

Drapers' Academy

Settle Road, Harold Hill, Romford, RM3 9XR

Inspection dates 14–15 November 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Drapers' Academy has improved rapidly since inspectors last visited just over a year ago. The governors are well on the way to fulfilling their vision of creating an academy which makes a significant difference to the community it serves and to the opportunities for its students.
- The academy's improvement is due to outstanding leadership and management. The Principal and senior team have developed highly effective methods for monitoring and raising the quality of teaching. Middle leaders have played an increasingly effective role in raising standards in most subjects.
- Students' GCSE results rose very sharply in 2012. The proportion getting five or more good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, was higher than the current national average. This represents strong progress for most groups of students.
- Students are taught well. Teachers are skilful in getting them to take part and contribute in lessons, which helps to develop their confidence.
- Students are proud to be part of the academy and keen to show off the impressive new buildings. They are always polite and helpful to visitors, and show each other a great deal of mutual respect.
- 'The Zone' provides excellent support for students who find it difficult to maintain concentration and behave well in class. Its success is seen in the fall in fixed-term and permanent exclusions to zero for more than a year.
- The school's sixth form, opened in September 2012, has made a good start. Sixth form students are well taught, and value the high-quality advice and guidance they have received about career opportunities.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Weaknesses in many students' reading and writing skills limit their progress.
- Students' academic progress is rather uneven; progress is not as rapid in Key Stage 3, and there is still slight variation in progress between subjects.
- Relatively few students gain the very highest grades at GCSE.
- Students do not always respond well to the advice teachers give them about how to improve their work and they do not always understand the targets they have been set.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 27 teachers in 28 lessons, including some joint observations and shorter visits to lessons with members of the school's senior team. Observations of other aspects of the school's work were also made, including visits to 'The Zone' inclusion centre, individual and small-group literacy sessions, form time and a meeting of the school council.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, with the Chair of the Governing Body and with school staff, including senior and middle leaders. Informal discussions also took place with staff and students.
- Questionnaire returns from 55 staff were analysed.
- Inspectors took account of nine responses to the online Parent View questionnaire in planning the inspection, along with written comments from one parent or carer. Evidence from the school's own survey of parents and carers was also examined.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, its safeguarding policies, and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

Ian Hodgkinson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gaynor Goodman

Additional inspector

Venetia Mayman

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Drapers' Academy opened just over two years ago on the site of its predecessor school, King's Wood. It was monitored by Ofsted just over a year ago and judged to be making satisfactory progress.
- In September 2012, it moved into completely new buildings next to the old ones. At the same time it opened a sixth form for the first time, admitting students into Year 12 to study academic A- and AS-level subjects.
- The academy sponsors are the Drapers' Company of the City of London and Queen Mary, University of London.
- The number of students on roll has increased very substantially, by almost a fifth over the last year. However, the academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The large majority of students are White British, although the proportions of students from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are above those found in most schools.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is high. This is so for those supported at school action, and for those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- A high proportion of students are known to be eligible for support from the pupil premium (additional resources provided by the government).
- The academy has specialisms in mathematics and science.
- A small number of students in Key Stage 4 spend one or two days a week following vocational courses with local work-based training providers.
- The academy meets current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement from good to outstanding by:
 - further strengthening students' skills in reading and writing
 - ensuring that students make consistently excellent progress from year to year as they move through the school, so reducing the need to accelerate progress so rapidly in Key Stage 4
 - increasing the number of students who achieve the highest grades at GCSE, and ensuring that their targets are always challenging enough
 - ensuring that students' progress in all subjects matches that in the best performing courses.
- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - making sure that, throughout the many activities aimed at promoting better literacy across the school, students are consistently challenged to work at progressively more demanding levels
 - ensuring that students always understand teachers' written comments which tell them how to improve
 - ensuring that students always respond to teachers' marking of their work by making corrections or specifically applying in their later work the targets they have been set.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The attainment of students who join the academy in Year 7 is typically well below average. Very few students join the academy having attained the higher Level 5 in any of their subjects in primary school.
- The improvement in GCSE results in 2012 was therefore a considerable achievement. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, inclusive of English and mathematics, improved from 36% in 2011 to 63% in 2012.
- The proportion of students who gained grade C or above in English exceeded the current national figure, and the figure in mathematics drew much closer to the national average. In the specialist subject of science, achievement was outstanding, as nearly all students gained the equivalent of two GCSEs at grade C or above.
- Results in art and most areas of design and technology have been relative strengths of the academy over two years. Elsewhere there have been some variations in performance by subject over time, in part linked to variations in the quality of teaching and learning. The very strong emphasis placed on ensuring that Year 11 students gained success in their mathematics and English results in 2012 also had an adverse effect on students' performance in some other subjects.
- The academy's policy of early entry for GCSE, including in mathematics and English, has been part of an effective strategy in accelerating the progress of most groups of students in Years 10 and 11. This ensured that in 2012 many were successful, particularly low and middle attainers, in getting results above the grade C threshold. Students know that if they attain a grade C as part of early entry but their target is higher, they will continue their studies to reach the higher grade.
- Higher attainers were mostly successful in making the progress expected of them in 2012, although relatively few exceeded the expected rate of progress. While the proportion of students attaining the highest GCSE grades of A* and A doubled in 2012, it remains low and a focus for improvement. For example, in lessons, targets set for higher attaining students are not always stretching enough to build on the high-quality of work they have produced.
- Students for whom English is an additional language generally make better progress than others. The progress of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is good overall. The gap in performance between students supported by the pupil premium and others has narrowed markedly across the school, and 57% of these students gained five or more GCSEs at grade C or above in 2012. The progress of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs varies across the school, but overall is similar to that of other students.
- Students make good progress in lessons, in the main school and the sixth form. Most have positive attitudes and are keen to learn. There has been a real change in students' confidence and willingness to make contributions in class since the last Ofsted monitoring inspection, because they know such contributions will be valued by their teachers. For example, in a science lesson one boy's question about the influence of temperature on the decay of a body in the ground stimulated an excellent discussion across the whole class, drawing on what they had learned about microbes and micro-organisms.
- Weaknesses in literacy skills continue to limit the progress of younger students in particular and the need to sharpen writing skills is rightly a priority for many sixth form classes. The academy's extensive focus on promoting better independent reading, writing, speaking and listening across all subjects is, however, helping to overcome this barrier, and has supported the acceleration in students' progress in Key Stage 4.

The quality of teaching is good

- The proportions of good and outstanding teaching have continued to improve since inspectors

last monitored the academy. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning by senior and middle leaders has ensured the highly consistent implementation of school policies throughout the school, for example on behaviour management, marking of students' work, and the promotion of literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects.

- In the large majority of lessons, the pace of learning is at least good. Teachers use a variety of interesting activities and approaches, including regular use of information and communication technology, to capture students' interest. They have been particularly successful in developing students' confidence to work independently and collaboratively in solving problems, and to actively volunteer their own contributions to class discussions. Innovative methods, such as the use of pupils who are more able or confident in a subject as 'pupil consultants', have further encouraged students to show initiative and take pride in their success. Teachers' questioning of students is sensitive and supportive in developing their thinking and ideas.
- Teachers mostly adapt work well to suit the varying abilities of students in their classes. This has improved significantly since the last monitoring inspection. In many subjects, however, targets need to be more challenging in order for higher attainers to make rapid progress.
- Class sizes and the deployment of extra adults in classes are adjusted through careful consideration of the need to boost progress for groups or individuals. Where teaching assistants and other adults are deployed, they make an effective contribution to learning. Teaching assistants lead highly effective literacy sessions out of classes, which enable targeted pupils to spend at least twice a day developing their reading skills.
- Across the school, staff in all subjects show a strong commitment to the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills. This is beginning to have a significant impact on students' ability to engage in learning and make good progress. Starters to lessons have a specific literacy or numeracy focus and most link seamlessly to the work that follows. Teachers in all subjects mark students' work with a focus on their literacy skills. In science and technology, students are encouraged to apply numbers carefully to make their work accurate. Sometimes, however, tasks to promote literacy do not build progressively on what students already know or can do, and this limits their impact.
- Teachers mark class work and homework regularly with encouraging and supportive comments. Students' books, however, indicate that, in many subjects, students are not in the habit of correcting work or always acting on the teachers' advice. In some cases, targets for students, including literacy targets, are written in technical language too complex for the student to understand.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students spoke positively to inspectors of recent improvements in their own attitudes and those of others, and they believe that this improvement is set to continue. They say they respond positively to the good teaching they receive, and report that incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with effectively. Students report that they feel safe in the school.
- These positive views are echoed strongly in the staff questionnaire responses and those of the small number of parents and carers who responded to Parent View and the school's own questionnaire. They correspond with observations by inspectors, which show that while disruptive behaviour in lessons has not been eliminated, it is uncommon and is well managed by staff.
- The academy has very well-developed systems for identifying, analysing and responding to students' good or bad behaviour. Its rewards and sanctions systems are well understood and valued by students.
- Students have an excellent understanding of different forms of bullying and how to take a stand against them, gained in part through the regular visits of the 'Anti-Bullying Team'. Incidents of bullying are almost always resolved swiftly because they are followed up appropriately. Students told inspectors of the very positive relationships between students around the school. For example a Year 7 student spoke warmly of being invited to play football at break time with

students in Years 10 and 11.

- The school has eliminated exclusion as a form of punishment by developing a varied and innovative range of special provision which is very flexible and carefully tailored to the needs of each student. Students speak with great enthusiasm about 'The Zone' inclusion centre. For example, one said, 'This unit has really helped me. I was struggling (in class) before... I can concentrate here.'
- The academy's use of alternative provision is exemplary in the way it carefully matches students' placements in vocational centres to their needs, interests and aspirations. The monitoring of students' attendance and engagement is rigorous. Students attending this provision are given individual support through The Zone, including work with specialist teachers, to ensure that they maintain their progress in other subjects in which they miss lessons when away on placement.
- Students take on a range of responsibilities for leadership in the academy and carry them out effectively. The 'student voice' is heard on an increasing range of issues. Sixth form students play a very effective part in the life of the school and provide very positive role models, for example by leading school council meetings.
- Students' attendance has improved markedly. For the last full year, attendance was broadly average and it has improved still further this year. The proportion of students who are persistently absent has also declined sharply to below the national rate, as a result of more rigorous follow-up of absence with the students and their families.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The academy is driven by its sponsors' and governors' vision for raising educational standards significantly and increasing opportunities for students from a community in which there is a good deal of social and economic disadvantage. The very marked improvements in students' achievement, behaviour and attendance, as well as in the quality of teaching, show that this vision is beginning to be realised. There is an excellent system for tracking the progress of individuals and groups of students. The information gathered is used as the basis of effective steps to ensure that all students have the opportunity to achieve well.
- The Principal communicates the academy's vision very clearly, and he has provided the academy with excellent and highly astute leadership since its opening. He has built an exceptionally effective senior team around him, comprised of vice principals, head of sixth form, assistant vice principals and the director of finance and administration. This team shows great determination and is sharply focused on improving key aspects of performance. While all members of the team bring their own very original ideas, they are also keen to listen and learn from the experience of others, both within and outside the academy, in order to refine and adapt the academy's practice to match that of the best.
- Support from external consultants has been judiciously employed to monitor the academy's overall progress and support improvements in the leadership and teaching.
- The system for monitoring the quality of teaching and managing the performance of staff is exceptionally thorough and highly effective. Senior leaders regularly drop in to lessons with a specific focus on aspects of teaching and learning, and where shortcomings are identified, subject staff have the responsibility for correcting them because they will be a focus for the next visit.
- Heads of faculty have become increasingly effective in the process of monitoring and developing teaching over the last year. They are now very active in identifying any shortcomings in practice before they are picked up by senior leaders. In addition, through regular joint meetings and meetings with line managers, they have contributed to the extensive sharing of best practice which is now a feature of the academy's work.
- Teachers whose lessons are less than good are provided with support packages and professional development tailored to meet their needs. The academy does not reward teachers for mediocre performance. The academy has a high proportion of teachers who are in the early stages of their careers, and a number told inspectors that they had been exceptionally well supported by line

managers and others responsible for their professional development.

- The curriculum has significant strengths. The focus on promoting literacy across the school has been exceptionally well led, so that all teachers recognise their role in surmounting this key barrier to students' progress. The curriculum is highly personalised, allowing for example those with weaknesses in literacy to get daily focused support in their reading and writing, and providing a GCSE programme for all students that is well tailored to their capabilities.
- Students also speak very positively of the wider opportunities they have been given, for example through their entitlement to free music tuition and opportunities to perform with the London Chamber Orchestra. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strongly supported by such activities and in lessons, through, for example, exceptionally rich cultural references in art.
- The academy's financial resources are targeted precisely in support of its key priorities. Money from the pupil premium has been used for literacy support and additional staffing in examination classes for targeted students. This spending has evidently closed gaps significantly between the achievement of these students and that of others. This can be seen both in GCSE results in 2012 and across most years in the academy.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body establishes the priorities for the academy through an open letter to the Principal at the start of each academic year. These priorities form the basis of the key measures by which the Principal's performance is judged. The governing body holds the Principal and other leaders rigorously to account for performance. The Principal's report to governors offers clear statistical evidence of the academy's performance across a range of outcomes for students. This enables governors' questioning of the academy's performance to be highly specific and gives them a sharp understanding of how well the academy is doing in comparison with other schools nationally. Governors have taken part in suitable training opportunities. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and of how the school's performance management system works, but they are not directly involved in decisions on salary progression. The quality of financial information provided for the governors is excellent and they have a clear understanding of how resources, including the pupil premium, are used. The governing body operates largely without sub-committees, although the education vision advisory group maintains effective oversight of the quality of provision. Elsewhere, governors have specific responsibilities for monitoring aspects of the academy's work and development. The monitoring role for safeguarding needs a clearer definition of its responsibilities. The governing body nonetheless ensures that safeguarding requirements are fully met.

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

Unique reference number	136090
Inspection number	399786

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	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	572
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adrian Lyons
Principal	Matthew Slater
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01708 371331
Fax number	01708 347515
Email address	admin@drapersacademy.com

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