

St Columb Major Academy

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136862
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	397480
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2012
Lead inspector	John Cavill

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	286
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Hooton
Headteacher	Antus Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

John Cavill Additional inspector

Marcia Headon Additional inspector

David Nebesnuick Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 28 lessons and observed 11 teachers. 'Fun Fit' and a Key Stage 2 singing lesson were also observed. The inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. The inspectors also made short observations of sessions on the teaching of phonics (pupils learning letter patterns and the sounds they represent to enable them to read). They had discussions with members of the governing body, staff, and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plans and priorities for development. They analysed recent evidence on pupils' progress and attainment, checked safeguarding procedures, and analysed 101 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as others completed by staff and pupils.

Information about the academy

St Columb Major is a larger-than-average primary academy. Conversion from the predecessor school to an academy took place in July 2011. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, but rising. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is within two Reception-Year classes. The school meets the current floor standards, the minimum standards expected by the government for pupils' attainment and progress. There is a children's centre, providing before- and after-school care, and nursery on the academy site, which are not managed by the academy and which will be inspected separately.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is an outstanding academy. The mission statement, 'Happy, Hardworking, Successful', is clear for all to see in the fantastic learning culture that exists, where everyone is valued and encouraged to be the best that they can. The parent or carer who commented that 'We are lucky to have such a brilliant school' reflects how parents and carers, pupils, and staff regard the impact the academy is having on the future life chances of pupils.
- Pupils' exceptional achievement starts from the moment they enter in the Reception Year, where excellent teaching provides a superb start to their education. Pupils' continue to make rapid and sustained progress throughout the academy, so that, when they leave at the end of Year 6, they attain above average standards.
- Teaching is outstanding, consistently challenging pupils to achieve very well. Lessons are planned particularly well to meet individual needs by skilled teachers and teaching assistants and offer exciting and stimulating activities keenly enjoyed by the pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary both in lessons and around the academy. They demonstrate a great attitude and desire to engage fully with their learning. Pupils are respectful, considerate, and say that they feel extremely safe at the academy.
- Leadership and management are outstanding, including the leadership of teaching and the management of the school's performance. All members of staff are focused on a shared vision to implement sustained improvements, ensuring that the academy is continuing to develop. Performance review systems are highly effective. They are supported effectively by appropriate professional development and reflect the standards and expectations at the academy. The curriculum is highly effective, incorporates outstanding spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, and promotes outstanding

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achievement. Enhancing the Early Years Foundation Stage environment to make it more vibrant and improve creativity remains an area for improvement. Nevertheless, children do well in Reception Year and get off to a strong start.

What does the academy need to do to improve further?

- Develop the learning environment in the Early Years Foundation Stage to make it more vibrant and allow for children's improved creativity.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement at the academy is outstanding. Pupils are encouraged successfully to do their best at all times, a view shared by almost all parents and carers, who think that they make good progress. When the children join the Reception Year, they have skills levels that are well below what would normally be expected for their age, especially in their literacy and numeracy skills. During their time in Reception Year, all children make excellent progress in all of the areas of learning, but especially so in their personal development and numeracy skills, as a result of high-quality teaching. Literacy and creative skills remain weaker, but the rapid gains that are made ensure that the children are prepared very well for the next stage of their learning.

Outstanding progress continues throughout the academy and pupils leave at the end of Year 6 with attainment that is above average in all subjects and continuing to improve year on year. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make outstanding progress when measured against their starting points. Accurately assessing individual needs and targeting effective interventions that are delivered by teachers and teaching assistants ensure that progress.

Pupils are excited to be at school. They approach their work with enthusiasm and enjoy working with other pupils. Their ability to work independently is allowing them to make exceptionally good progress and is learnt at an early age. An example of this was seen in a Year 5 numeracy lesson, when pupils were collecting data in groups to work out the mean, average and range. Following an excellent session when the teacher modelled the calculations involved, pupils were presented with challenges that they had to organise together in groups to solve. The ease with which the pupils settled to work on these tasks and used each other to evaluate the process promoted some exceptional learning and is typical of most of the lessons at the academy.

Attainment in reading is above average at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Pupils are able to use their phonic skills very well and this is evident in the way that they 'sound out' and blend the words well to enable an understanding of the text. Reading by the most-able pupils was fluent and enabled them to access information easily from a wide range of sources using challenging text.

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Quality of teaching

The outstanding quality of teaching, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is securing pupils' particularly good achievement. Lessons are full of challenge and teachers ensure that they are delivered at a pace which promotes very effective learning. There is a team approach in classrooms, with teaching assistants supporting the pupils' learning very well. Work is matched extremely well to the needs of all pupils, who demonstrate an exceptional keenness to learn and are excited by the tasks that are planned for them. In discussions, they say that 'they have a good education here' and that 'teachers are helpful, really friendly and will joke with you'.

Teachers know their pupils' very well and use lesson objectives and success criteria to help the children to recognise their own learning. Assessments are regular and direct the learning through the highly effective use of targets with pupils. Marking in the books is done regularly and pupils are able to use feedback to help them progress rapidly. 'Learning ladders' are used very well and allow pupils to be fully involved in the assessment of their own work, developing further independence in their learning.

Imaginative teaching strategies are used frequently by teachers and provide opportunities for learning to reflect real life. In the Year 1/2 class, Smudge the sheepdog was used to provide a focus to the pupils that they could relate to and stimulate their reflective thinking. A Year 6 lesson on the weather saw pupils presenting the weather forecast as though they were on the television, showing outstanding confidence and great recall of the information they had learnt. The awe and wonder seen in lessons is indicative of the way that the pupils are enjoying their work. Successful teaching and support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is very effective in helping them to make the same strong progress as their classmates.

Parents, carers and pupils agree with inspectors that the teaching is very effective at the academy and is developing the pupils' skills in communication, reading, and mathematics extremely well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural awareness is developed very well through a number of subjects. Reading is taught very effectively and is supported by high-quality daily phonics sessions in Reception Year and Key Stage 1.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour at the academy is outstanding. High expectations are sought by the staff, who model excellent behaviour which is learnt and adopted by the pupils quickly. A strong moral code exists and all pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, demonstrate clearly an understanding of right and wrong. Pupils are keen to take up responsibilities at the school and this can be best seen in the way that the 'Squaddies' organise activities for the younger pupils to take part in

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during the lunch break.

Pupils enjoy school, play together particularly well and understand the importance of keeping everyone safe. They work very well together and the academy has placed a strong emphasis on teamwork, which has proved to be extremely successful. Learning in lessons is highly effective and pupils are very keen to learn. They have a very positive attitude towards their learning and disruption to learning is non-existent. Pupils value the rewards systems and appreciate the way that success is valued and celebrated.

Almost all parents and carers believe that behaviour at the academy is good and that their children are safe. They noted that there has been some bullying, but this has been resolved quickly by the academy. Pupils report that there is very little bullying of any kind, including physical, emotional, and cyber-bullying. They know that the adults will deal with any problems they may have very quickly and very effectively.

Attendance has improved strongly and is now above average, due to successful work to raise awareness of levels of absence with parents and carers. Pupils are rarely late into the academy or lessons and understand the need to have good attendance.

Leadership and management

Clear direction and vision from the inspirational headteacher have created a learning culture that fosters high expectations from both staff and pupils. That has led to exceptional practice and outcomes in a friendly and cohesive school community where every child genuinely does matter.

Leadership and management at all levels, including the governing body, are outstanding. They support the drive for sustained improvement at the academy fully, with an attention to detail which ensures all areas are monitored and examined fully to strive for the very best. Excellent links exist with the nearby children's centre and nursery that enhance their work with families and the local community successfully. The governing body is challenging, supportive and fulfils all its statutory responsibilities very effectively, including equalities legislation to combat discrimination and ensuring that the requirements for safeguarding are effective and fully met. It is fully conversant with the academy's strengths and aspects that need further development and is completely involved in the self-evaluation and improvement planning process.

Very regular and challenging monitoring of teaching at the academy has resulted in the quality being outstanding. Teachers are supported very well and developed to improve their practice and information on the quality of teaching is used to ensure that appropriate professional development is available through performance management procedures.

The curriculum is continually under scrutiny to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils and provides them with a wide range of memorable experiences. It is broad

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and balanced and the cross-curricular tasks provide excellent opportunities to embed the pupils' literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills. Displays around the school provide first-rate stimulus for learning and are used well to promote outstanding work. However, the environment within the Early Years Foundation Stage has yet to fulfil its potential to provide a vibrant learning experience that encourages creativity.

Pupils' cultural development is enhanced with the very well-developed links with the Shanghai Dong Zhan Primary School in China and Gumpa School in India. Activities such as assemblies, violin tuition for all pupils, and very enthusiastic singing by Key Stage 2 all support the work being undertaken within the curriculum to promote spiritual development. Residential camps and extra-curricular clubs help develop social skills and are very much enjoyed by the pupils.

Leaders and managers use the academy's assessment and tracking system to monitor the performance of individuals rigorously. Pupil progress meetings allow teachers to discuss the progress of individual pupils. Pupils who are identified as not making the required progress are quickly and very effectively targeted with successful interventions that produce outstanding academic outcomes, ensuring equality of opportunity.

The quality of the academy's self-evaluation and 'vision' improvement plans is excellent and focused on sustaining and continually raising its effectiveness. They fully reflect the academy's capacity for improvement.

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.
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.



15 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Columb Major Academy, St Columb TR9 6RW

Thank you for welcoming us to your academy recently, talking to us about your work and telling us about your academy and what you like about it. We enjoyed talking to you and would especially like to thank those of you who met with an inspector or completed the questionnaire.

We are always pleased when we see pupils enjoying learning and we certainly saw that at St Columb Major. You told us that you have lots of fun in lessons and when you are with your friends. You thought that the teachers made sure that lessons were fun to do. As you grow up it is important that you remember wonderful moments. The singing that we heard from the Key Stage 2 pupils was fantastic and it was great to see you all enjoy it so much. Those of you who did the wonderful 'Fun Fit' session showed us how much you have achieved since you started the programme – well done!

You told us that your academy is great and we agree with you. We believe that everything about your academy is outstanding. Even outstanding academies can carry on improving, however, and I know your headteacher and teachers want to do just that. We have asked them to make some improvements in the Reception classes so that the classrooms and outside area are more vibrant to encourage the children to be more creative.

We enjoyed coming to your academy. You can help it to improve by continuing to work hard and concentrating on your work in every lesson.

Yours sincerely

John Cavill
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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