

John Madejski Academy

Hartland Road, Reading, RG2 8AF

Inspection dates 11–12 December 2013

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

- GCSE results in 2013, although considerably improved, continue to show weaknesses in a few subjects, including mathematics.
- More-able students do not consistently make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not always adapt tasks sufficiently well to ensure that all students, and especially the more able, are suitably challenged to work at higher levels.
- Where teaching is insufficiently challenging, students are unenthusiastic about learning.
- The quality of teachers' marking varies between staff; in some cases, marking is not frequent or detailed enough to help students improve their skills.
- Homework is not always set regularly enough to support students' learning out of class.
- The relatively high turnover of teaching staff has made it difficult to establish consistency in the quality of teaching across the academy.
- The proportion of students who are persistently absent has remained above average, and too many students are late in the morning.

The school has the following strengths

- The Principal has guided the academy with exceptional vision and drive, and has significantly developed its capacity to continue to improve at a rapid pace.
- A strong and stable senior leadership team collaborate very effectively to ensure that marked improvements are increasingly evident in the academy's work.
- Attainment and progress improved significantly in academic and vocational examinations in 2013, in both Year 11 and the sixth form. For the first time, the academy exceeded the government's floor standards.
- The sixth form is good. Students' achievement has improved sharply. Students choose courses well-suited to their interests and aptitudes and are well prepared for the future.
- The sports specialism makes a very significant contribution to the academy's ethos, and the level of students' sports performance is high.
- Improvements in students' literacy since the last inspection have successfully supported better learning in all subjects, and much higher achievement in English.
- The governing body provides very effective support and challenge to the academy's leaders.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 teachers in 35 lessons. They carried out many joint observations with members of the academy's senior team. Observations of other aspects of the academy's work were also made, such as a literacy session in the library.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, governors and academy staff, including senior and middle leaders. Informal discussions also took place with staff and students.
- There were insufficient responses to the online Parent View questionnaire to provide evidence for the inspection. Evidence from the academy's own surveys of parents, gathered at recent consultation evenings, was examined.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the academy's self-evaluation and development plans, its safeguarding policies, and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

Ian Hodgkinson, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Heidi Boreham	Additional Inspector
Jackie Cousins	Additional Inspector
Najoud Ensaff	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- The academy is an average-sized secondary school.
- At just over half, a high proportion of students are eligible for support from the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government for students known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service personnel and children looked after in public care).
- The proportion of disabled students or those with special education needs supported at school action is well above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- At just over a quarter, the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is above average, although the proportion that speaks English as an additional language is below average.
- Boys make up a high percentage of most year groups.
- Nine students in Year 11 attend part-time vocational programmes at Reading College.
- The academy has a specialism in sport, which includes an elite basketball programme and elite football programme for boys and girls.
- The academy meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- At its last full inspection in January 2012, the academy was placed in special measures. The Principal took up post three weeks before that inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that more teaching matches the best in the academy, by:
 - improving the engagement of and challenge for all students, including the more able, and setting activities that are neither too hard nor too easy for students
 - ensuring that students' work is marked regularly with comments that help students understand how to improve and to reach higher standards, and making sure that students act on such advice
 - supporting students' learning outside the classroom with regular and worthwhile homework.

 - Raise students' academic achievement by:
 - improving the progress of all groups of students in mathematics, especially in their GCSE examinations
 - developing the use of the whole-academy numeracy programme across all subjects
 - ensuring that more-able pupils make better progress by ensuring that they are set suitably challenging work in lessons
 - continuing to close gaps between subjects in examination results at GCSE.

 - Further improve students' behaviour by:
 - improving students' attendance, particularly by reducing the proportion of those who are persistently absent
 - reducing the number of students who arrive late in the morning
 - ensuring that teaching consistently enthuses and engages students in their learning.
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Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Weaknesses remain in aspects of achievement in some key subjects and by some groups of pupils, even though examination results increased significantly for students in Year 11 and the sixth form in 2013.
- Although the attainment of Year 11 students reached national floor standards for the first time in the academy's history in 2013, the proportion gaining five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics remained below the national average. While results across most subjects improved, there were some marked variations in performance, both between and within subjects. This is a reflection of continuing variations in the quality of teaching. When all qualifications are taken into account, students' overall attainment still only matches the national average.
- More-able students experience a lack of challenge in some lessons. Some get frustrated at having to complete the same lower-level work as others before being able to move on.
- Students' progress in mathematics improved this year, but fell well short of that expected nationally, especially for the lower and higher-attainers. Although the proportion of students gaining grade C or above increased for all subjects, some middle- and higher-attaining students did not make the progress expected in mathematics because, having achieved a GCSE as a result of early entry, they did not try hard enough to reach their full potential. Very few students are now entered early for their GCSEs.
- Students' progress in mathematics has been adversely affected in the past by the academy's difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified and high-performing mathematics teachers. Classroom evidence and academy data show that, while there is still some variation in students' engagement, linked to the quality of challenge and support they receive, students across the academy are increasingly enjoying mathematics and making at least the progress they should.
- Students' progress in mathematics is promoted by the extensive offer of support sessions outside the classroom, and by their use of online study support programs. Students' numeracy skills are beginning to be developed and reinforced through tutorial activities, but not systematically in all subjects.
- Students' achievement rose strongly for all cohorts across the academy in the Year 11 examinations in 2013. Consequently, while they improved at the same rate, students supported by pupil premium funding did not close gaps with others. As in 2012, these students were, on average, approximately two-thirds of a grade behind their classmates in their English and mathematics GCSEs. The gap in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics more than doubled. Nonetheless, these students have made significant improvements in their attainment and progress. Internal academy data show that gaps are narrowing for current cohorts.
- Given their particularly low attainment when they joined the academy, the Year 11 students who took their GCSEs in 2013 made good progress in many subjects. Their progress in English improved sharply on previous years and, for most groups, compared favourably to rates of progress in English nationally.
- Strategies to improve students' literacy have been given a very high priority since the last inspection: they have been largely very successful in promoting better learning and progress across the academy. Students now have little reticence in contributing to class discussions or

even in addressing large groups such as assemblies. While standards of presentation still vary markedly, students are now able to write in a variety of forms and to understand what makes a good written answer.

- The academy rigorously monitors and promotes the development of students' reading skills; its reading programmes ensure that reading materials are well-matched to students' interests. Staff and subjects across the academy have contributed well to the development of all aspects of students' literacy.
- The academy has used Year 7 catch-up funding well to significantly extend liaison with feeder primary schools on the development of programmes for students requiring extra support in English and mathematics. The progress of these students is tracked carefully, and additional support provided where necessary. Just occasionally, expectations of the lowest attaining pupils are too low to ensure that they make the best progress.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, as well as those who speak English as an additional language, make progress in line with their peers in the academy. They receive good and well-managed additional support, although progress in class varies according to the extent to which activities are fully matched to their capabilities.
- Students make good progress in the sixth form, as they are now guided effectively on to courses well-suited to their interests and aspirations. Inspectors saw much good and outstanding progress in sixth form lessons, where students made strong independent contributions to discussions and were able to reflect carefully on how to improve their performance. This is reflected in the very sharp improvements in A-level results in 2013, where the proportion gaining results at the highest grades A to B, although below average, doubled.
- The academy's elite sports teams compete at the highest levels nationally. Throughout the academy, the general level of sports performance is high, and students take part in a wide range of sporting and recreational challenges.
- Provision for the few students who go off-site for vocational provision is managed effectively, and prepares students for the next stage of their education or training well.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has improved markedly since the last inspection, and in the majority of lessons the teaching is good or better. Nonetheless, teaching still requires improvement overall because the weaknesses that remain adversely affect the rates of progress made by key groups of students and some subjects.
- The quality and regularity of teachers' marking continues to vary between teachers, often within the same departments. For example, in sport, vocational assessment is used very precisely and effectively, but marking of students' GCSE work sometimes gives students too little guidance on how to reach the higher-order assessment criteria. In some cases, marking is infrequent and makes little subject-specific comment on the standard of the work or ways of making it better. As a consequence, students' care over presentation and action to correct or improve their work differs between classes and subjects.
- Although many vocational and applied subjects, including business, sport, and information and communication technology, use assessment information well, not enough teachers ensure they base planned work on their knowledge of students' prior achievement or ensure that it is

adapted to meet the needs of individuals. On occasions, this slows the learning of lower attainers or some with special educational needs who find learning more difficult. More often, the more-able students are held back by having to complete work which is too easy for them.

- Students appreciate the great commitment of teachers in supporting their learning outside the classroom, through additional study and support programmes before- and after-school. The quality and regularity of the homework set for all students, however, varies, and does not yet make a strong contribution to all students' progress.
- Teachers support the development of students' literacy well. They emphasise key vocabulary, ensure that students read and write in a variety of forms, and often check and correct spelling, grammar and punctuation. Teachers often elicit confident oral contributions from students to class discussions through their sensitive and well-targeted questions.
- Teaching is particularly strong in the sixth form, where teachers' strong subject knowledge and successful promotion of students' independent study skills support strong learning and progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- Behaviour still requires improvement because some aspects, including attendance and punctuality, are not yet good enough.
- For the last full year, the overall rate of absence and the proportion of students who are persistently absent were above the average for similar schools. They have shown little year-on-year improvement since the previous inspection, although on both counts the figures for the current term are much improved and closer to average. The academy is taking increasingly rigorous action to promote better attendance, based on a clearer analysis of absence patterns and closer working with families and feeder primary schools.
- Students' punctuality in getting to the academy in the morning has improved, but still too many are late. Despite careful monitoring of punctuality, some students do not show enough urgency in getting to school and a few loiter on their way to the academy. When in the academy, however, students are prompt in getting to lessons.
- Where students are not challenged to think for themselves and take an active part in learning in lessons, some students easily disengage and become distracted.
- Exclusions were very high during the first half of the last academic year although they fell sharply in the second half of the year. The academy has made strong efforts to reduce its reliance on exclusion as a way of managing challenging behaviour. Permanent exclusion is now only used following isolated incidents of extreme misbehaviour.
- Despite the weaknesses outlined above, students themselves report that that it is behaviour that has improved the most since the last inspection. Most students behave well in the majority of lessons, and most students and their parents say they feel safe when in the academy.
- Most students like belonging to the academy and some told inspectors that they were proud to wear its uniform. The sports specialism makes a very significant contribution to the academy's ethos, encouraging students to celebrate their achievements and to make a positive contribution to their community.
- Sixth form students play a positive role in the life of the academy, including in supporting

younger students. Work experience programmes prepare them effectively for later life. Their attendance is generally good.

- Behaviour around the academy site is typically calm and orderly. There is a strong staff presence around the site during breaks, when staff and students mix well together.
- Systems of care, guidance and support for students, including those whose welfare and achievement are most vulnerable, are well organised and managed.
- Students can recognise different forms of bullying and explain how to keep themselves safe from this. The academy has worked closely with other agencies, including the police, to take action to prevent and overcome cyber-bullying. Students who spoke with inspectors expressed confidence in the ability of academy staff to resolve the relatively few instances of bullying.

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal has demonstrated great energy and clear vision in rebuilding the academy's capacity to improve after the last inspection. She has, in stages, assembled a very able senior leadership team and highly professional team of administrators to help guide the academy to improvement. In turn, these senior leaders have developed the capacity of heads of faculty and subjects, along with that of teachers and support staff, to improve the quality of education in the classroom.
- The evaluation of the academy's performance has become increasingly sharp as the flow of information about students' progress and personal development improves, and the quality of teaching, has become more accurate and comprehensive. This has enabled leaders at all levels to implement effective plans to address areas of underperformance.
- Leaders now analyse students' progress data in considerable detail to promote the equality of opportunity of students by closing gaps, for example for those eligible for support from the pupil premium. The academy has recognised the need to promote better achievement of more-able students and has used the additional funding to create the 'Becoming A*' group with activities and mentoring to raise aspirations and performance.
- The relatively high turnover of teachers and leaders since the last inspection has presented difficulties in ensuring that the academy's high expectations for approaches to teaching and learning are consistently met. However, the monitoring and development of teaching has been thorough and effective in securing general improvements.
- The management of the performance of staff at all levels has been particularly effective. Leaders have dealt rigorously with underperformance and a number of staff have moved from the academy as a result, while some have improved their performance successfully. Very strong support is provided for new teachers or those seeking to improve their performance, including to good or outstanding. While improvements in teaching were centrally driven by senior leaders following the last inspection, an increasingly collegiate approach is being promoted to enable teachers to share best practice around the academy.
- Leadership of the sixth form has been very effective in raising achievement through much closer monitoring of performance and reshaping of the sixth form curriculum.
- The curriculum has undergone major changes in all year groups to ensure that it better serves the needs of all of the students. It now offers a broad choice of academic and vocational options

at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, which is tailored effectively to the needs of individuals.

- Students are provided with very effective careers information, advice and guidance, including access to advice from outside agencies, supported by a range of activities to acquaint students with the world of work. As a result, the proportion not in education, employment or training on leaving school in Year 11 is low.
- Literacy is promoted very effectively through all subjects of the curriculum. Programmes to promote students' numeracy across the academy have only just been set in place and have had limited impact so far.
- The academy offers a range of enrichment and community programmes which promote students' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and physical development well. The sports specialism makes a significant contribution in this respect. Students learn to value diversity and the academy successfully counters any form of discrimination.
- Leaders have made judicious use of external consultant support to improve leadership and teaching at all levels. In addition, the academy has worked very closely with a range of local partners, including Reading University and the local authority, to improve its support for teaching, literacy, and students' welfare.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Under the astute leadership of the Chair, the governing body has substantially developed its capacity to support leaders and to hold them to account for improvements in performance. New governor appointments have significantly developed the educational expertise of the governing body, and developed greater parental representation to complement the business and community experience offered by governors.
 - Governors use their links with subjects and aspects to find out more about academy performance; for example, by taking part in autumn departmental reviews of examination results. The governing body commissions regular external reviews of academy performance and has become adept at using short- and medium-term targets to ensure that leaders address the most pressing priorities.
 - Governors have a detailed understanding of the use and impact of additional funding such as the pupil premium, and receive detailed reports on this. They have been closely involved in scrutinising the new performance management system and dealing with all matters relating to staff performance, including the links between pay and performance.
 - The academy meets requirements for the safeguarding of the welfare of students and staff.

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	130247
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	423703

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	911
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	136
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alex Bayliss
Principal	Nicola Maytum
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 January 2012
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