

# The Knights Templar School

Park Street, Baldock, SG7 6DZ

## Inspection dates

10–11 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The academy motto - 'courage and courtesy' - is evident in the excellent relationships between all students and with adults.
- Much of the teaching is good with some that is outstanding.
- Students attain high standards and the progress made by students of all backgrounds and abilities in the main school is better than average.
- Students have exemplary personal and social skills. They show an excellent understanding of right and wrong.
- The behaviour of students is extremely good, both in the classroom and around the site. They feel very safe and happy at school.
- Students have an excellent attitude to learning.
- Staff are highly committed to students' welfare, academic development and to a wide range of additional activities.
- Leaders and managers plan well and have improved teaching.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- There is not enough teaching that is outstanding.
- Examination results have been static for three years.
- The progress made by students should be stronger, particularly in the sixth form.
- The monitoring arrangements by managers and governors need to be even sharper.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 48 lessons in total. They also visited many different areas of the academy and the site during lessons and at break times.
- Meetings were held with three different groups of students, the Chair and representatives of the Governing Body, senior staff and other managers.
- The inspection team examined a range of academy documentation including: school development plans and policies; departmental plans, records of lesson monitoring and checks on students' progress; and the minutes of meetings, including those of the governing body.
- The 130 responses made to Parent View were considered, along with an analysis of the academy's own questionnaire returns. Staff questionnaires were also considered.

## Inspection team

David Martin, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Angela Podmore

Additional Inspector

Ann Short

Additional Inspector

Piers Ranger

Additional Inspector

Derek Wiles

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Knights Templar is larger than the average secondary and is the only one serving the local town.
- The school converted to become an academy on 1 April 2011. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding.
- The academy has specialisms in the performing arts and in sports.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is below average.
- The majority of students are White British, but a number of other ethnic groups are represented in the population. A small proportion of students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The academy has Artsmark Gold accreditation and the Eco-school silver award.
- The academy consistently exceeds current government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The headteacher has provided support to another local school, although this has become a pairing arrangement more recently.

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

- Improve the frequency of outstanding teaching by:
  - sharing the best practice widely across the academy through coaching and mentoring
  - ensuring all teachers use assessment information to plan and deliver work that is always at the right level of difficulty
  - allowing students more opportunities, particularly in the sixth form, to work on their own.
- Ensure all students make better than expected progress by:
  - checking that systems to track students' progress are used fully and effectively
  - giving students helpful feedback through marking, and assessment during lessons, so that they know exactly what to do to improve their work.
- Sharpen the monitoring practice of school leaders, managers and governors by:
  - making line management at all levels sharply focussed on key academy priorities
  - enabling all managers to judge the quality of teaching and learning accurately and follow up the identified areas for development to ensure improvement
  - ensuring that monitoring activity is always recorded and followed up.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- The standards reached by Year 11 are high compared to the national average but they have been static for three years.
- Most, but not all, students make better than expected progress. This is also true for disabled students and those who have special educational needs or who are supported by pupil premium funding, due to effective additional support. For example, a Year 7 group of lower attaining pupils have made good progress because of this effective support. There is no variation in the progress made by pupils of different ethnicities. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good overall although it is better in some subjects than others. Reducing this variation is a current priority within the school improvement plan. The progress made by students in the sixth form overall is at least as expected from their starting points, and sometimes better.
- Results in science dipped sharply in 2011. Due to concerted action taken by school leaders, including changes to staffing, results have improved strongly in 2012 and are close to those achieved in the other core subjects. There is still work to do with the new science team, as progress seen in lessons during the inspection was variable.
- In nearly all lessons, students show an excellent attitude to learning. They are willing and eager participants in the classroom, enabling most lessons to proceed at a good pace, with little time lost. They quickly gain new skills, knowledge and understanding and lessons are productive. Literacy, numeracy and communication skills are good.
- In a minority of lessons progress is slower. This is often because the work is not well matched to students of different ability. As a result, all students complete the same tasks and there is insufficient challenge for some pupils.

### The quality of teaching is good

- In the large majority of lessons seen during the inspection, teaching was good. There were a number of outstanding lessons. Leaders' views of strengths and weaknesses in teaching tallied with those of inspectors.
- In all lessons relationships between students and their teachers are very strong. Students want to learn and make progress. They respect their teachers and follow instructions willingly, always striving to do their best. They use resources and equipment thoughtfully and carefully.
- There are, however, inconsistencies in the quality of planning, marking and the use of assessment to improve learning across the school. In some lessons teachers do not carefully check students' understanding and adjust their teaching. This helps to explain why students make better progress in some subjects than others.

- In the best lessons seen, work was planned to meet the full ability range, so that all were consistently challenged. Questioning encouraged deeper thinking and helped students to develop and express their ideas confidently. Students knew what they needed to do to improve as a result of the feedback that they got in lessons verbally and in written marking. They also frequently had opportunities to assess their own and the work of others.
- In an outstanding Year 11 lesson, students thoughtfully explained their own ideas about how the language and imagery developed the themes and character in the book being studied. They then clearly explained their ideas to the rest of the class so that they could all select from a wide range of examples to use in their own writing.
- Where teaching is less strong, all students are frequently given the same tasks, whatever their ability and experience. Students do not always know what their targets are or what they specifically need to do to improve their work. In some lessons there is limited opportunity for discussion, or questioning requires only simple responses.
- In a few lessons, including in the sixth form, there is too much teacher talk leading to limited time for students to work on their own.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- This is a major strength of the academy. Students' attitude to learning is outstanding and their behaviour exemplary. They show mutual respect for each other, the school environment and for all adults. This is true in all classrooms, around the site and in their courtesy and helpfulness towards visitors.
  - Behaviour logs are well maintained, and students commented positively on a more recent focus on rewards for good behaviour. The academy has had no permanent exclusions and very few students are excluded for shorter periods.
  - Incidents of bullying are thoroughly recorded and clearly followed up. Students assured inspectors that the behaviour seen during the inspection was typical for the academy, and that bullying is very rare and always dealt with quickly when it does occur.
  - Students have a good understanding of different forms of discrimination and bullying, including cyber bullying and that based on gender or sexuality. They show a highly mature attitude when given opportunities to discuss sensitive or controversial topics in class.
  - There are many opportunities for students to take on additional responsibilities - as prefects, members of the eco-council or as sports leaders, for example. Sixth form students enjoy opportunities to work with younger students as mentors.
  - Attendance is good and few students are persistently absent. This is partly due to attendance being carefully monitored with speedy intervention if there are any concerns. Parents are supportive and students enjoy being at the academy. They have access to a wide variety of additional opportunities and trips beyond the normal day.
  - Safeguarding procedures are robust and the day-to-day care of students is excellent. The
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academy has a good track record in helping more vulnerable students to take a full part in the life of the school. Students feel safe and behave with great responsibility, for example when having to cross the road between sites.

## **The leadership and management** are good

- School leaders and managers, including the governing body, have developed and sustained a strong ethos for the school. This is built upon the academy motto and is reflected in the excellent attitude of students, commitment of staff and warm relationships. It is also reflected in the outstanding moral, social and spiritual development of students.
  - High academic standards have largely been sustained, although there has been a plateauing. Leaders and managers have recognised this. Senior leaders have shown a willingness to tackle serious underperformance rigorously. For example, they have taken decisive action in science, where there were particular problems with falling results. Other weaknesses in the school are recognised, but there has been less effective impact on reducing internal variation in performance.
  - Recent changes in senior team responsibilities have led to stronger leadership of teaching and learning. There is some evidence of impact from the more bespoke training and support provided. There is no clear recorded evidence that identified weaknesses in teaching are systematically followed up.
  - Middle leaders feel suitably challenged and supported through present line management arrangements. Senior leaders have plans to further strengthen monitoring activity; these are at an early stage of implementation to ensure that agreed priorities are making a measurable difference.
  - The curriculum is good and well matched to students' needs and interests. The additional activities provided, such as trips and cultural events, adds a great deal to students' enjoyment of their time at the academy.
  - Performance management arrangements have been revised. All staff now have to reach teaching and student performance targets in order to meet the academy's expectations. Identified areas for improvement are taken into consideration in providing coaching, support and training.
  - Parents, staff and students are very satisfied overall with the way that the school operates. However, there are some justified concerns that the school is not living up to its previously outstanding reputation for high academic success and improvement.
  - The school has a wide range of partnerships and networks, notably with the Baldock Forum, but also with a range of other schools and business partners. The school successfully seeks support for leadership and governance when it is required.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - brings a great deal of experience, professional skill and continuity to the role
    - provides appropriate support and challenge where it is required
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- has an effective committee structure and strong financial management in partnership with the business manager
  - has given careful consideration as to how pupil premium funding is used and can demonstrate the impact this has made for students
  - does not record minutes of meetings and visits to the school sufficiently sharply to enable the governing body share and evaluate what they have learned.
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## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136608
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	395656

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1332
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	280
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Graham Kingsley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew Pickering
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 620700
<b>Fax number</b>	01462 620701
<b>Email address</b>	admin@ktemplar.herts.sch.uk

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