

The Milton Keynes Academy

Fulwoods Drive, Milton Keynes, MK6 5LA

Inspection dates 24–25 April 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Teaching is typically good. This is because teachers plan learning that captures students' interest. They frequently make sure that students understand the work they are doing.
- All groups of students achieve well and make good progress. Progress is particularly strong in English.
- Students behave well in class. They listen with respect to their teachers and each other. This means that they have the confidence to share their ideas.
- Students behave well around the academy. They say that they feel safe there.
- Students' attendance has improved strongly and is now close to the national average
- The sixth form is good. The effective study programme adopted prepares students well for the world of work. Achievement is improving in the sixth form. This is because good leadership has led to improvements in the quality of teaching. Students who follow vocational subjects in the sixth form achieve well.
- Through outstanding leadership, the principal and other leaders have ensured rapid improvements to achievement, the quality of teaching and students' behaviour.
- Leaders have the considerable ambition to improve the academy further and have a very clear understanding of what needs to be done to make this happen.
- The governing body gives very strong support to the academy. Governors know the academy well because they are well informed. They ask leaders highly challenging questions about its performance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students do not always make as much progress in mathematics as in English.
- Teachers do not always make sure that students act on the advice they are given in marking.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 41 lessons, five of which were jointly observed with a senior leader. Inspectors also conducted a series of short observations to look at students' attitudes, behaviour and learning around the academy.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior leaders, subject leaders, other teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and other members, groups of students, a group of parents and a representative from the local authority. The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative from the academy sponsor, Edge Foundation.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the academy's self-evaluation and improvement plan; records of teachers' performance; the analysis of students' progress; students' work; and records relating to the behaviour and safety of students.
- Inspectors looked at the 24 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the academy's own surveys of parents' views. They also took account of responses to an inspection questionnaire from 59 staff.

Inspection team

Neil Stanley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Carol Worthington	Additional Inspector
Gillian Walley	Additional Inspector
Kathy Twin	Additional Inspector
Martin Spoor	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Milton Keynes Academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- An above-average proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is high.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. Very high numbers of students are supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is well-above average. This additional funding is for particular groups of students, including those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those with a parent in the armed forces or those in local authority care.
- The academy is sponsored and has a business and enterprise specialism.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- A small number of students in Year 10 and Year 11 attend courses at Milton Keynes College, the Personal Education Centre, the Real Project, Ride High and the Christian Foundation. A very small number of students in Year 12 attend courses at St Paul's Catholic School and Lord Grey School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to be outstanding by making sure that teachers insist that students follow the advice they are given from marking, and make more rapid progress as a result.
- Improve students' progress in mathematics so that it is as rapid as their progress in English by ensuring that teachers give students regular opportunities to use their mathematics skills to solve problems.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the academy with levels of attainment that are lower than those seen nationally. Typically, their standards are two terms below average at age 11. Many students' reading and writing abilities are low, and many are not confident using basic mathematics skills, such as times tables.
- The proportion of students achieving five GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics rose sharply in 2013 to be broadly average. Academy data suggest further improvement in 2014. The academy is not making use of early entry at GCSE this year. This is enabling more able students to achieve the highest grades at GCSE.
- Students make rapid progress in English. The proportions of students making and exceeding expected rates of progress in 2013 were well above those seen nationally. Academy data indicate further likely improvement in 2014.
- In 2013, the proportion of students making expected progress in mathematics was close to that seen nationally, but fewer exceeded this rate of progress. Sometimes, teachers did not give students regular opportunities, including homework, to practise their mathematics skills and use them to solve problems. In Year 11 and throughout other years in the academy, the majority of students are currently making good progress in mathematics.
- Achievement is good in the sixth form, with students making good progress from starting points that are well below the national average for entry to AS-level and equivalent vocational courses. In 2013, all students studying level 2 qualifications studied additional English and basic numeracy. Students taking vocational courses do particularly well and, in 2012, every vocational student gained either a merit or distinction at the end of their course. Achievement in academic subjects is improving and an increasing number of students are now following vocational courses. This reflects improvement in achievement at GCSE in Year 11. A significant proportion of students in Year 12 retake GCSEs in English and mathematics to improve their grades.
- Student retention from Year 12 to Year 13 is high for vocational subjects. With academic subjects, this is lower, but improving. The proportion of students progressing to higher education has increased. This year, over half of students in Year 13 have applied to universities and the majority of those have either been accepted or have received conditional offers.
- Students supported by the pupil premium make good progress and, by the end of Year 11, they are typically less than one GCSE grade behind their classmates. In 2013, their progress was in line with other students in the academy in English. In mathematics, over recent years, the gap between the progress of these students and their classmates has closed. Academy data show that these gaps are closing for students across all years.
- The academy closely checks the progress made by disabled students and those who have special educational needs. As a result of the extra help given, these students are gaining confidence and making good progress.
- Students from all ethnic groups make similar progress in all subjects, including English and mathematics. Those who speak English as an additional language make particularly rapid progress and do better than their classmates, because of the additional help they are given.
- The academy promotes equal opportunities well. For example, much work is done in the

academy to help girls to be properly ambitious when making choices of education and career.

- The academy's more-able students make good progress. This is because teachers set work that is challenging and provide a wide range of additional trips and visits to inspire students and raise aspirations.
- The academy has invested its Year 7 'catch-up' funding in a scheme to encourage reading for pleasure. Academy data show that students' reading abilities have improved rapidly.
- Students who follow courses with other providers attend well and make good progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in most subjects in the academy, including English and mathematics, is typically good. This is because teachers plan learning carefully to enable students to build on what they already know. This means that students make good progress over their time at the academy.
- Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve and make work challenging, particularly for the most able students. Relationships between teachers and students are very positive and, as a result, students are confident when sharing ideas. This was shown in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, where students confidently explained how they worked out their answers to their classmates.
- Students enjoy learning and help each other to do better. For example, in a Year 9 physical education lesson on long jump, students were seen giving each other encouragement and constructive criticism. They listened to each other and helped each other to improve their skills.
- Teachers make good use of information and communication technology to capture students' interest. As a result, students' attitudes to learning are positive. In particular, mathematics teachers are now using web-based programs to help students to study purposefully at home. As a result, students are able to use their mathematics skills to gain confidence solving problems. This is one reason why achievement in mathematics is improving well throughout the school.
- Teaching assistants and other adults provide well-targeted support for students' learning. They encourage students to think for themselves and give them the confidence to share and try out new ideas. Consequently, these students make good progress.
- Teachers direct questions well in lessons to check students' understanding. This was evident in a Year 8 German lesson on food. The teacher repeated questions from earlier in the lesson to check that students had retained the knowledge. As a result, students made rapid progress.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. The helpful study programme followed is preparing students well for the world of work. Through regular use of tracking sheets that are discussed in tutorials, students say that they have a clear idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Many students develop their skills through participation in the young enterprise competition and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
- Teachers mark students' work regularly and thoroughly. Across the different subjects, teachers explain clearly to students the next steps they need to take to improve their work. However, teachers do not always insist that students act on the advice that they are given. As a result, students sometimes repeat the same mistakes in consecutive pieces of work and their progress is less rapid as a result.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. They behave well in class, have positive attitudes to learning and want to do well. This means that lessons start promptly.
- Students listen to each other with respect. They help their classmates to become more confident and share their ideas.
- Students say that behaviour in class and around the academy has improved significantly since the previous inspection. They say that the new rules on uniform and behaviour are fair. Parents are supportive of the changes that have taken place.
- The academy is a friendly place. The students were keen to speak with inspectors and share their pride in their academy.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Students say that they feel very safe in the academy. They show a good understanding of the issues relating to safety and they know how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including when using the internet and social-networking sites.
- Students say that bullying occurs only rarely in the academy and that it is tackled swiftly and effectively by teachers. Students are aware of different forms of bullying and harassment, including cyber-bullying and they say that homophobic bullying does not take place in the academy.
- Incidents of racism have fallen sharply in recent years and are now rare. This is because of the success of leaders' work to raise awareness of the issue.
- Since the previous inspection, students' attendance has improved sharply and is, currently, close to the latest national-average figures. This is due to leaders' engagement with parents, actions taken to improve attendance and improvements in the quality of teaching. Levels of persistent absence have fallen, although these are still above average in 2013.
- Students in the sixth form make a positive contribution to the life of the school as student ambassadors. For example, sixth form students lead an anti-bullying focus group and, through a peer mentoring project, Year 10 students help younger students to improve their reading skills. Large numbers volunteer with the local 'Citizen MK' initiative.
- Exclusions have been used effectively to improve behaviour in lessons and around the school. Although the levels of exclusions have fallen sharply in recent years, they remain high. This is why behaviour is not outstanding.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The principal and senior leaders share considerable ambition to transform the academy and the potential of its students. They have a highly accurate understanding of what needs to be done to improve and have a clear plan to achieve it. Consequently, achievement has improved rapidly.
- The academy's leaders strongly believe that students deserve outstanding teaching. They monitor achievement and progress very closely and provide individual and highly effective

support to help teachers to do better. This is why the quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection.

- The academy is very strongly supported by its sponsor, which provides challenge and ambition. This support has helped the principal to make rapid improvements to teaching and behaviour.
- The academy has a positive relationship with its local authority. The principal meets regularly with his counterparts in other local schools. The academy has worked with its partners on its ethnic minority achievement programme and has used local authority expertise to help develop the effectiveness of subject leaders.
- The academy has built strong links with parents, including those who find it difficult working with schools. This is because the academy is very keen to be approachable, to understand parents' situations and to listen to their concerns.
- The academy makes good provision for students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Students are given regular opportunities to learn about people from Britain from all cultural backgrounds and to understand the wider world. Students are keen to support charities, for example, they are currently enthusiastically raising money to support the 'Make a Wish' foundation.
- The academy has made innovative use of its business and enterprise specialism. Strong links have been built with the many large businesses that are based locally. These have given students work experience, mentoring from local business people and activities, such as an engineering event with a major car maker. Such events are helping to complement the academy's comprehensive careers guidance and to raise students' career aspirations.
- Leadership in the sixth form is good. Increasing numbers of students now follow both vocational and academic subjects that are appropriate to their abilities and. As a result, their achievement has improved. Extra help is given to sixth form students who did not do well in English or mathematics at GCSE. The number of students progressing to higher education is small, but growing. Their progress is closely monitored and steps are taken to tackle underachievement.
- Senior staff have tackled weaknesses in the leadership of mathematics rigorously. Swift action has led to marked improvement in standards, although these are not as high as in English.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors know the academy very well and they hold leaders strongly to account for students' achievement and the quality of teaching.
 - Governors rigorously challenge academy leaders and share very strong ambitions for improvement and success. They have very high expectations for students' behaviour and support the academy's leaders to make improvements.
 - Governors closely monitor the progress of groups of students and are able to interpret the data available on students' progress and attainment, including those supported by the pupil premium.
 - Governors know what the quality of teaching is across the academy and know how staff performance is managed. They confirm all pay decisions for teachers. They demand that teachers' pay rises and promotion are justified by the progress of their students.

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	135665
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	428888

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

Type of school	Secondary
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	1270
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	157
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Young
Principal	Dara Carroll
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2012
Telephone number	01908 341700
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