

The Oxford Academy

Sandy Lane West, Littlemore, Oxford, OX4 6JZ

Inspection dates 28–29 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Too many students do not make enough progress. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A*- C, including English and mathematics, is well below average. Standards at Key Stage 4 are declining. Boys make less progress than girls.
- The quality of teaching is too variable and inadequate overall. Work in lessons is not always matched to students' needs; it is too easy for some and too hard for others.
- The sixth form is inadequate. Standards reached in some A-level subjects are low. Many students choose not to continue their learning into Year 13.
- Leaders and managers have not given teachers enough opportunities to learn from the best teaching that exists in the academy.
- Until recently, the governing body has been too slow to challenge poor performance. It has not had a good enough understanding of the academy's weaknesses.
- Greater understanding and trust is needed between the academy's leaders, the governing body and sponsors to enable them to work together more cohesively to improve the school.

The school has the following strengths:

- Students generally get on well with each other and their teachers. They say the academy's new behaviour policy is helping improve behaviour in most classes so they can concentrate better.
- There are examples of good teaching in art and science. The academy's specialism helps students achieve good results in sport.
- There is a good range of after-school activities. Students appreciate the excellent facilities.
- Teachers in some subjects are working hard to improve students' skills in reading and writing.
- Boys and students supported by the pupil premium make good progress in mathematics in Years 10 and 11.
- Leaders have exciting ideas on how to improve the academy. These are too recent to have had an impact on students' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 lessons. Nine of these observations were made jointly with the acting principal and other members of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors visited five lessons in the sixth form.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, groups of students and the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors considered the views of the seven parents who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire. They analysed the results of the staff questionnaire, to which 58 replies were received.
- Inspectors analysed the provisional 2012 examination results and the published results for previous years. They also looked at the academy’s data on students’ progress, minutes of meetings, and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and students’ attendance. They reviewed external evaluations of the school’s effectiveness and the academy’s improvement plans.

Inspection team

Lisa Fraser, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Thomas Walton

Additional Inspector

Ian Jones

Additional Inspector

John Mallone

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- The Oxford Academy is slightly smaller than the average comprehensive school with a sixth form.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is higher than average, and the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The very large majority of students are White British.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below that found nationally.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, from Forces families and for students known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above average.
- The academy's specialism is sport.
- The academy works in partnership with other providers to offer students more choices in the sixth form.
- There is on-site provision for students who have behavioural needs.
- A few students who are at risk of exclusion attend a specialist off-site centre.
- The academy does not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy's principal is on leave. A senior education consultant has been appointed to support the leadership of the academy.
- The academy's principal, Mike Reading, was on leave at the time of the inspection and was not involved in the inspection. At the time of the inspection the acting principal was Sarah Norcliffe. A senior education consultant has been appointed to support the leadership of the academy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to improve students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics, eradicate inadequate teaching and raise the proportion of good or better teaching in all subjects by:
 - making sure that teachers make better use of information about what students already know so that work is accurately tailored for students of all abilities, particularly the most able
 - raising teachers' expectations of the quality of work that all students can be expected to achieve
 - extending the range of strategies teachers use to increase students' active involvement in lessons
 - sharing the good practice which exists within the academy more widely
 - ensuring that teaching in all subjects, wherever appropriate, contributes to developing students' basic skills in reading, writing, grammar, punctuation and numeracy.

- Strengthen the effectiveness of all leaders, managers and governors by:
 - taking students' progress and attainment into account when evaluating the quality of teaching of individuals and the performance of departments
 - evaluating the impact of all new initiatives on students' achievement, and adjusting the initiatives' implementation as necessary
 - evaluating how effectively the current systems for tracking students' attainment and progress provide suitable information to inform students, teachers and leaders of students' progress
 - improving the programmes of study in the sixth form so that they better meet the needs and aspirations of all students and encourage them to continue their learning
 - making sure that the governing body uses accurate information, gathered from more rigorous evaluation, to help it monitor the school's effectiveness better and hold leaders and managers to account for students' achievement
 - developing clear procedures for meetings of senior leaders, the governing body and the sponsors and ensure that they result in a coherent approach to improving the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is inadequate.

- Achievement is inadequate because students' overall progress in different year groups and subjects is too slow. The academy has been unable to reduce the gap between its own students' attainment and that of students nationally. However, and particularly in mathematics, the average point scores gained and progress made by students who are eligible for pupil premium funding compares more favourably with those of other students.
- Students enter the academy with knowledge and skills that are significantly below national averages for their age. By the end of Year 11, the proportion of students gaining five A*- C GCSEs, including English and mathematics, is well below the government's floor standard for minimum results. Standards at Key Stage 4 are getting worse over time.
- Students make better progress in mathematics than in English in Years 10 and 11. This is because the academy has a very good understanding of examination requirements in mathematics. In mathematics, boys and students who are eligible for the pupil premium make progress that is better than expected nationally. Girls' performance is in line with students nationally. However, students' progress in mathematics in other year groups is less secure.
- In English, students make inadequate progress. In Years 10 and 11 all groups of students do not make the expected rate of progress. Teachers have worked hard to improve achievement in the GCSE examinations but students perform less well in controlled assessments.
- Changes to the English curriculum in Years 7 and 8, new appointments to the English staff team, and good collaborative working with other schools are beginning to make a difference to students' achievement in English at Key Stage 3. In a Year 8 lesson on discovering how poets make language choices, students made outstanding progress. This was due to the teacher's precise, probing questioning of their understanding. However, these improvements are at an early stage of development and not all teachers are equally skilled.
- Students make good progress in BTEC subjects, including sport and health and social care. However, at GCSE level, students' achievement in other subjects is too low. For example, in 2012, students' results in business studies, history and religious studies were particularly low.
- At Key Stage 4, there is a marked difference between the performance of boys and girls, with girls making better progress in most subjects. In Year 11, disabled students and those who have special educational needs make progress broadly in line with national expectations as a result of the additional support they receive. More-able students do not always attain the higher grades that they should. Very few students are now entered early for GCSE examinations as this is not appropriate to their skill levels.
- Students join the sixth form with below-average starting points. However, results at A level, particularly the proportion of A*, A and B grades achieved, are not high enough. Class sizes are very small and significant numbers of students choose not to continue their learning into Year 13. Students on BTEC courses, however, are achieving better than national averages.

The quality of teaching is inadequate.

- The overall quality of teaching is inadequate. Not enough teaching is good or outstanding and too much is either inadequate or requires improvement. Typically, in weaker lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations of students' capabilities, particularly the more able. Students are not challenged enough to improve the standard of their spoken and written English in several subjects.
- Teachers talk for too long, which results in a slow pace of learning. Teachers often emphasise the volume of work students must complete rather than encouraging them to focus on producing the best quality work they can.
- In too many lessons, students all complete the same work. While some students might find this work demanding, others find it too easy and so do not make enough progress. Teachers do not always use the information they have about students' skills well enough to match work to their individual needs.
- Teachers' marking is adequate and shows students how to improve their work. When given the opportunity in lessons, students show that they are good at checking the work of their classmates. They offer helpful comments and guidance to each other about how work can be improved. In a Year 12 history lesson for example, students displayed mature attitudes to their learning and were able to work well independently. However, some students in the sixth form are not confident in expressing their thoughts in group discussions.
- Some, but not all teachers are skilled at developing students' reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in their subject. In a Year 11 science lesson on how a crime scene is processed, for example, the teacher used questioning effectively to encourage more complex verbal responses from students.
- High staff turnover has also had a negative impact on the quality of learning. Students appreciate the efforts the academy has recently made to recruit experienced teachers. They say that in the past they made little progress in classes led by supply teachers.
- Learning in several subject areas contributes to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, in a Year 9 science lesson, students understood the moral dilemma when considering the advantages and disadvantages of genetically modified foods.
- A minority of lessons are outstanding. In a mixed-age Key Stage 4 psychology lesson, a small group of students led their peers in a psychological investigation into how people learn best. During the lesson students demonstrated exceptional levels of mutual trust and respect. As a result both their behaviour and progress were outstanding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement.

- Students have a positive attitude to learning in most lessons and are sensible when moving around the school. Where behaviour requires improvement, this is generally related to less effective teaching where students lose interest and where behaviour management is weaker.
- Teachers and students commented positively on the academy's new behaviour policy. Students say that it helps to resolve problems of low-level disruption in lessons quickly, which means that they can now concentrate better on learning. However, boys and disabled students and those

who have special educational needs are more likely to be removed from lessons for internal exclusion as a result of poor behaviour than other students. A very small number of parents contacted inspectors to express their concerns about behaviour at the academy.

- The behaviour policy has also had a positive impact on reducing the number of exclusions. The special on-site provision for pupils removed from lessons is helping to improve these students' behaviour. The academy monitors the effectiveness of off-site provision with other providers across the city.
- Students understand the damaging impact of different forms of bullying. They are proud to say that racism is not a feature of the academy. However, they feel that more needs to be done to tackle occasional name-calling.
- Attendance has improved over time but remains lower than average, particularly for students with a statement of special educational needs. The academy recognises that it has much to do to match attendance figures nationally. Students are generally punctual to lessons.

The leadership and management are inadequate.

- The academy does not demonstrate sufficient capacity to improve. While the very recently appointed senior education consultant understands the range of problems that the academy faces, its leaders and managers have not succeeded in securing improvements in performance. In particular, they have been ineffective in:
 - ensuring that students in all year groups make good progress over time
 - evaluating the progress of students in the sixth form
 - evaluating the impact of new initiatives and improvement plans to ensure they are having a positive effect on students' achievement
 - addressing the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection
 - making sure that the governing body has access to more accurate information about the academy's strengths and weaknesses to properly inform its evaluations and decisions.
- There are individual examples of effective leadership at department and senior leadership level. These leaders understand the work that needs to be done to improve achievement. However, several of these leaders are new to their role and their work has not yet had a chance to secure improvements in achievement.
- The academy's arrangements for managing the performance of teachers are appropriate. Academy leaders have recently focused on improving the quality of teaching with support from Challenge Partners, who are experienced headteachers who work in other schools. The outcomes of lesson observations are used to decide what training teachers need.
- A small number of teachers have benefited from the academy's 'outstanding teaching' programme which develops new approaches to teaching. A recently launched programme to improve teachers' skills has been received enthusiastically by staff. However, these initiatives are too recent to result in any marked improvement in students' attainment and progress.
- A new curriculum structure has been introduced in Year 7 to help students make the move from primary school and focus on developing their basic skills in reading, writing and numeracy. The effectiveness of this development has not been checked. A similar review of the Year 8 curriculum to ensure that it effectively prepares students for the challenges of learning in GCSE subjects, which students now begin in Year 9, has not yet taken place. This is a new

development aimed at improving students' progress, which has yet to be fully evaluated.

- The curriculum in the sixth form does not meet the needs of all students. However, partnership arrangements with two off-site elite sports providers are well-established, help to recruit students into the sixth form and contribute to their good achievement in sport.
- There is a wide range of sporting and after-school activities and high quality facilities which students really appreciate. This helps to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and encourages them to make the most of all that is on offer. For example, one student spoke enthusiastically about her participation in last year's school production, 'Bugsy Malone'.
- Disadvantaged students who are falling behind are provided with individual tutoring in mathematics and English through pupil premium funding. They also receive financial support to encourage their participation in educational trips and visits. However, the impact of this on improving their achievement is not evaluated. Pupil premium funding is also used to support wider school initiatives and is not solely used for the students who attract it. Students supported by the pupil premium require more support in English so that they can match the good rates of progress they make in mathematics.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body brings a range of valuable skills and experience to the academy but has had insufficient training on how to work collaboratively. Members now understand the weaknesses in teaching. They are absolutely committed to improving it by recruiting more experienced teachers, securing support from other schools and successful headteachers, and implementing a robust system of performance management that is closely linked to the staff's pay progression. The governing body understands the urgent need to improve achievement so that the academy performs increasingly in line with similar schools. However, it has not yet had enough impact on raising standards. Clear protocols for meetings at the highest level have not been agreed to ensure the academy's leaders are working as a cohesive team. The governing body has been too slow to take decisive action to address underperformance. The governing body has sometimes been presented with information which is over-optimistic about students' achievement. Consequently, it has been unable to properly hold the school to account for the quality of its work and students' differing outcomes. Links between particular governors and subjects are being established to help governors gain a more accurate picture of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. The governing body has a strong understanding of the academy's finances and the academy is financially secure. It recognises that pupil premium funding should be better targeted and its use evaluated. All statutory requirements relating to safeguarding are 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	135675
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	406623

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	956
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adrian Beecroft
Headteacher	Mike Reading
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2010
Telephone number	01865 774311
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