

Malcolm Arnold Academy

Trinity Avenue, Northampton, NN2 6JW

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Many students enter the academy with low reading, writing and mathematical skills. They make good progress to achieve broadly average results in GCSE examinations. Results in English are above the national average.
- The academy's checking and review of its teaching are consistently accurate. Professional development opportunities are good.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Students from different backgrounds work well together and feel safe. The overwhelming majority of students are courteous and well-mannered and have a very positive attitude to learning.
- The academy looks after its students exceptionally well, particularly those who find learning difficult.
- Students supported by the hearing-impaired provision make excellent progress.
- Attendance has improved significantly and is now broadly average.
- The academy has used additional government funding, as well as its own resources, very effectively to support a wide range of students in need of extra help. The progress of these students is good and often outstanding.
- The sixth form is good. Sixth form students make good progress from below average starting points and benefit from small teaching groups.
- Outstanding leadership and governance have ensured teaching is good and that standards are rising.
- The systems designed to check the quality of teaching are very effective

It is not yet an outstanding academy because

- Students do not make good progress in those lessons where teachers do not use questions sufficiently well to check students' understanding and adapt tasks.
- Results in some subjects, notably science, are not strong enough.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 65 lessons including eight joint lesson observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors found time to assess behaviour around the academy and when the students arrive in the morning.
- Meetings were held with the principal, students, two members of the governing body, and nominated staff. The lead inspector also met with the chief executive of the academy sponsor, the David Ross Education Trust.
- Inspectors considered 33 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and analysed the results from 68 staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team observed the academy’s work and scrutinised statistical information about student achievement, attendance and exclusions. In addition they reviewed the academy’s analysis of how well it is doing, the school development plan, minutes of governing body meetings and examined senior leaders’ observations of teaching.

Inspection team

David Jones, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Beverly Dobson

Additional Inspector

Jean Whalley

Additional Inspector

Carol Worthington

Additional Inspector

Del Planter

Seconded Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is larger than the average secondary school.
- A significant proportion of students join the academy part-way through their secondary education or without the experience of a UK-based primary education.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is more than twice the national figure. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is three times the national figure. The academy population is drawn from a wide variety of ethnic groups and nationalities.
- The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average and rising.
- The proportion of students registered by the school as disabled or with special educational needs is three times the national average, as is the number with a statement of special educational need supported at 'school action'. The Malcolm Arnold Achievement Centre coordinates all the support for those who find learning difficult.
- The academy has specially resourced provision for students with special educational needs. It hosts a centre for those whose hearing is impaired. The students are taught in normal classes, supported by specialist staff.
- The number receiving additional support at 'school action plus' is above average.
- There are a number of children who are looked after by the local authority in the academy.
- The academy has specialist status in music and mathematics.
- The academy meets the minimum standards required by the government (floor targets).
- The academy opened in September 2010 following the closure of its predecessor school. HMI visited the academy in October 2011 to monitor its progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement and standards, particularly in science, so they are as good in other subjects as they are in English and mathematics.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching available in all subjects by;
 - using demanding questions to check students' learning at different points in lessons and subsequently give additional, harder work to students who are ready to move on to more difficult work
 - providing more opportunities for discussion in order to improve the quality of students' answers as well as their speaking and listening skills
 - appointing staff of proven quality to subjects where achievement is known to be weaker.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is good. Almost all students enter the academy with low reading, writing and mathematics skills. Subsequently, they make good and sometimes outstanding progress because teaching is invariably good if not better and their development is checked regularly.
- Standards are average overall but rapidly improving. In 2012, 52% of the Year 11 students secured five higher grade GCSEs, including English and mathematics. Standards in English are particularly good. The 2012 results in English were well above the national average and those for mathematics were close to the national figure. Weaknesses remain in some subjects, notably science, where standards have not risen as rapidly.
- Hearing-impaired students and others who are disabled or who have a statement of special educational needs make outstanding progress because of the quality of the individual support now available.
- Students in need of extra help and those in the care of the local authority make good progress because of the wide range of personal and academic support provided, in part, by additional government funding (the pupil premium) and coordinated through the Malcolm Arnold Achievement Centre.
- Students who speak English as an additional language and others in need of extra help make good progress. Their achievement has improved significantly, following the very recent appointment of a number of specialist qualified teachers to support them.
- Modelled on the improvements secured in English, the academy has recently put in place an ambitious programme to improve the students' reading and writing skills in all subjects. This is helping to improve the achievement of students with weaker literacy and numeracy skills.
- Senior staff review and revise the organisation of subject teaching on a regular basis to ensure individuals progress well. The use of early entry to GCSE examinations is very well managed to make certain that students can achieve well and then move on to more demanding courses.
- Standards in the sixth form match national averages. In 2012, the proportion of students securing an A-level pass was average and this represents good progress from their often well below average starting points.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved significantly since the HMI monitoring visit in 2011. Nearly three quarters of teaching is good or better and nearly a third of the lessons observed were outstanding. Inspectors' judgements confirm the academy's own accurate picture of its

teaching quality.

- Teaching is strongest in English and mathematics but is less consistent in science, humanities and some of the vocational subjects.
- Lesson planning is usually detailed and shows a personal knowledge of the students. The best lessons are inspiring and students are very keen to learn. In an outstanding Year 10 mathematics lesson, students who lacked confidence in their mathematical ability were taken carefully through the calculations required and guided to the discovery of the correct answer.
- In the best lessons, teachers ask probing questions and work effectively to create high level discussion. Students work well in small groups and staff use the time this creates effectively to address the gaps in the students' knowledge related to their previous education. Most teachers use subject-specific vocabulary effectively to help students improve their writing and speaking skills.
- In a small minority of lessons, teachers expect too little of students and their teaching does not always engage the students' attention or allow enough time for students to discuss the topics and problems they are dealing with.
- Students who speak English as an additional language and others in need of extra help make good progress because their small group teaching is effective.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students have very positive attitudes to learning. Attendance has risen rapidly in the last year and is currently in line with the national average. This improvement is the result of the rigorous monitoring of attendance, clear systems and expectations, and improved communication with parents and carers. The senior leadership team make exceptionally effective efforts to ensure students attend school on time. Punctuality to school and to lessons is good.
- Students move around the site promptly and gather in easy social groups during breaks and lunch periods to listen, with obvious enjoyment, to the live music provided by a wide variety of student musicians. Students have a very good understanding of safety matters, particularly e-safety.
- Staff supervision is low key but effective. Students are keen to engage staff in conversation in the corridors and social areas and clearly appreciate the staff interest in them as individuals.
- Parents and carers who responded to the Parent View questionnaire were positive about the academy: eight out of ten felt their child was happy and well looked after; all felt their child was safe in school.
- The number of students on roll is rising, a mark of the academy's growing reputation.

Students who joined discussions with inspectors were overwhelmingly positive about the care and academic support available. One young man who spoke informally to HMI explained he had been at the academy during the difficult days of the predecessor school and he noted 'this place has changed – it's changed me!' Then, almost as an afterthought, he added, 'I used to be naughty – but now I am learning'.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The principal and his senior team consistently communicate high expectations. Staff and students have a very positive opinion of his leadership.
- The monitoring of teaching by senior staff is rigorous, providing an accurate basis for staff development and performance management. The senior leaders worked alongside HMI in the joint evaluation of teaching and the views they expressed consistently matched the judgements given by the inspectors.
- Pupil premium funds are used very well. The improvements made in English and mathematics have been supported by this government funding and the academy's own resources.
- The senior leadership team have managed significant staff change in their drive to produce school improvement. The rise in standards in English and mathematics is a measure of their success. Self-evaluation is robust and the academy's actions are carefully planned, concerted and effective.
- The range of subjects available to students and how they are organised is regularly adjusted to provide effective opportunities for learning for all groups of students, including disabled students and those in need of extra support. These, often individual, adjustments have secured positive attitudes to learning and good progress.
- The complete refurbishment of the atrium has allowed it to become the social, moral, cultural and spiritual heart of the academy. It provides quiet learning areas, space for lessons to expand, and performance spaces for a wide variety of music and cultural events that take place very regularly on a formal and informal basis. The academy's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.
- The quality of live music provided in the atrium by students of all ages, has helped to transform social interaction.
- The clarity and extent of information provided to the governing body and the academy trust is exceptional. There is an openness to questions which is a feature of the way senior staff communicate with parents and carers. For example, the academy's website is a model of how to provide the range of information schools should make public, including how it effectively uses the funds received through the pupil premium to raise standards.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is able to provide very effective challenge to the principal and

senior staff because of the exceptional clarity of information available on a consistent basis. This working relationship between governors and the principal has been very important to the academy's relentless focus on high-quality education for all. The governing body is knowledgeable and well-supported by the academy trust and consistently compares the academy's progress to the appropriate standards. The performance management targets for the principal and every member of staff are linked to improvements in teaching and standards and, as a result, both have improved. The governing body and the principal manage the academy's budget very efficiently. The academy trust has provided stability, good governance, staff support and professional development opportunities. The academy now makes a considerable contribution to the trust's support for other schools.

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	136201
Inspection number	399797

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

Type of school	Academy
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	1049
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	159
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Hancock
Headteacher	Philip Cantwell
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01604 778000
Fax number	01604 778074
Email address	admin@malcolmarnoldacademy.co.uk

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