

Nottingham University Samworth Academy

Inspection report

Unique reference number	135761
Local authority	N/a
Inspection number	381920
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2012
Lead inspector	Andrew Cook HMI

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
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	684
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Rowen
Headteacher	David Harris
Date of previous school inspection	N/a
School address	Bramhall Road Bilborough Nottingham NG8 4HY
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Age group	11–18
Inspection date(s)	23–24 May 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Peter Bailey

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Carol Worthington

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Most lesson observations were around 25 minutes long. One inspector made short visits to 10 lessons to specifically look at behaviour. Overall 54 lessons were observed and 37 teachers seen. In total just under 21 hours were spent observing teaching and learning in lessons. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, senior leaders, two members of the governing body, and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the academy's work, and looked at its improvement plans and data on students' progress and behaviour. Inspectors also took account of 44 parental questionnaires and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

The academy opened in September 2009, and is smaller than other schools of the same type. It is jointly sponsored by Nottingham University and Sir David Samworth. The links with the university give the academy a focus on research. For example, approximately a third of the staff have taken on either a masters or PhD course. The Principal took up post in spring 2008, working with the sponsors from the university.

Around 45% of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. Most students are White British. Approximately a quarter of the students have been identified as having learning difficulties which is double that of the national average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.

The academy meets the current floor standards, which are the minimum standards expected by the government for students' attainment and progress. Since September 2010 the academy became the designated deaf provision for the city of Nottingham. This specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs will eventually cater for 15 students.

The provision for students in the sixth form is in partnership with Bilborough College. Students progressing to academic courses are taught at the college with pastoral support from the academy, while those studying a small number of vocational courses are taught at the academy.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is improving but not yet outstanding because students' attainment in most subjects is sometimes undermined by their insecure literacy and numeracy skills, and outstanding teaching is not common across most subjects.
- All groups of students make good progress from their various starting points. Attainment at the end of Year 11 rose dramatically in 2011 and is on track to rise again this year. The gap between the standards the academy's students achieve and those achieved by all students nationally is closing quickly.
- Staff training, rigorous monitoring and high expectations from leaders have led to improvements in the quality of teaching, which is now typically good and often outstanding in English.
- Students talk of the dramatic improvements in behaviour since the academy opened; behaviour in lessons and around the site is good. Students' positive attitudes to learning ensure lessons run smoothly. Attendance has improved and is now broadly average.
- The sixth form is satisfactory. Students make satisfactory progress. There has been a greater focus on helping students choose the most appropriate courses for their ability.
- Leaders have been highly effective in driving up standards and the quality of teaching. The management of performance is dealt with rigorously. Raising attainment in English and mathematics has been effective within these subject areas; leaders are aware that raising standards across all other areas of the curriculum is now the next stage. The governing body are acutely aware of the work of the academy and provide rigorous challenge when needed. The co-sponsorship of the academy plays an influential role in its distinguishing features. Links with the University of Nottingham bring expertise to governance

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and the opportunity to share facilities, and have given students a chance to realise how they can aspire to further education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in all year groups so that it is above the levels expected for students of a similar age by:
 - refining the use of students' achievement data to inform planning
 - ensuring students achieve well in all subjects.

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in all subjects by:
 - defining the key features of outstanding teaching, taking into account the views of students
 - ensuring teachers always convey the highest expectations for what students should achieve in lessons, including the amount and quality of their work
 - providing a variety of tasks that reflect appropriate challenge for students of different abilities and generate high levels of enthusiasm for learning
 - ensuring that teachers perceptively intervene when students need support, further challenge or praise.

- Develop the curriculum so that it better meets the needs and aspirations of all students and contributes to raising attainment by:
 - ensuring the opportunities for students to achieve well-developed literacy, numeracy and ICT skills give them access to a broad range of curricular choices
 - ensuring that opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpin learning in all subject areas.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

In 2011 the proportion of Year 11 students who achieved five or more A* to C GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, rose dramatically when compared to the 2010 results. The 2011 results were slightly better than those predicted by the academy but overall its predictions were very accurate. The academy's assessment information for 2012 show that examination results will be even better and there is convincing evidence that they are likely to reach a level comparable with the national average. Attainment across the school is rising quickly, reflecting the good progress students are making from their low starting points. Students known to be eligible for free school meals make good progress, as do disabled students and those with special educational needs because teaching is often matched to their abilities. Deaf students in the unit make good, and in some lessons outstanding progress.

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Opportunities for students to catch up in terms of their reading skills are very effective and reading standards are rising, especially in Years 7-9.

In lessons students typically make good progress. For example, in a physical education lesson students were keen to improve their discus throwing skills, and use of clear learning criteria and peer assessment helped them to make good progress. In other lessons when students made good or better progress, clear expectations and good behaviour management led to students making concerted efforts to complete tasks. Where progress was outstanding, for example in English, a high level of challenge was given through tasks that were expertly matched to ability and a wide variety of learning opportunities.

A scrutiny of students' work showed that most are making good progress over time. In a few books the amount of recorded work for a lesson suggested that students had not worked studiously.

Students in the sixth form make satisfactory progress. Taking on A-level courses has been a challenge for students who have weaker literacy and numeracy skills; the academy has addressed this issue through extra literacy lessons.

The vast majority of parents and carers who completed questionnaires believed their children were making good progress in school. Likewise most students who completed questionnaires said they learnt a lot in lessons.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good. The majority of parents and students who completed the questionnaires agree. Most of the teaching observed in the English department was outstanding. The common features of good and outstanding teaching were:

- very positive relationships between students and staff
- detailed planning that highlighted how tasks were planned to match students' differing abilities
- a variety of tasks which encouraged paired and group work, discussions, peer assessment and practical activities
- perceptive interventions by the teacher when students needed to be challenged further, or given guidance and support or well-earned praise
- reference being made to previous work and the findings from the teacher's marking of students' work.

The teaching of disabled students and those with special educational needs is good overall. Outstanding teaching was observed in the base for deaf students when there was an excellent relationship between the teacher and students, and teaching provided constant challenge and expert support. Teaching assistants are very effective in supporting students in their learning.

Outstanding teaching in English is ensuring students make rapid progress. In one

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Year 8 English lesson the teacher skilfully managed students' behaviour, made clear her expectations and used praise to motivate. Her constant monitoring of students' learning led to her giving exceptional support to students who needed help. In a life skills lesson good teaching helped to develop students' empathy when they were challenged to think about what it would be like for a student joining the academy from Russia who spoke no English. In this lesson the teacher used highly effective questioning so that students considered a range of issues.

When teaching is satisfactory the common features are:

- missed opportunities to improve students' literacy and numeracy skills
- a lack of attention by the teacher to the amount and presentation of work students produce, which could be used as a gauge to their progress
- too few interventions by the teacher when students are not making good or better progress
- missed opportunities to emphasise aspects of learning to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

No teaching was observed in the sixth form as the inspection took place during an exam period. The academy rigorously monitors teaching in the vocational courses it offers; the developing links with the college mean that it also has a clear view of the provision for students taking A levels.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is good in lessons and around the academy site. Students' behaviour during the lunch breaks, for example, is good when they get time to relax, socialise and enjoy the excellent food from the cafeteria. The vast majority of parents and who completed Ofsted questionnaires said that their child feels safe in school; a similar response was received from students who completed questionnaires.

Inspectors particularly scrutinised the evidence around behaviour because a small number of parents and carers who completed questionnaires raised some concerns about lessons being disrupted by inappropriate behaviour. A small number of students who completed questionnaires also felt that behaviour in lessons was not always good. In the vast majority of lessons observed by inspectors behaviour was good or better. In the last 12 months there have been no permanent exclusions and the number of temporary exclusions is falling. Expectations of students' behaviour have risen. There is a much more rigorous approach to recording low-level behavioural incidents. Academy data, including behaviour incidents, accident records and lesson evaluations, all show improvements in behaviour. Discussions with students confirmed inspectors' views that behaviour is good overall. Students commented that when behaviour was not good, staff quickly dealt with it.

Students told inspectors that any instances of bullying, including racist and homophobic bullying, were dealt with quickly. They were also very clear and confident about the procedures in place to deal with any behaviour that prevented

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lessons from running smoothly. Attendance has improved and students are punctual to lessons.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders have been highly effective in driving up the quality of teaching and as a result students now make good progress. Since the opening of the academy leaders have been determined to be reflective and researched-based, appreciating the need to make rapid improvement whilst not losing sight of building for long-term success. Underpinning their work is an ambitious plan for improvement which is reviewed regularly so that improvement work can be focused. For example, assessment data on students' achievement is robust but leaders recognise that the way it is presented needs to be further refined to ensure that it is always used effectively to inform teachers' planning for lessons. Holding leaders to account is an impressive range of skills and expertise provided by an astute governing body. The links with Nottingham University are opening doors, not only for students to experience and aspire to university education, but also for staff to pursue professional development. Middle leaders have benefited from coaching from their senior colleagues; they understand their roles and responsibilities and can provide convincing evidence of the positive impact of their work. This combination of proven track record in improving standards and teaching and the determination to reflectively self-evaluate demonstrates good capacity to improve further.

The curriculum is good. It is clear that the academy focused on key weaknesses especially to drive up standards in English and mathematics. This work has been successful and the English department is now one of the strongest in the academy. The curriculum on offer is broad and balanced. There is a strong determination to ensure the curriculum meets the needs of all students even more closely. For example, sixth form students can take either vocational or more academic courses, and extra reading classes are provided for those whose reading skills are holding them back. The 'Lifeskills' programme aims to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and in many ways is successful. Religious education features both in the 'Lifeskills' programme and other subjects, but as a result learning is disjointed. The academy uses the expression 'the guiding principle of wonder' and genuinely promotes an enquiring mind. One of the best examples is the 'Wonder Room' (a room full of weird and wonderful artefacts from nature, science and history) which provides students with a treasure of experiences. As one student told an inspector who asked how one scientific artefact worked: 'That's the wonder of it sir, nobody knows.'

The academy is successful in promoting equality and tackling discrimination. Good efforts are made to identify any barrier to a students' progress and action is then taken. For example, students who have difficulties managing their behaviour receive one-to-one support from key workers. The good teaching and good outcomes for students in the designated deaf provision provide another example of good leadership. Safeguarding requirements are meticulously met.

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Every member of staff who completed the Ofsted questionnaire said they were proud to work for the academy. There is a genuine sense that leaders and staff know that they are on a journey; much has been achieved but more is to be done.

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 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.



25 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Nottingham University Samworth Academy, Nottingham, NG8 4HY

Thank you for contributing to the inspection through letting us know your views about the education you receive at the academy. One of the most important things many of you told us was that the academy helps you to do as well as you can. Inspectors made the judgement that your academy is good. The combination of your good behaviour and the successful work of the adults who teach and support you has led to you making good overall progress in lessons.

The senior leaders have made sure that the education you receive has improved. They have been supported extremely well by the academy sponsors. The links with Nottingham University have given you a chance to look forward and hope and plan for your future studies and employment.

Teaching is good. In many lessons you enjoy the variety of tasks you are given. Your literacy and numeracy skills are improving but you still must always make the most of every opportunity to do better.

I know that the senior leaders are now thinking about how they can make the academy outstanding, and to help them do this the inspectors left three key areas to work on.

- Your attainment in English and mathematics and in other subjects must improve so that it is above the national averages for all students.
- Increasing the proportion of teaching that is outstanding.
- Developing the curriculum so that it fully meets your interests and needs and gives you every opportunity to develop life skills.

Keep focused on improving and do not lose sight of your ambitions.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector

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