematically through a variety of activities, including a good balance of listening, collaborative and independent work. Teachers give helpful individual guidance in lessons, although occasionally there is a tendency for teachers to give the answer or do the task, rather than develop students' understanding through questioning. In the small minority of lessons where teaching was satisfactory, there were too few opportunities for students of different abilities to work at an appropriate pace, so some students lacked challenge in their work. Most books show some evidence of positive and encouraging comments, but the quality and frequency of marking varies across subject areas. The majority of students are aware of their current performance and their target grades, but are less secure about the steps they need to take to improve.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and highly inclusive. At Key Stage 3, the curriculum shows evidence of innovation and personalisation to meet the needs of all students, including a small group of low-attaining students who find it difficult to engage with their learning. The Key Stage 4 curriculum provides good opportunities for all students through a comprehensive offer of academic, applied and vocational options. Successful partnerships with local companies and other educational providers deliver good support for the potentially most vulnerable students who enjoy their curriculum and gain qualifications that equip them effectively for the next stage of their lives. Students talk convincingly of how the courses have improved their confidence and skills. There are excellent opportunities for students to extend their knowledge and understanding through a broad range of trips, events and activities. Partnership arrangements, driven by the academy's technology specialism, are a strength of the curriculum. For example, good links with feeder primary schools have led to the development of a common ICT curriculum from Year 5 to Year 8.

Excellent systems of pastoral care link closely now with academic monitoring and present a strong system of support which ensures that students' needs are met through a wide range of intervention strategies. A panel, which consists of a senior leader, senior mentor and year heads, meets weekly to monitor and evaluate the support needed. The academy works very effectively with outside agencies and professionals to achieve the best outcomes for students. Students' achievements are celebrated and students value highly the new system of rewards introduced this term. Very effective transition arrangements ensure that students who join Year 7 settle into the academy quickly and smoothly. For example older students peer-mentor Year 6 pupils before they arrive. Evidence was seen of the excellent provision made for students who have diverse and challenging needs. The strong pastoral care has resulted in a significant reduction in exclusions over the past year and has had a

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considerable impact on reducing persistent absenteeism.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leadership team provide the academy with clear and effective strategic leadership and direction. Their vision to improve achievement for all students through improved teaching, an appropriate curriculum and high-quality individual support and intervention is shared by staff and the governing body. Monitoring of teaching and learning is accurate. A targeted programme of professional development has been successful in increasing the proportion of good and outstanding teaching in the academy. The effectiveness of the governing body is good. Members know the academy very well and play a key role in its strategic direction. The governing body and senior leaders participate together in a strategic group that meets frequently to review the work of the academy.

All requirements for the safeguarding of students were in place at the time of the inspection. The academy has thorough and robust systems for assessing risk and ensuring the health and safety of staff and students. Staff receive frequent training on wide-ranging child protection and safety issues. The school's outstanding practice in this area has been shared through partnerships with other schools. The academy has effective strategies to promote equality for all potentially vulnerable groups of children. There is good provision within the curriculum to raise awareness of equal opportunities and discrimination. The academy has effectively reduced the gap in progress and attainment for students known to be eligible for free school meals. Minority ethnic groups have been encouraged to share and celebrate their identity and culture through displays in the academy. The academy's racist incident log shows the number of incidents is reducing significantly year on year.

Community cohesion is managed by a dedicated and well-organised team, which has analysed the local context well and is aware of and has planned for changes in the make-up of the local community. Students from different backgrounds get on well together. The curriculum has been designed to include suitable opportunities to raise awareness of different races, religions and cultures through lessons, visits and visiting speakers. The channels of communication for parents and carers are clear and the academy is readily accessible. In response to the views of parent and carers, the academy has reviewed the content and timing of parents' evenings, which has resulted in an increase in attendance.

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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	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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Students’ attainment is average and progress is good. The great majority of teaching observed in the sixth form was good or better. Teachers are well qualified and some have valuable experience as examination markers, so that students receive excellent constructive feedback about their performance. Good questioning techniques probe students’ understanding and, in some lessons, for example in statistics, examination answering techniques are taught well. The curriculum offers a broad range of courses at all levels, catering for the individual needs of all students. Some courses are offered by other providers and students take full advantage of them.

Students have a positive attitude towards learning. They benefit from a range of opportunities to take responsibility and to contribute to the school and wider community through activities such as sport, music, organising charity events, sixth form council, mentoring younger students and assisting at local primary schools. Students receive good and impartial advice on the next steps they might take in their education or into employment. The sixth form leadership group evaluates provision and outcomes effectively and is taking effective steps to improve weaknesses identified in some subject areas. As a result of the interventions, there is less variation in the outcomes for students in different subject areas.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2

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Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

A low proportion of parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. Of these, the overwhelming majority are happy with their children’s experiences in the academy. They agree that their children enjoy the academy and feel safe. A few specific concerns were raised about poor behaviour or instances of bullying, but inspectors found that behaviour around the academy and in lessons was good and the very few instances of bullying were dealt with effectively. Some concern was also raised about the support the school provides for adopting healthy lifestyles. Inspectors found that students had access to a wide range of sporting opportunities and healthy dining options, but did not necessarily take up these opportunities. Parents and carers expressed confidence with the way that the academy is led, the quality of the teaching and the progress being made by their children. Inspection findings support their positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Danum School Technology College 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 236 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1850 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	61	26	155	66	16	7	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	62	26	166	71	5	2	1	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	75	32	132	56	14	6	4	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	62	26	142	61	16	7	5	2
The teaching is good at this school	53	23	159	68	11	5	2	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	47	20	141	60	33	14	6	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	14	139	59	44	19	4	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)	50	21	150	64	19	8	3	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	52	22	152	65	19	8	4	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	47	20	137	59	26	11	11	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	13	143	61	31	13	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	47	20	147	63	19	8	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	62	26	152	65	11	5	4	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 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 are 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.



21 October 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Danum Academy, Doncaster, DN2 5QD

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome at your school. We enjoyed being in your lessons and talking to you and were impressed with the honesty and maturity with which you answered our questions. We judged the academy to be good overall.

The majority of you make good progress and the academy prepares you well for your move on to further education or training at the end of Year 11. Staff take considerable care to make sure you are safe and well-supported and the care, guidance and support provided by the academy is outstanding. The academy helps you to develop good spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills and you use these skills to make a good contribution to your academy and community. Examination results in English and mathematics are low, but improving. You tell us you enjoy coming to school and, although your attendance is currently average, it is improving strongly. Teaching is good and your teachers work hard to make your lessons interesting and motivating.

We have asked the academy to make the following improvements, so it can be even better.

- Make sure that more of your lessons are good or outstanding, with better marking and learning activities that are matched to your ability so you make better progress.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management so that all departments are as well run as the best.

You all can help by continuing to work hard, attend regularly and behave well. Thank you again for helping us with the inspection of your academy. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Deborah James
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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