

Meden School

Burns Lane, Warsop, Mansfield, NG20 0QN

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	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.

- Achievement of students is good and is continuing to improve because school leaders have successfully developed the quality of teaching.
- Attainment in English and mathematics has risen sharply and is now broadly average and rising.
- The relentless drive of leaders to improve standards has led to most teaching being good.
- Students behave well in lessons and are keen to make progress; this supports their learning well.
- Students' attendance has risen and is now above the national average. Levels of persistent absence are falling quickly.
- The expectations of students by their teachers are very high and students respond well to them.
- The headteacher and his senior team have helped students to raise their aspirations so that more of them are now continuing to the sixth form, further and higher education.
- The sixth form is good. Results at AS are improving rapidly and results at A2 are above average.
- Governors offer challenge and hold school leaders to account for students' progress and the quality of teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although the gap between the achievement of those pupils supported by pupil premium and their peer group is closing, it is still too wide in some year groups.
- Key Stage 4 results in mathematics are not as strong as those achieved in English.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 34 lessons or part lessons taught by 32 teachers and one cover supervisor.
- Joint lesson observations were conducted with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, subject leaders, heads of house, the special educational needs co-ordinator, school governors, members of staff responsible for attendance, safeguarding and child protection, and the Chief Executive Officer of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors met with and listened to the views of groups of students from Years 7, 8, 9,10, 11 and post-16 and talked to students in lessons.
- The views of 30 parents who completed the on-line survey (Parent View) were considered, as was a letter from a parent.
- Staff views were taken into account from conversations and from the 40 questionnaires that were completed during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at information about students' progress and attainment, the school's improvement planning and its evaluation of how well it is doing. Inspectors looked at the provision for staff training and the systems used to manage staff performance, and saw evidence of how decisions about teachers' pay are made. Records of governing body meetings, the headteacher's reports to governors and a range of policy documents were also considered.

Inspection team

Liz Talmadge, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Alan Gray

Additional Inspector

Jeremy Seymour

Additional Inspector

Margaret Jones

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average secondary school. Numbers in the sixth form are increasing year by year.
- The proportion of students eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government to support students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- There are higher than average numbers of students with special educational needs supported by school action. There are lower than average numbers supported by school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds. There are a few students who speak English as an additional language. The school hosts a small number of overseas students on sixth form courses.
- The school makes use of alternative provision for a very small number of students. Most of them attend West Nottinghamshire College of Further Education for a day a week to study vocational subjects.
- The school became a sponsored academy in September 2012 as part of the Torch Academy Gateway Trust and operates as part of the multi-academy trust under the guidance of a Chief Executive Officer. It has its own governing body that has strong links with the trustees. The school also has links with the teaching school alliance led by the outstanding partner school in the trust.
- The headteacher has been in post for two years.
- The school and its predecessor school have been on a challenging journey to improve standards during the last three years and this has led to significant turbulence in staffing. The school now has secure staffing in place in all areas.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve achievement for those students entitled to pupil premium funding by ensuring that some of the good support and intervention work currently taking place outside the classroom becomes embedded in lessons by:
 - using available information about students to plan work that develops their literacy and communication skills
 - teachers modelling ways of working so that students have good examples of what success looks like.
- Improve progress in mathematics so that GCSE results are at least as good as those in English.
- Ensure that more teaching is outstanding by sharing best practice within the academy trust and teaching school alliance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' attainment has risen quickly so that by 2013 the numbers of students attaining five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics was in line with the national average. School data demonstrate that the students currently in Year 11 are on track to attain more highly again this summer.
- The majority of students join the school with attainment that is broadly average and most then make good progress. Progress at Key Stage 3 is very good. Progress at Key Stage 4 is good in English and improving in mathematics. The predecessor school has left a legacy of underachievement for some Key Stage 4 students but they are catching up rapidly.
- The few students who have English as an additional language make good progress in all year groups as do the overseas students who study in the sixth form.
- Despite the rapid gains made there are a few subjects such as mathematics, design technology and history where, in the past, students have not made the progress expected of them. The most able students have not always reached the higher grades. Changes to the qualifications taken by students means that more able students in the current Year 11 are on track to do so now.
- The school now has good information about students' prior attainment and assesses their progress at regular intervals during the year. This information is used to set appropriate progress targets. All students are now expected to make better than expected progress. The majority of parents who responded to Parent View say that their children make good progress.
- In lessons there is strong evidence of the majority of students making good progress. Key Stage 3 students make particularly good gains in their learning. Progress checks in Year 11 demonstrate that above average numbers are making good progress in English. Progress in mathematics is improving but still lags behind English. Average numbers of students are set to make good progress in mathematics this summer.
- The school has previously used early entry in mathematics for the most able and that has not disadvantaged them.
- The school provides a great deal of carefully-targeted support for Key Stage 4 students in both mathematics and English. Any student at risk of not making enough progress is given additional support. Students say that they appreciate this and they benefit from the additional support.
- Year 7 catch up funding is used to provide a significant amount of support with literacy. There are a number of reading programmes targeted at Year 7 and 8 students that are having a good impact on their ability to tackle other subjects. The school has also extended the time available for all Year 7 and 8 students to have extra literacy sessions.
- Students who are entitled to benefit from pupil premium funding have not always made as much progress as their peer group but are now catching up rapidly. In 2013, pupil premium students achieved on average half a GCSE grade lower than their peers in English and mathematics. In Key Stage 4 the rapid improvements made by the peer group have made closing this gap more challenging but in Key Stage 3 the gap has almost closed. Funding is used well to provide a range of effective intervention such as one to one support in English and mathematics, additional teaching and small group work. Successful strategies to raise students' aspirations

have helped to improve progress but there is still more to be done to ensure that all students in this group make progress in line with their peers.

- Many students who have special educational needs supported by school action are also eligible for the pupil premium. As such, they benefit from the interventions and support offered. Students in Key Stage 3 are making more progress than their peer group and outcomes for Key Stage 4 students are set to improve this summer.
- A small group of students benefit from studying at West Nottinghamshire College for a day a week and this has improved their attendance and the progress they are making.
- Students join the sixth form with attainment that is below average. Outcomes in Year 12 are improving and those in Year 13 are above average.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching in all key stages is good and leads to the rapidly improving progress being made by students. Despite some historic instability in staffing, particularly in English and mathematics, the focus in the school on improving teaching has led to students being very positive about their own learning and participating well in the majority of lessons.
- Students' achievement is at its best when expectations are high and well-structured activities are supported by sufficient time for them to think deeply. In a Year 10 English lesson, for example, students made rapid progress in their understanding of a character through well-directed research and discussion. In a Year 12 drama lesson the preparation of a monologue was improved by the teacher using her subject knowledge to offer an example of how she would act.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good and pupils appreciate and respond well to good and better teaching. They comment that there has been 'a significant improvement in the quality of teaching' and they are now 'given a greater variety of tasks to do in lessons that engage and motivate them'.
- The 'achievement culture' engendered by the headteacher and senior leaders supports teachers in setting aspirational targets for students' progress. Students know their targets and recognise the importance of the regular assessments that help teachers to identify gaps in students' learning and to plan support that helps them to reach their targets. Students say that they appreciate what their teachers do to help them.
- Marking is good. Inspectors looked at marking in lessons and also looked in detail at marking in a number of subjects and found it to be helpful in telling students what they did well and what they need to do next. Marking is regular and creates opportunities for students to respond to teachers' comments. The standard of teachers' assessment is reliable and is externally moderated.
- Teaching assistants work well with teachers to provide additional support for students who need one to one support, small group or additional teaching.
- The school has an extensive literacy programme in place and this supports all students with their reading and written communication. The achievement of those students entitled to pupil premium funding would benefit from well-planned opportunities to develop their literacy and communication skills in all subjects.

- Teaching in the sixth form is good and the work of sixth form students shows good progress over time. By the time students reach the end of Year 13 the outcomes are well above average.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. The management of behaviour by staff is robust and consistent. The school has very clear systems in place to reward good behaviour and to sanction unacceptable behaviour. Students know what is expected of them and the vast majority respond very positively.
- Students say that behaviour has improved a great deal over recent years because of the systems that are in place and because, 'lessons are more fun and engaging'. They also comment that the environment that they learn in has been improved so that they want to come to school.
- Students' attitudes to learning in lessons contribute to the good progress being made in Key Stage 3 and to the rapidly improving outcomes in Key Stage 4. Behaviour around the school and in social times is considerate and polite. Students show respect for adults and for each other. In lessons students work well together, listening to each other's views and challenging each other in ways that help them to develop their knowledge and understanding.
- Students of all ages are ambitious for themselves and they work hard to improve their standards. Sixth form students, for example, study at school until late into the evening. They say, 'It is a good place to work.'
- Attendance has improved to be just above national averages and the rate of persistent absence has reduced markedly. This reflects students' improved attitudes to learning and their increasing rates of progress.
- Students are proud of their school and of themselves. This can be seen in their smart appearance and the absence of litter and graffiti around the school.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Parents say that their children feel safe and this is supported by the views of the students themselves. They say bullying is rare and that the school is a harmonious place to be. Students know about the various forms of bullying and are taught well about how to keep themselves safe using social media and the internet.
- The school has developed an internal system to reduce numbers of fixed term exclusions, and this is having a positive impact. Permanent exclusion in recent years has been used only rarely and in response to the most extreme behaviours.

The leadership and management are good

- Since his appointment the headteacher and his senior team have created policies and practices that are centred on the achievement of students. Leaders at all levels are now confident that the school is well placed to continue the upward trend seen in GCSE results, improving post-16 results and good progress at Key Stage 3. Inspection evidence supports the rapid progress that students are making.
- The Torch Academy Gateway Trust has played an important role in improving standards at the school and the Torch Teaching School Alliance has plans in place to support the further development of the quality of teaching at the school.

- The improvement to the quality of teaching has been a key focus for the school in raising achievement. The training of staff to develop their teaching skills is regarded by middle leaders as, 'a strength of the school'. Examination class teachers, for example, are supported in attending regular examination board training. Staff questionnaires say that they feel their professional development is well catered for.
- The impact of this training is seen in the rapid improvement in standards across the school for most students. Leaders validate the school's use of progress data, particularly in English and mathematics, by using external moderation of marking controlled assessments, mock examinations and tests so that they know their data are accurate.
- The school has experienced some turbulence in staffing in recent years. This has been well-managed but teachers do not have enough opportunities to see examples of outstanding teaching so that they know what the next steps in their own development need to be.
- There is confidence in the leadership provided by the headteacher and the senior team from teachers, governors and the majority of parents.
- The leadership's evaluation of its current progress is accurate and there are detailed plans in place for further improvement. The school is not complacent. This is evident in the sixth form, for example, where the vast majority of Year 13 students are progressing to higher education and in the fact that no student leaves the school without a college or university place or employment.
- Tracking and monitoring are well used by the school to inform progress targets. Leaders at all levels talk confidently about how progress checks lead to discussions with class teachers to check or re-set targets for individual students. This is confirmed by the evidence of targets being used by teachers when marking books.
- The Key Stage 3 curriculum has been revised to end in Year 8; the vast majority of Key Stage 4 courses are now GCSE. Sixth form courses are, with very few exceptions, academic AS and A2 courses. These changes have contributed to the high aspirations of students of all ages.
- All students have some advice and guidance on making choices for their futures and there is good quality independent information, advice and guidance to prepare students for the next stage.
- Performance management is well used to ensure that only those teachers who make sufficient impact with their teaching progress through the teachers' pay scales.
- Gaps between the achievement of different groups are narrowing quickly and this promotes equality of opportunity for all students.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is well supported by the school. Activity days offer a wide range of cultural events whilst sporting opportunities, charity fundraising, performing arts events and school visits are available to students. The behaviour of students demonstrates good social skills.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors offer both challenge and support to school leaders. Minutes from their meetings show that they are well informed and from discussion during the inspection it is evident that they are proactive in supporting the continued improvement of the school. They have a good

understanding of achievement data and know how the school compares to other schools nationally.

- The chair of governors is also a trustee of the Torch Academy Gateway Trust and this allows governors access to a wide pool of governor experience that supports the development and training of Meden School governors. This has enabled the conversations that governors have with leaders at all levels to be more focused on the impact of the quality of teaching and on the actions taken by the school to improve standards.
- Since the school became an academy governors have involved themselves in the provision and outcomes for students with disabilities and special educational needs, where their intervention has led to significant improvements being made. They are now doing the same with those students entitled to receive pupil premium funding.
- Governors have a clear view of the school's finances and are involved in ensuring that the performance management of teachers is closely related to students' progress.
- Governors ensure that safeguarding meets legal requirements.

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	138411
Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	424947

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	860
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	116
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Gray
Headteacher	David Hooker
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01623 843517
Fax number	01623 847354
Email address	d.hooker@medenschool.co.uk

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