

The King's Academy

Stainton Way, Coulby Newham, Middlesbrough, TS8 0GA

Inspection dates 30 April–1 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Overall, students make good progress and achieve well, because the academy meets the needs of all its students effectively.
- The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades in Year 11 examinations, including English and mathematics, has improved steadily over a sustained period from a low baseline.
- The effectiveness of the sixth form has improved and achievement is now good.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs, including those in receipt of resourced provision, make good progress, because teaching is effective and the quality of care and support is excellent.
- The quality of teaching and classroom support is continually improving and is good. Staff know their subjects and students very well.
- Behaviour and safety are good and often exemplary. Attendance is improving and is now average. The outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures that students enjoy very positive relationships with staff and each other.
- Assured leadership sets a clear strategic direction and this has led to year-on-year improvement.
- The strong governing body are insightful and are aware of what needs to be done to achieve their high ambitions.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Higher-ability students do not consistently achieve the highest grades they could, notably in mathematics.
- Marking does not always provide students with clear-cut guidance for improvement nor consistently checks that corrections have been made.
- Insufficient teaching is inspiring, exciting or challenging enough. Sometimes, work is not set at the correct level of challenge for each student. Opportunities are missed to apply students' numeracy skills in all subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 51 lessons. Seven of these lessons were observed alongside senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons, conducted walks around the academy site to check the quality of what is provided for students and listened to students read in lessons.
- Inspectors held discussions with students; members of the governing body; academy staff, including senior leaders and those with responsibilities (such as the leadership of subjects or resource provision).
- Inspectors took account of the 97 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors observed the work of the academy and examined a range of documentation, including the academy's own records of students' current progress, records from the observation of lessons, students' books and the improvement planning. Records relating to behaviour, complaints and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding were also taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Irene Lavelle	Additional Inspector
Alexandra Hook	Additional Inspector
Graeme Clarke	Additional Inspector
James Bradley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The King's Academy is a larger than average sized secondary school. It has specialist business and enterprise status and is part of the Emmanuel Schools Foundation.
- The proportion of students eligible for pupil premium funding (which is provided by the government to support the learning of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, in the care of the local authority or the children of members of the armed forces), is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is twice the average.
- Most students are White British. A few are from minority ethnic groups with very few at an early stage of learning to speak English.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The academy has specialist provision for students in Years 7 to Year 13 who have hearing impairment, visual impairment or moderate learning difficulties. This is known as the resourced provision. Although the number of students varies in each year, it can be over 10% of the students in a year group.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase rates of progress and raise students' achievement in mathematics by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what students of all backgrounds and starting points can achieve, including in the layout and presentation of work
 - extending the opportunities in all subjects to use and apply their mathematical skills
 - ensuring staff constantly check students' understanding in each lesson, so that they can be provided with precisely the right help and support to meet individual needs
 - making certain leaders and managers rigorously check the levels of challenge and achievement for each student.
- Making certain that more teaching is inspiring and exciting to ensure a pattern of rapid progress and high achievement by:
 - ensuring progress information, in a succinct form, is consistently used by teachers to shape activities to match the individual abilities and needs of students, especially of the most able
 - maintaining a relentless focus on getting the best out of students in all lessons and activities
 - ensuring high-quality questioning continuously checks understanding and always stretches the thinking of students of all abilities and needs
 - providing well-defined written guidance in books so that students are clear about what they need to do to improve, and making certain they respond to this advice.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics are below those typical for their age when they arrive in the academy. In 2012, Year 11 students had made good progress as they moved through the academy to reach average standards overall. Current academy information, confirmed by inspection evidence, indicates that current Year 11 standards are above average in English and science and average in mathematics. Increased proportions of higher-ability students are on track to reach higher levels.
- Students are selectively entered early in GCSE examinations from Year 10 onwards, mainly in mathematics. This enables students across the ability range to achieve their potential. In art, business studies, science, English literature, religious education and vocational studies, the number of students achieving A* to C grades is significantly higher than average.
- The highly-detailed system for checking and following students' progress is accurate. Staff generally work diligently to use this information to shape activities and to pinpoint any slips or dips in students' progress and achievement, despite the fact that some information is sometimes difficult to retrieve.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs, including the resourced provision students, make good progress because they receive skilled extra help from both teachers and classroom assistants. Visually impaired and hearing impaired students benefit from the specialist expertise of academy staff, such as when learning to sign or use Braille. Those new to learning English also make good progress, because of the good support they receive.
- Effective use of additional funding is closing the gap in standards between students supported by pupil premium funding and other students. Eligible students are under a grade behind in reading and writing and well over a grade behind in mathematics. However, positive action is eliminating gaps speedily. This includes providing guided reading for students of all ages each morning and extra one-to-one support and small-group teaching, including in mathematics.
- Good progress is made in fostering a love and enjoyment of reading, both for pleasure and for purpose. Students confidently read in class and happily discuss their choice of theme or author in their current reading.
- Progress and achievement in Years 12 and 13 is good and continues to improve year on year. In advanced level physics, art and design, textiles, history, English literature, drama and product design students exceed the standard expected of them. All successfully make progress to the next stage of education, employment or training.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is of good quality and occasionally it is outstanding. Senior leaders have been resolute since the previous inspection, in improving the quality of learning. Any areas of underperformance are tackled quickly and purposefully. An overwhelming majority of parents believe that their children are taught well. The atmosphere in classrooms is typified by excellent relationships between students and with staff. This is because teachers and support staff provide first-class role models for students.
- Teaching is well organised and methods are increasingly interesting and thought provoking. Activities and tasks are often put together thoughtfully to meet students' individual abilities and needs. For example, this ensures that resources and equipment can be used independently, successfully and safely for those students with impairments. Despite this, occasionally tasks are not always interesting and challenging enough to encourage students to think more deeply and critically.
- When progress is fastest and achievement highest, teachers:
 - set high expectations for what each student can achieve

- closely match and tailor activities to meet individual needs successfully
 - use high-quality questions to check continuously students' thinking, knowledge and understanding
 - set problem-solving tasks which fully involve students and encourage discussion with a partner
 - prepare students to work on their own and take responsibility for their own learning.
- In those lessons which require improvement because challenge and lesson pace are variable:
- expectations of what individual students can achieve and can do are not consistently high enough, including in the layout and presentation of their work
 - methods are sometimes unexciting and lack that essential spark to stimulate interest and discussion
 - questioning does not consolidate or stretch students' thinking enough
 - marking does not help students improve quickly enough or ensure that misconceptions are corrected.
- Where achievement was highest in the lessons observed, such as in history and geography, imaginative teaching energised students' thinking. For example, in history students worked out why monks chose to settle in Rievaulx, using their first-hand knowledge of the site. In geography, they analysed evidence well when considering the implications of managed retreat as the coast line erodes. However, not enough lessons trigger students' curiosity and provoke their interest sufficiently to think critically, question, explain and justify their ideas.
- Frequent marking is positive, helpful and constructive. Students are aware of how well they have done, but sometimes unclear about how they can do even better.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students really appreciate the determination of the academy to raise their aspirations and boost their self-confidence. They recognise that the academy constantly strives to get the very best out of each of them. Students value the high quality of care and support provided for them. As a result, the atmosphere in classrooms and in social areas is harmonious and behaviour good and often exemplary.
- Students are kind and considerate and take great pride in the academy. They thrive on the responsibilities that they are given, contributing to academy improvement. They particularly appreciate the rich variety of first-hand experiences to develop their personal skills and add to their experiences.
- Students report that, 'good values and morals are taught'. They express high levels of confidence that staff will promptly resolve any issues, worries or concerns they may have. Students are well informed about risk and danger, such as when using new technology. They are taught about different types of bullying and how to deal with any form of intimidation. Consequently, all feel safe and happy. Sanctions are used consistently and fairly and rewards are meaningful.
- Those students accessing the resource provision, whose needs are often complex or whose individual circumstances might make them vulnerable, are managed highly skilfully and sensitively. Parents are fulsome in their appreciation of how well their children are cared for and looked after. Very good guidance is provided for Year 12 and 13 students when they are planning what to do next. As a result, all students are very well prepared to make choices for the next stage of their life.
- The academy has effective systems for managing attendance and punctuality, which is at national average and improving.

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal, adeptly supported by the Chair of the Governing Body, has high ambitions for the development of the academy. The checking on performance is accurate and correctly identifies strengths and areas for improvement. This leads to clearly defined actions for continued improvement.
 - Those with management responsibility, such as subjects or resource provision, have an increasingly confident and secure appreciation of how to check students' progress and achievement. Even so, inconsistencies remain. Staff share the same ambition as senior leaders and are keen to ensure all students reach their full potential.
 - Senior leaders are determined that the academy should improve even more. They are fully aware that more outstanding teaching is required if rapid progress and high achievement are to be sustained in all subjects. They acknowledge that the more imaginative and challenging methods are not always shared as fully as they might be to improve the quality of teaching further.
 - The academy's system for checking on students' progress is extremely detailed and robust. This provides an accurate view of how well each student is making progress and developing. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to ensure that staff always make use of simple profiles of students' progress when tailoring classroom tasks and activities to match their individual needs.
 - A thorough system is in place to check on staff performance and to set targets for their development and improvement. This is closely linked to incentives and rewards. Those newly qualified staff and those in training at the academy are also well supported and guided.
 - All students, including those benefiting from the resourced provision, are thoughtfully and skilfully involved in all facets of academy life. Any form of discrimination is promptly eliminated. A close watch is kept on those students who are potentially vulnerable because of their circumstances and any issues are swiftly addressed. The successful collaboration with specialist support agencies and students' families enhances the quality of the support provided for students.
 - The good curriculum is well matched to students' needs. First-hand learning experiences and a rich variety of visits and visitors contribute very well to their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, older students appreciate hearing first-hand the moral implications of human trafficking. Literacy skills receive a high priority, but opportunities for students to practise their numeracy skills in all subjects are sometimes missed.
 - The business and enterprise specialism has clear benefits enriching students' range of skills.
 - Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, with much very good practice underpinning the high quality of care and support provided for all students.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The astutely led governing body take an active role in academy life. They have a good grasp of strengths and areas for improvement. Governors are not afraid to ask searching questions. They closely monitor the strategies used by the academy to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They ensure performance management makes accurate assessments of teachers' performance and it is appropriately linked with pay. Governors monitor the impact of pupil premium funding on a regular basis. Strong links are maintained with the academy foundation which ensures that governors are well equipped to hold leaders and managers to account for the performance of the academy.
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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

Unique reference number	134223
Local authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	413436

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	1,178
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	159
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel Robson
Principal	Chris Drew
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2009
Telephone number	01642 577577
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