

Maltings Academy

Spinks Lane, Witham, CM8 1EP

Inspection dates 5–6 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Given their starting points, too few students make enough progress. Too few students have gained five high-level GCSE passes including English and mathematics compared with similar schools.
- There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Not enough is consistently good or outstanding yet, although it is improving quickly.
- The sixth form requires improvement because progress is uneven and is not consistently good in all subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- The proportion of students gaining five high-level passes in a range of GCSE or equivalent subjects, other than English and mathematics, has risen sharply.
- Behaviour around the school and in lessons is exemplary. The rapid and positive transformation in students' attitude to learning has been instrumental in the academy's strong improvement.
- The school has used effectively the additional government money allocated to it for disadvantaged students. It has employed extra staff to give support to students and groups. This has reduced the difference between the achievement of different groups of students.
- The principal and staff demonstrate a passion for the care and nurture of all students in the school. Over the past two years, they have expanded this to include a much more rigorous approach to improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Leaders have demonstrated an ability to get things done, for example, through providing good-quality training for teachers, ensuring exceptional behaviour and impressive advances in the development of reading.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 38 lessons, including seven joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short visits to lessons to observe behaviour, how well disabled students and those who have special educational needs were doing and to observe students reading.
- They observed students during break times, lunchtime, before and after school and visited assembly.
- Inspectors met with groups of students across the age and ability range to discuss their views on teaching, students' behaviour and safety in the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, representatives of the academy chain, senior leaders, middle leaders, and a group of classroom teachers.
- Inspectors took into account the 25 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and also the very recently completed commercial survey of parental perceptions and letters from parents.
- Inspectors checked the school's records on safeguarding and child protection. They looked at the school's records of students' current results and progress. They also considered the school's behaviour records and the figures for attendance and exclusion. Inspectors considered the academy's evidence of performance management and minutes of governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Adrina Lyons, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Angela Skinner	Additional Inspector
Beverly Dobson	Additional Inspector
Jackie Easter	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Maltings Academy is similar in size to the average secondary school.
- The academy is a member of the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET). It has its own Principal, senior leadership team and governing body.
- Applications to the academy have risen and it is now over-subscribed.
- Most students are of White British heritage, with a below average proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and few whose first language is not English.
- The number of students supported through school action, school action plus or with statements of special educational needs is average.
- Around one in five students are eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding from the government). The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching in order to accelerate student's progress, particularly in mathematics and English, by:
 - achieving greater consistency and a common approach or set of guiding principles for teaching in all subjects, particularly for marking and written feedback on students' work
 - ensuring that all lessons are planned thoughtfully to match the needs and abilities of all students in the class
 - using a range of activities in lessons that help teachers to know how well each student is doing so that lessons can be adapted to enable students to achieve their best, including the use of questions that give them a chance to explain their thinking
 - making more imaginative use of the academy's technology to increase the pace of lessons and interest the full range of students
 - consistently setting homework that is both relevant and challenging
 - continuing to share what the best teachers do in this and other schools.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- GCSE results have risen over recent years, but the rise has been uneven. The proportion of students gaining five A* to C grade passes at GCSE or equivalent qualifications, is now high but the proportion of students reaching the threshold of five higher level passes including English and mathematics is below the national average and below the average for similar schools. Given their starting points, the progress made by students has been insufficient. It is improving markedly, but students' progress in different lessons is uneven.
- School leaders have developed effective and helpful systems for checking and measuring students' progress. This enables them to have a clear and accurate picture of how groups of students and individual students are progressing. However, some groups of students do not make enough progress because their teachers do not plan well-structured lessons to match their ability. Not all teachers make effective use of the information they have about students' attainment in order to plan successful lessons.
- Achievement in the sixth form is uneven between subjects and between years, but overall is not good enough. Students make better progress in vocational subjects. They enjoy their studies and appreciate the individual attention they receive from their teachers. This helps them to do well. The academy is now paying greater attention to matching courses to students' interests and abilities.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to other students. The academy provides additional lessons for students who need to catch up, for example, with reading or spelling. Their progress is checked and measured frequently and all students with specific or complex difficulties are supported well. Students' progress is supported by a coordinated whole-school approach to special educational needs and disabilities.
- Students in all year groups enjoy reading. The library area in the academy is used well. Each day, students and staff 'drop everything and read' for 20 minutes. The 'accelerated reader' programme, together with extra help in English and mathematics funded by the government's 'catch-up premium', has a powerful impact on raising achievement across subjects in Key Stage 3. Leaders are proud that the academy is being used as a model of good practice for others in the chain.
- The academy is using pupil premium funding imaginatively. For example, there is a lot of one-to-one extra tuition often provided by sixth formers who are paid to work with younger students, thus benefiting the younger students while enabling the sixth formers to continue in education. As a result, the gap between the attainment of students known to be eligible for free school meals and other students is reducing, although it remains too large. For example, in 2012, 35% of students known to be eligible for free school meals gained five high level passes at GCSE including English and mathematics, but this compared with 55% of their classmates gaining the higher grades.
- The academy has changed its policy of entering students early for GCSE examinations. Some subjects, such as the finance examination taken in Year 8, offer students a useful and highly relevant qualification early in their school career. Examinations in English and mathematics have until recently focused on getting students over the grade C 'hurdle' and, as a result, students lowered their aspirations and settled for the ceiling of grade C even when they could achieve higher grades. This has been changed with a greater emphasis on each student meeting or exceeding their expected progress.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not good overall because improvements seen since the last inspection are not found regularly enough and have not been present for long enough in all classes.
- Some teachers plan activities that contribute to improving students' reading, writing and communication, but other teachers are not skilled in this area. The academy chain is working with the numeracy leader to improve numeracy across subjects but this work is less advanced.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve based on good information on how well students are doing. However, not all teachers adapt their lessons to take account of students' different abilities and interests.
- In less successful lessons there are missed opportunities for students to participate or take the initiative because teachers talk for too long and do not listen well to students' responses. Sometimes, students waste time copying from the board rather than learning by exploring resources and thinking up ideas for themselves. The academy has a lot of technology available to help students to learn but, during the inspection, it was rarely used by students in subjects other than art, photography and music.
- Teachers use questioning to check that some students know the right answer, but not effectively enough to ensure that students make good progress. They do not always include enough lower ability students in the questioning. Teachers do not use enough questions that need more than a single word answer, so questions do not challenge students enough.
- The quality and quantity of marking is too variable. Alongside this, the academy's homework policy is not followed by all teachers, resulting in students in some subjects not developing skills to work independently. This becomes a barrier to progress in the sixth form, where students lack practice in the skills needed for higher level study.
- The academy-wide literacy strategies are effective in contributing to improving students' progress.
- Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge. This is particularly apparent in sixth form lessons.
- Many lessons provide effective opportunities to develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. For example, in an engrossing history lesson about Jack the Ripper, the teacher dealt skilfully with a student's evident surprise regarding the family circumstances of one of the Ripper's victims. The quality of teaching in art, photography and music results in very high-level cultural development.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students enjoy their learning and relations between student and teachers are excellent. This enables lessons to proceed without interruption.
- Students of all abilities and all year groups demonstrate exceptionally positive behaviour in and out of lessons. The 'discipline with dignity' policy has had a highly positive impact and is praised by staff and students. In lessons and other activities such as assemblies, and when preparing to enter the building at the start of the day, students' behaviour is highly respectful and orderly.

Changes in activity within and between lessons are calm and show excellent self-control and discipline.

- Behaviour around the school, in corridors, at lunchtime and at the end of the day is also exemplary. Students are always friendly, courteous and helpful. Their respect for the environment is demonstrated by the excellent condition of the school and the displays of students' art in busy communal areas. Parents are extremely positive regarding student behaviour. It has clearly transformed since the establishment of the academy.
- Students' positive attitudes to school and their respect for the standards expected are shown in their improved attendance. They are also responding well to the academy's firm policy on punctuality, which is designed to prepare them for working life. Students show a diligence and dedication to their work in lessons, even in lessons that are dull. For example, a Year 11 group had just finished a science exam. They were then allowed to study for a subject of their choice and they all engaged in productive private study.
- The highly positive attitudes of students often contribute to the success of lessons. The response to extra classes after school and on Saturdays is making a strong contribution to improving achievement.
- Students are adamant that they feel safe in the academy and they know that the academy staff are there to help and support them as much as they can, in and out of school. Parents are also extremely positive regarding their child's safety and happiness.
- Incidents of bullying or poor behaviour are very rare and, when they occur, they are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Students say that there is very little prejudice-based bullying or derogatory language. Parents say that they are very happy with the strong discipline in the academy and confirm the lack of bullying.
- Students make a very positive contribution to the wider community and are involved in local charity work.
- Levels of exclusions have fallen dramatically.

The leadership and management are good

- The governors and Principal have a vision for the academy which subject leaders and staff share. Governors work closely with senior leaders and departments to initiate and monitor change.
- Governors and leaders have a firm understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for further development. For example, during joint observations with inspectors, leaders were accurate in their analysis of lessons. Academy leaders are ambitious. They want the academy to become good and then outstanding and they are doing the right things to achieve this. However, they are a little too optimistic when making judgements on teaching.
- Teaching has improved sharply because of effective leadership and management. There is rigorous performance management and planned professional development which are in the process of bringing about change, by closely matching teaching to the needs of the academy.
- The academy makes good use of a range of support offered by the academy chain, both to ensure the good running of the attractive building and to improve the quality of learning. For

example, there has been effective work to improve literacy across the curriculum and there is good support for the newly appointed numeracy leader.

- The audit, development and revision of the academy's literacy action plan are impressive. The strongly improved rates of progress at Key Stage 3 are judged by the academy to be in part due to the more effective literacy provision.
- The academy's curriculum has been modified to provide better opportunities and pathways for all students and, in particular, high attaining students, to access a greater range of traditional GCSE subjects. Students are now advised on pathways and combinations of subjects that better match their potential. Careers guidance has recently been strengthened with the appointment of an enthusiastic leader. The academy is using a county quality award to assess and improve the quality of careers provision.
- Governors, senior leaders and subject leaders ensure that teachers have challenging targets to meet in order to progress through the teachers' pay scales. If teachers have not achieved their targets, leaders and governors ensure they are not rewarded with pay increases.
- Senior leaders have dedicated much time and thought to developing effective systems to track students' progress and improve teaching. Senior leaders check teaching and the work of subject leaders regularly throughout the year, but this has not yet resulted in securing consistently good teaching. This is because leaders have not focused enough on lesson planning, pace of lessons and how much students participate actively.
- Students are given opportunities to explore their spiritual, moral, social and cultural abilities through activities such as going on trips to art galleries in London and Paris, classical civilisation trips to Rome, sporting trips to South Africa and the USA, participation in the World Challenge events and the celebration of Black History month. Students have a strongly developed sense of right and wrong. However, there is insufficient time on the students' timetable for them to develop fully their personal, health, social and cultural understanding. They also do not have enough time to study aspects of religious education and citizenship in depth. There is not enough careers education.
- The sixth form has improved since the last Ofsted inspection. Students are very positive about the way the sixth form is run and, especially, about the personalised help and advice they receive. The sixth form council has only just been established and so the student voice has not had a chance to have much impact yet. The academy has plans to improve the study facilities for sixth formers. Sixth formers are very well involved in supporting the rest of the school.
- School leaders make effective use of the pupil premium funding to improve the progress of students entitled to additional support. Additional teaching hours are funded to improve skills in reading and writing for these students.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet all statutory requirements and all staff are actively committed to keeping students safe.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Governors are well informed and have been forceful in challenging leaders to do better and in accelerating actions to bring about improvement. They now have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses as a result of training on understanding information about the school.
 - Governors are involved in checking how teachers' and leaders' salary progression is linked

to the quality of their work.

- The governing body holds to account the Principal and senior leaders in their management of resources.
- Governors have used their expertise from business to develop a seven-point strategic plan for the academy. They then regularly review senior leader’s progress against it.
- Governors offer loyal and steadfast support when needed, but are courageous when asking challenging questions about teaching and achievement.
- Governors are well informed about the achievement of students and demonstrate a good understanding of current measures of attainment and progress.
- Governors are linked to subject areas and make frequent visits to observe teaching and discuss aspects of the school’s work with teachers.
- Governors are very active in ensuring that the school offers good value for money, including the effective use of the pupil premium to secure good progress.

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	135653
Local authority	Not Applicable
Inspection number	406618

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	978
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frank Butler
Headteacher	John Szynal (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01376 512911
Fax number	01376 501076
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