

Droylsden Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135864
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	381939
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2012
Lead inspector	Jane Jones HMI

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	1,067
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	14
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Ryder
Headteacher	Derek Davies
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
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This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 33 teachers in 34 lessons, six of them jointly with curriculum or senior leaders, and made brief visits to two other lessons and a mathematics intervention session. A 'learning walk' across three further lessons focused on the support provided by additional adults for disabled students and those who have special educational needs. An inspector heard two Key Stage 3 students read. A visit was made to the academy's off-site provision for a small group of students. As well as talking informally with students and staff during the inspection, inspectors held meetings with six groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body who also represented the sponsors, Tameside College, and senior and middle leaders in relation to their areas of responsibility. Inspectors observed the academy's work, and looked at management information including the self-evaluation document, the academy's improvement plans, assessment data, information on attendance and behaviour and the strategies to improve them, monitoring records and minutes of governors' meetings. Inspectors scrutinised samples of work in all subjects from Year 8 students and in mathematics from students in Years 7 to 11. Inspectors analysed questionnaires received from 71 parents and carers, 140 students and 53 staff.

Information about the school

The academy opened in September 2009 in the buildings of two single-sex predecessor schools, which were situated about two miles apart. For the first two years, students in Years 7 and 8 were housed at the former boys' school and Years 9 to 11 at the former girls' school. The academy moved into new buildings in January 2012. It opened a small sixth form in September 2011. The number on roll is higher than average. Girls outnumber boys by around 3:2 in Key Stage 4, which is a legacy of the predecessor schools' sizes. In Key Stage 3, the numbers of boys and girls are similar. A small group of Year 11 students attend the academy's bespoke off-site provision at a nearby primary school. Approximately 20% of students are of minority-ethnic heritage and 12% speak English as an additional language, of whom 35 are the early stages of learning to speak English. The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs, 22%, is average. Of these students, 12 have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals, 27%, is nearly double the national average.

The academy's sponsor is Tameside College. Its curricular specialisms are mathematics and applied technologies. The academy holds the Continuing Professional Development Mark and a Bronze Award for Information, Advice and Guidance. The principal is a National Leader of Education. At the monitoring inspection in June 2011, the academy was judged to be making good progress in raising attainment. It met the government's floor standard, the minimum performance expected, in 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

Overall Effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- The academy provides a satisfactory education. While improving, teaching, achievement and students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are not yet good.
- The principal's outstanding leadership and shared vision for the academy's future are driven by his passion for creating the best in students' learning and aspirations. To have established one academy from two very different schools and laid the foundations for the next phase of development at the same time as raising attainment significantly is a major achievement.
- Good leadership and management provide the engine for the academy's journey of improvement. The principal and vice principals work very effectively as a team, with excellent support and challenge from the sponsor and governing body. Leadership at other levels is improving. Accurate self-evaluation feeds effectively into focused plans and longer-term strategic development. The sixth form has had a satisfactory start: it is too early to judge its overall effectiveness.
- Achievement has risen significantly and is satisfactory. At GCSE and equivalent qualifications in 2011, 55% of students gained five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics, which is average, and the gap between boys' and girls' attainment closed markedly. Students made satisfactory progress overall from their starting points. They achieved strongly in vocational qualifications. Attainment in English and mathematics rose substantially but remained below average. The academy's data point to continued rises on most fronts in 2012, including in English. Learning in lessons is usually at least satisfactory.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. While nearly half is good or occasionally outstanding, not enough consistently accelerates students' progress. Leaders tackle weak teaching robustly including through performance management. Well-thought-through strategies to improve teaching are strengthening the skills of individual teachers and the teaching staff as a whole. The innovatively designed new building reflects the academy's vision for vibrant and flexible approaches to teaching and learning but, to realise its full potential, requires further development of teachers' skills and improvement in students' behaviour and attitudes to learning.

- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are satisfactory. Attendance has risen. Most students behave well but not all make the most of opportunities to learn. Impediments to good achievement include late arrival in the morning, casual use of time in lessons, low-level misbehaviour such as chatter, and inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of the quality and presentation of students' work. Year 11 students reflected wisely on how their attitudes to study had matured and spoke enthusiastically of their varied plans for further study next year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' attitudes to learning and behaviour by:
 - developing in students a greater sense of responsibility for their learning, nurturing a keenness to grasp opportunities and a sense of urgency about raising achievement
 - encouraging students to relish challenging activities that develop their thinking and deeper understanding
 - improving students' punctuality at the start of the day and move with a sense of purpose to lessons
 - ensuring staff implement consistently policies for behaviour throughout the academy day, imparting high expectations of students' work and contributions in lessons.
- Secure students' higher achievement in mathematics by:
 - ensuring schemes of work specify coherent mathematical pathways from Year 7 to Year 11 and in the sixth form
 - providing guidance for teachers on approaches and activities that promote conceptual understanding, including through visual images and practical resources, and on making links with earlier learning and laying the foundations for learning still to come
 - sharpening attention on the mathematical detail, including coverage of the curriculum and depth of learning within topics, in the monitoring of teaching and learning of mathematics
 - enabling teachers to plan together and to learn from each other and experienced expert practitioners.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching to strengthen progression within lessons and from lesson to lesson by:
 - ensuring teachers' planning takes account of students' starting points, individual needs and potential, and provides a coherent sequence of learning activities, making good use of time
 - improving teachers' use of questioning and other strategies to check and probe learning, and adapting the lesson accordingly
 - supporting the development in all lessons of students' skills in reading and writing, speaking and listening, ensuring teachers model good practice
 - strengthening the quality and accuracy of teachers' assessment of and feedback on students' work.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Students join the academy having attained slightly below average test results at primary school. By the end of Key Stage 3, achievement is close to average. The academy's data show that progress in Year 7 is stronger than in Years 8 and 9 in mathematics and science.

Attainment at GCSE and equivalent qualifications in 2011 rose to 88% of students gaining at least five A* to C passes when all their subjects are taken into account. Students of Pakistani heritage performed particularly strongly. Students with special educational needs achieved less well than similar students nationally. The gaps in performance in 2010 between students known to be eligible for free school meals and their classmates were generally smaller than those seen nationally and they closed further in 2011. Overall, the results represented satisfactory progress from students' starting points, an improvement on 2010.

Learning and progress are satisfactory but the rate at which students make gains in knowledge, skills and understanding varies within and between subjects. In the best lessons, students participated enthusiastically, meeting teachers' high expectations of them and maintaining their concentration. They collaborated well in pairs or small groups and took pride in the presentation of their work. In some lessons, however, they were slow to settle to tasks or worked half-heartedly on them. A minority answered the teachers' questions while others watched on. In a minority of lessons, low-level chatter and inattention slowed learning. While work to improve students' reading skills is having a positive impact, more widely in lessons their skills in literacy and oracy are not being promoted effectively.

Students' attainment in mathematics rose substantially in 2011 but results of examinations taken already this year point to a drop in the proportion gaining at least a grade C, which is likely to affect adversely the academy's headline attainment figure. However, more students have attained the highest A*/A grades in mathematics and almost all have an A* to G grade, both an improvement over 2011. Observation of mathematics lessons and scrutiny of students' work show that most make satisfactory progress in individual lessons but, over time, the emphasis given to different areas of the mathematics curriculum and a focus on learning how to answer questions rather than on understanding the underlying mathematics mean that too few students are making good progress.

Quality of teaching

The quality varies from outstanding to inadequate, although most is good or satisfactory with no endemic weaknesses in any subject or key stage. Of the parents and carers who completed the questionnaire, most consider that their children are taught well and that they make good progress. Inspection evidence does not fully support these views as much of the teaching is satisfactory and does not lead to good progress. As identified in the academy's self-evaluation, more good and outstanding teaching is required to raise attainment further and to ensure that all students consistently make at least good progress.

The new building, occupied since January, provides teachers with the environment to work imaginatively, for instance, using demonstration areas, enclosed classrooms and free-flow open-plan spaces. Students and staff enjoy the high quality resources, particularly modern technologies. While staff and students alike are becoming used to the open-plan spaces,

some students said that they find it difficult to hear or concentrate over the noise from neighbouring classes. This is a particular challenge when weaknesses in behaviour management and casual classroom routines allow noise levels to spiral upwards.

The best lesson planning sequences learning skilfully through a variety of interesting activities which take account of students' starting points and individual needs. Time is used effectively with important learning points emphasised before learning moves on. In these lessons, teachers use questioning well to check students' understanding, asking follow-up questions to probe further or encourage extended responses, and adapting the lesson as learning evolves.

Although lesson planning has improved, it does not pay sufficient attention to students' literacy skills. Not all teachers model good spoken and written English, with several instances of incorrect spelling of subject-specific vocabulary. Teachers' expectations of students' writing and presentation are not high enough. Resources are rarely adapted to enable all students, including those who have special educational needs, to access new learning or to challenge the most able. The support provided by the small number of teaching assistants for these students and disabled students was effective.

The academy has rightly identified the need to improve further teachers' use of assessment. Where questioning leads to short answers only, provided by a few volunteers, teachers do not have insight into how well the rest of the class is progressing. The quality of marking varies widely from carefully constructed feedback that helps students to improve or correct a misunderstanding to superficial ticking of work with little regard to correctness and quality. Some teachers write helpful comments or points for improvement but these are not routinely followed up by students or teachers. Scrutiny of students' work showed assessment, particularly in Key Stage 3, is not consistently accurate or based on a sufficiently broad range of work.

Although opportunities are missed, teaching promotes aspects of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the planned curriculum. For instance, students' spiritual and cultural understanding was developed in a history lesson on the life of Native Americans, considering their beliefs, dances, the roles of women and government. In a geography lesson, the teacher challenged stereotypical views of Japan, and students in a performing arts lesson worked together on plans for a community performance.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Most students are friendly and courteous towards each other, staff and visitors. Students generally respond positively to teachers' enthusiasm and high expectations but, when not challenged, can be content with less than their best efforts. Occasionally, low-level chatter and inattention escalates into misbehaviour that slows the learning of all students in a class. Behaviour around the site is also satisfactory but movement to lessons often lacks a sense of purpose, leading to lateness to lessons. A few students linger in corridors during lesson time and, when challenged by staff, this occasionally led to confrontation and unacceptable language. Questionnaires completed by parents and carers, students and staff raised some concerns about behaviour and its impact on learning. Inspectors observed a small number of lessons where behaviour disrupted learning but more often it was at a low level that firm, consistent implementation of behaviour-management policies should have tackled. Students know how to behave well

but do not always take responsibility for doing so. The academy's records and discussions with staff and students show that behaviour has improved since the move to the new building, and that the behaviour observed during the inspection was typical. Discussions with students showed they were aware of bullying in its various forms but that it was not a common occurrence at the academy. A minority of responses from questionnaires said it was not dealt with effectively. Students understand about risk and keeping themselves and others safe.

The number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen dramatically this year. A few Year 11 students who were vulnerable to exclusion attend off-site provision. This initiative is helping to retain these students in education and enabling them to complete some qualifications.

Attendance has risen steadily and is close to the national average although the attendance of students who have special educational needs remains lower than that of their peers. Persistent absence has fallen. The next step is to tackle lateness. Incentive schemes to encourage good attendance do not currently include punctuality, yet around 10% of students arrive during form time and a further 10% during lesson 1.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. The executive leadership team of the principal and two vice-principals spearheads the academy's development. Leadership at other levels is a mix of good or satisfactory and improving. For instance, alongside the implementation of strategies to improve the quality of teaching was the development of curriculum leaders' skills in monitoring teaching and learning through a range of activities including scrutiny of students' work and teachers' planning, lesson observations and learning walks. The leadership of teaching is good. As well as a whole-academy drive to improve teaching, teachers have individual professional development plans. Judgements made by senior and curriculum leaders during joint observations were accurate and appropriately focused on learning and progress.

Lines of accountability are clear with arrangements for performance management focused robustly on holding teachers and leaders to account for their effectiveness. Governors, several of whom also represent the sponsor, Tameside College, provide high quality professional support and challenge. They receive good quality information from senior leaders. Curriculum leaders evaluate the effectiveness of their areas and devise improvement plans. Such increased accountability has become the norm. However, some leaders are more influential than others in driving improvement and leading by example.

At present, the proportion of staff who hold leadership and management responsibilities is high, reflecting the legacy of the staffing structure at the two former sites. The principal recently shared a new slimmer structure, but sensibly delayed implementation until September 2012, allowing for the transition to the new building and helping a harmonious community to be established. The review of roles and responsibilities has proved challenging for some staff.

Improvement planning is good with coherence between actions, expected impact including measurable success criteria, arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and the professional development of staff. Longer-term strategic planning is supplemented by focused action plans to tackle priorities, which are evaluated regularly. Priorities identified at the monitoring

visit in June 2011 have been tackled robustly with a marked impact upon provision for students who are disabled or have special educational needs and greater coherence to the drive to improve the quality of teaching. Self-evaluation by senior staff is accurate and insightful, identifying clearly the positive impact of actions and pinpointing where refinement or improvement is required. Capacity to improve further is good.

Data on students' attainment and progress are analysed carefully to inform where individual students need additional support or intervention and to monitor the achievement of groups of students. The academy's track record of reducing the gaps in achievement for different groups reflects the impact of approaches to tackling inequality and discrimination. The academy meets statutory requirements for safeguarding.

The curriculum is responsive to the needs of students and national developments and is supplemented by a range of extracurricular activities. Its contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is uneven but with strengths in several subjects. At Key Stage 4, courses, including high-performing vocational options, meet a range of needs and interests. Around half of Year 10 students are following a programme leading to the English-Baccalaureate qualification, ensuring higher-attaining students are well equipped for the next stage in learning. At Key Stage 3, project-based learning provides a good bridge between primary and secondary learning. The innovative 'stage-not-age' grouping of students in mathematics and science, however, is not promoting consistently good progress for the students. Sixth-form students select from a small range of A-level courses and receive appropriate advice about other course available locally. Enrichment experiences for these students are developing. More students are applying to join the sixth form next year.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 December 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).

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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



27 April 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Droylsden Academy, Manchester M43 6QD

I am writing to tell you about the findings of the inspection and, on behalf of the team of inspectors, to thank you for your friendly welcome. We were interested to hear about your experiences and views, including through the questionnaires completed by some students.

These are some of the things we found. We can see that much has improved.

- A lot of change has happened during the last three years! Your new academy building is so exciting. It was good to see all year groups together, getting on well with each other.
- Results of GCSE and vocational qualifications went up by around 10% in each of the last two years. They are set to rise again this year although quite a few students have yet to get their grade C or better in mathematics.
- You learn enthusiastically in some lessons but less so in others. You are not all making the most of opportunities to learn new knowledge and skills. Some of you take better care over your work than others. You need to reach a good standard in all of your subjects – the teachers should expect more of you.
- Some teachers are skilled in making sure you learn at a good rate. They plan interesting activities that keep you busy and thinking for the whole lesson, even those long lessons. We want more of the teachers to teach like this so that you are challenged and supported to do your best. Some of you find reading and writing difficult. The teachers can do more to help you with this.
- Most of you behave well in lessons and around the academy, but some do not. Misbehaviour in lessons, including chatting to your friends instead of working, slows down your learning and can stop teachers from teaching well. You all have a responsibility to help yourself and each other gain the best education.
- Your attendance has improved again this year. Now you need to be punctual at the start of the day and to lessons.

We have asked the principal, the staff and governors to improve some things.

- Improve behaviour and attitudes to learning – you have a big part to play in this.
- Raise standards in mathematics.
- Increase the amount of good and outstanding teaching.

With best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Jane Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

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