

St Mary Magdalene Academy

Liverpool Road, Islington, London, N7 8PG

Inspection dates 15–16 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.

- The academy does well for its pupils and, as a result, their achievement is good.
- Many children start school with skills which are below expectations for their age. By the end of Year 6 their attainment is in line with the national average.
- Pupils currently in Year 11 are on track to attain standards of work that are well above average by the end of this academic year.
- Teaching and learning are good in most lessons. Some teaching is outstanding.
- Pupils who need extra help are given good support. As a result, they are making good progress at least and the gaps in attainment between different groups are closing.
- Teaching assistants and support workers contribute well in lessons and other activities. They make sure that pupils understand their tasks and are able to take part fully in the life of the academy.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the academy.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the academy and pupils feel safe. They are polite and show respect for each other.
- The sixth form is good. Effective leadership and teaching, which is at least good, contribute well to pupils' achievement.
- The principal and senior staff lead the school well. They check the quality of teaching carefully and make sure that the standard of pupils' learning is good and improving.
- Leaders have high ambitions for the academy and its pupils. They know the academy's strengths well and also where it needs to improve further.
- The governing body is effective and shares the school's high ambition. Governors hold the principal and senior leaders to account for the academy's performance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a small minority of lessons, pupils do not make enough progress because activities are not sufficiently well linked to their abilities.
- The achievement of some pupils is hindered by their poor attendance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 47 lessons of which 21 were joint observations with senior leaders.
- They held discussions with pupils, senior leaders, teaching staff, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the London Diocesan Board for Schools.
- The inspection team checked pupils' books as well as a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' progress. Inspectors also looked at documents relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- The results of the responses to the academy's own survey of parents and staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Keith Thomas, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Isobel Randall	Additional Inspector
Brenda Watson	Additional Inspector
Paul O'Shea	Additional Inspector
Pauline Hoyle	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an all-through primary and secondary school of average size which opened in 2007. It is sponsored by the London Diocesan Board for Schools.
- The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportions of those supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are above average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for specific pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals) is well above average.
- A very small number of pupils attend off-site provision at a range of local colleges. These arrangements are made as required to suit the needs of individual pupils.
- The Year 11 students who took GCSEs in 2012 were the first group in the school to do so.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum levels expected for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of teaching that is outstanding by:
 - checking that activities are suitable for all pupils to make rapid progress
- making sure that the wide range of successful strategies used in the best lessons is fully developed by all teachers.
- Improve overall attendance figures by making sure that pupils maintain their good rates of attendance as they move through the school

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well. Many start school with skills in communication, literacy and mathematics which are lower than those expected for their age. They are taught well and consequently make good progress through Reception and continue to do so in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. By the end of Year 6 attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is in line with the national average.
- Through Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils continue to make progress across a range of subjects. GCSE results in 2012 however, were below average and fell well short of the academy's expectation. This has been successfully addressed and current progress information securely indicates that outcomes in 2013 will be better than average. This is also confirmed by lesson observation and work scrutiny.
- The pupil premium is used well and the progress of eligible pupils is given a high priority by senior leaders and all staff. Funding is used to provide a range of support, including small group tuition and extra classes. In reading for instance, eligible pupils were approximately five terms behind others. This is now reduced to less than one. At GCSE, eligible pupils have, in the past, attained up to one quarter of a grade lower in English and mathematics than others. This gap is reduced in mathematics and is virtually closed in English.
- The progress of pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs is good and in some cases outstanding. All teachers and support staff are aware of the needs of these pupils and plan so that they are properly supported and achieve as well as they are able.
- Good support is provided for pupils in Year 7 who still find reading difficult. Their progress is checked regularly and records show that almost all have made good progress since arriving in secondary education.
- Some pupils are entered early for GCSE mathematics in Year 11. All pupils who meet or exceed their target grade continue to study mathematics in Year 11. This provides good preparation for sixth form studies where mathematics is a compulsory part of International Baccalaureate studies.
- The progress of the very few pupils who attend off-site provision is carefully monitored and they achieve well. Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as other pupils.
- In the sixth form, achievement in lessons is good. The outcomes for pupils in 2012 were high when compared to other sixth forms. Pupils say that 'active learning' and, 'being taught as adults', helps them to do well.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good throughout the school and, at times, it is outstanding. English, mathematics and a range of other subjects are effectively taught and, as a result, pupils achieve well.
- Teachers aim high and plan carefully. Pupils know they are expected to work hard and complete tasks. In the best lessons, they are constantly challenged to deepen their understanding. For

instance, a visit to the 'Ministry of Stories' was used as a stimulus for pupils' creative writing, contributing to the high quality of the completed work.

- Skilled teaching techniques and methods are key features of the most effective teaching. A good example was seen in an outstanding physical education lesson, when pupils were involved in analysing and evaluating the development of their classmates' skills in improving their forehand stroke in tennis. The feedback this generated helped them to improve their skills significantly. However, such methods of engaging all pupils are not evident in all lessons.
- In a few lessons, tasks are not appropriately matched to pupils' abilities. As a result, some pupils become disengaged and make too little progress
- Planning for all abilities is clearly seen in lessons. Pupils of varying abilities are often carefully grouped together so that more and less able pupils may take a full part in the lesson's activities.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and thoroughly. They say that they know how well they are doing and what is needed to make further progress. For instance, in an art lesson, a pupil described that achieving the highest grade in printing required clear detail, use of a range of materials and good use of light and shade.
- Teaching in the sixth form is at least good and some is outstanding. Pupils respond well to the appropriately mature atmosphere in lessons. In a music lesson, pupils were encouraged to develop their own style and content, while making sure that their compositions contained the required elements to achieve good grades.
- The relationship between teachers and pupils in lessons is an important strength. Teachers encourage pupils to do their best work, to be confident and to offer answers and suggestions. Opportunities are frequently provided for pupils to discuss these ideas with each other and to suggest alternatives and improvements. Praise is used appropriately and pupils' achievements are frequently highlighted.
- The learning environment is attractive and classrooms provide a stimulating place for pupils to learn. Teachers make sure that high quality displays celebrate pupils' work and achievement.
- Teaching assistants and support workers contribute well to pupils' learning. This is particularly so for pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is good

- The academy is an orderly community. Pupils know the rules and are courteous and respectful to each other, adults and visitors. They spoke openly to inspectors and told them for instance, how 'family groups' encouraged older pupils to help their younger peers.
- Pupils also told inspectors, that behaviour during lessons and outside lessons is generally good. They said that incidents of bullying are rare and if they occur, are properly dealt with. They added that the academy is a safe community and that the dangers of the outside, do not come 'through the gate'.
- The academy encourages pupil responsibility and self-regulation. The academy parliament is responsible for making the views of the 'pupil voice' known. Elected members of the parliament

meet half-termly and members of the cabinet are responsible for carrying out decisions, meeting with members of the senior leadership team regularly.

- In almost all lessons, pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. They are keen to contribute to activities and confident to do so. They show enthusiasm for learning and know that this will prepare them well for the future.
- Sixth form pupils make a positive contribution to the life of the school. They provide good role models for younger pupils and support them as they progress through the school.
- Although it is improving, attendance is slightly below average and it is noticeably lower for older pupils. Pupils are punctual to lessons and at the start of the day. There are good routines to make sure that late arrivals are noted and proper records are kept so that trends of lateness can be checked. However, not enough is done to ensure that pupils maintain their good attendance as they get older.

The leadership and management is good

- The ambition and determination of the principal and senior leaders to do well is evident in all of the academy's work. They know what needs to be done to continue to be successful and have successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection.
- There is a rigorous programme of lesson observation which makes sure that the quality of teaching remains high. It is also accompanied by a comprehensive range of training opportunities to support aspects of teaching that are less effective. The agreement of lesson observation judgements between inspectors and members of the leadership team during the inspection, showed the school self-evaluation to be accurate in this important area.
- The academy works effectively with the London Diocesan Board for Schools and other advisers to support its efforts to continue to improve. Recent work on more robust checking of pupils' progress and predicting pupils' results more accurately, have been important in addressing issues connected to last year's lower GCSE results.
- There are well developed policies for all areas of academy activity. This includes the high profile given to literacy. As a result, pupils' development in this key area is a given a high profile in teachers' planning.
- The sixth form is well managed and senior leaders make sure that good opportunities are created for their pupils. Pupils speak highly of the support and guidance they receive when entering the sixth form and in preparation for the next stage of their education or employment.
- Subjects are arranged so that the needs of all pupils are met within the formal timetable and beyond. There are several innovative features, such as 'enrichment', which provide pupils with opportunities to develop skills and interests beyond their core subjects. Activities include sport, cookery, art and computing. Senior leaders make good use of the all-age nature of the academy to make sure that curriculum arrangements allow its stated aim of 'seamless transition' throughout the stages of education to be achieved. A good example is 'homebase', which provides a good introduction for younger secondary pupils and consistent literacy support from a dedicated teacher and teaching assistant.

- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. This is evident in lessons and a range of other activities. There is a wide selection of cultural activities with a strong focus on musical theatre and the academy has several overseas links with schools in Senegal, China, Mexico and Finland.
- A good programme of assemblies gives pupils the opportunity to reflect on some of life's deeper issues. For instance, in one assembly, pupils were given the opportunity to reflect on what might be done about the fact that one in eight people would be hungry that night.
- Senior leaders make strong efforts to keep parents, carers and the community informed about the academy for instance, through the informative website and regular newsletters.
- Careful attention is paid to safeguarding and child protection and statutory requirements are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is properly organised to play its part in the life of the academy. It challenges the principal and senior leaders in tackling areas for improvement. A properly planned programme of visits means that the academy's work is regularly checked. Governors are trained well and properly prepared to work with the academy in areas such as safeguarding, child protection and staff recruitment. The governors have a good knowledge of how well the academy is doing and a clear picture of pupils' achievements. They also understand the teacher appraisal system and what is done to tackle any underperformance. They know that teachers' objectives are linked to improved outcomes for pupils and that pay progression is dependent on these being achieved. Finances are properly used and governors carefully monitor the use of pupil premium funding to bring about improvement for eligible pupils.

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	134314
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	412914

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	4-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1105
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Lucy Winkett
Headteacher	Paul Hollingum
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2010
Telephone number	020 76970123
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