

Dixons City Academy

Ripley Street, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD5 7RR

Inspection dates 21–22 May 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- From their starting points, all groups of students achieve well and make good progress. Attainment by the end of Year 11 is above average.
- Teaching is typically good. This is because teachers have high aspirations and good specialist subject knowledge. They make learning interesting for students and help them to acquire knowledge and skills quickly.
- Leaders and governors have successfully built on the last inspection to foster an environment of tolerance and respect. Consequently, behaviour is outstanding.
- Students' attitudes are excellent and attendance and punctuality to lessons is very high. They arrive well prepared and ready to start work.
- The Principal's leadership and uncompromising drive means underperformance is challenged and progress is rising.
- The sixth form is good and is well led. There is a good take-up of courses and achievement by the end of Year 13 is above average.
- Leadership and monitoring of the academy's work to improve behaviour and safety is first class.
- The governing body gives strong support to the academy. Governors are knowledgeable and use their wide range of skills and abilities to keep the academy's work under close review.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching and some requires improvement. Occasionally, teaching does not challenge all students to do their best, particularly the least able students and those who are known to be eligible for additional funding.
- Gaps in the progress of pupil premium students and their classmates are closing but not rapidly enough.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are not always focused precisely enough on the impact it has on different groups of students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 28 lessons, and conducted a series of short observations to a further 16 lessons to look at aspects of learning around the academy for specific groups of students including those with disabilities and special educational needs. Six lessons were jointly observed with the Principal. Inspectors also attended several tutorial sessions.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including school data, the academy’s self-evaluation, the academy’s development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, records of lesson observations and safeguarding documentation.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, senior leaders, middle leaders and other staff as well as discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body, three other governors and a representative of Dixons Academy Trust.
- Inspectors held meetings with groups of students in each year group. Discussions also took place with students informally during break and lunchtimes. In lessons, inspectors discussed students’ work with them and they examined students’ work across a range of subjects focusing on attainment, progress and the quality of marking and feedback.
- Inspectors took account of 61 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also received 36 questionnaires completed by members of staff.

Inspection team

Gina White, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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Full report

Information about this school

- Dixons City Academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- An above-average proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Most students are from Asian British and Pakistani backgrounds. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well above average; few are at early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in the care of the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action is well below average, while the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A very small number of students in Year 11 attend courses at Bradford College and Work Quest.
- Since the last inspection the academy has formed the Dixons Academy Trust; a partnership of five local schools.
- The academy is also part of the Bradford Partnership of Schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and increase the amount of outstanding teaching by:
 - making sure activities challenge students of all abilities, particularly the least able, to do their best and make rapid progress in their learning
 - ensuring students' individual needs are checked and quickly responded to as they emerge during the lesson so that tasks and activities remain challenging
 - improve the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation by leaders at all levels to bring consistency to teaching and eliminate the gaps in the attainment and progress of all students and especially those who are eligible for pupil premium and catch-up funding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most students join the academy with levels of attainment that are higher than those seen nationally. In Year 7 and Year 8, attainment on entry is broadly average. Small numbers of students, in all year groups, enter with low basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Students make good progress from their individual starting points. By the end of Year 11, the proportion of students achieving five GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is above average. Numbers rose in 2013, following a dip 12 months earlier.
- Stronger teaching and effective revision and study support in a wide range of subjects helped to secure the improvements for Key Stage 4 students. Progress in English and mathematics in 2013 was good and the academy's latest assessments show this is improving rapidly in English and being sustained in mathematics by current Year 11 students. The school does not make early entries for GCSE.
- Students' learning and progress across year groups in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, indicates they are achieving very well. There is no evidence that students from different minority ethnic groups make progress at different rates.
- Higher expectations for the most able students are emerging. Students are responding to their targets, and more are now working at the highest GCSE grades and levels.
- Support for literacy and communication has been strengthened. Dedicated time for reading, at least once a week, and regular use of the library is helping to develop reading habits. The weakest readers are making rapid gains in their reading in response to the focused support they receive.
- The academy closely checks the progress made by disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Students are gaining in confidence and making progress in response to additional support they receive. However, teachers' assessments are not always used well enough to ensure learning is pitched accurately for students and their learning slows at times because they are not always given challenging work to do.
- Some students supported by the pupil premium make slower progress than their classmates. Their learning and progress are not always checked effectively. By the end of Year 11, they are typically more than one GCSE grade behind their classmates. The academy's expectations have increased this year. The support leaders have put in place lower down in the school and in Year 11 is starting to close the gaps in achievement in most year groups.
- A small number of students receive help from the government's Year 7 and Year 8 catch-up funding. Different forms of help have been put in place, especially for numeracy work. Students are enjoying the work and are starting to make gains in their learning. The impact of this work is due to be evaluated by the academy in the next few months.
- Students attending off-site provision make good progress on courses that cater well for their specific needs and interests.
- Achievement is good in the sixth form. The vast majority of students complete their courses and are developing the study skills they need to achieve the highest grades at A level. Following broadly average AS results in 2013, Year 12 and 13 students are making better progress this year.
- Students receive good information and advice to inform their choices and are well prepared for the next steps in work, training or higher education. Increasing numbers of Pakistani heritage students are the first in their families to go to university and many younger students aspire to do so.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good with a strong core that is outstanding. Very occasionally, teaching requires improvement.

- Students respond quickly to clear instructions and settle readily to work; they concentrate well and are responsive to teachers' questions.
- Teachers' good specialist subject knowledge is used effectively in a wide range of subjects to provide interesting activities and build students' knowledge and skills successfully. Students understand the tasks but are sometimes less clear about what the learning intention is and how their teachers would assess this.
- Students are normally challenged to do their best. Teachers check students' understanding regularly, pick up where it is not secure and provide alternative explanation or support to help students make faster progress. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, effective use of memory aids and cues helped students to learn about mathematical functions. One student said, 'Miss picks up on the things I can't do'.
- Teaching assistants and other adults provide well-targeted support for students' learning. Very occasionally, tasks set do not help students, particularly the least able, to progress well unaided.
- There is a strong insistence on students using language accurately, and a secure focus on students explaining their thoughts and ideas. Skilful questioning built upon students' answers, challenging them to expand and deepen them to reason, explain and make connections in their learning in English, mathematics and history. This challenged the most able students and other groups equally.
- Students are supported and prepared very well for examinations. Revision classes are highly focused, fast paced and demanding. Students in Years 11, 12 and 13 worked hard, concentrating deeply, and recognised teachers' efforts to make the sessions interesting and purposeful. Revision sessions are well attended.
- Students' work is marked regularly. The best written and verbal feedback encourages students to critically reflect and act on the points for improvement. Notes recorded by students in 'My Action Plan' following discussion, and advice from their teachers, encourages them to keep a close check on their progress.
- Inconsistencies in the quality of marking and in students' response to feedback within departments limit its effectiveness in supporting students' learning. High standards of presentation in students' books are not always insisted upon in mathematics and science.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students have excellent attitudes to learning. They arrive promptly to lessons, are well prepared, and ready to work hard. Students regularly complete homework. Conduct in lessons and around the academy is consistently mature and sensible, with only minor unsettled behaviour where teaching is less effective.
- Students know what is expected of their behaviour and attitudes. This is made crystal clear on arrival and consistently reinforced by staff. Adherence to school uniform rules is very good and is diligently checked by form tutors.
- A high level of mutual respect characterises relationships between students and adults in all year groups. Students have a real sense of pride in the academy. They are welcoming and readily discuss their work with visitors.
- Sanctions such as detention are effective in reducing lateness or forgetting homework. Attendance and punctuality are consistently high. Students say they enjoy lessons and many keep regular checks on their progress towards their goals.
- Bullying is very rare, and dealt with effectively. Students have a good awareness of different forms of bullying including through the internet and social media and prejudice-based name calling. They know that derogatory language is not tolerated. They show a marked degree of tolerance and respect for others, and individual needs and differences are well supported.
- Leaders ensure that behavioural concerns are acted upon and specific needs are well supported. Additional individual support is constructive and effective in helping students to know how to develop and take responsibility for their behaviour.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding.

- Students have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe due to frequent and consistently strong teaching about risks and how to manage them. Leaders are vigilant in keeping students safe and every care is taken to ensure the academy is safe and that safeguarding policies, procedures and practice are applied thoroughly and conscientiously.
- Parents, staff and students express strong support and positive views of the academy's work to promote good behaviour, care and well-being.

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal sets high expectations of students' behaviour and attitudes for learning. Senior leaders and governors work closely together and leaders have done much to create a culture in which good teaching can flourish.
- A wide range of policies help to shape the academy's work. A greater focus on improving the quality of teaching and closing learning and achievement gaps for all groups of students is evident in the latest policies. Well-established systems are in place to review their impact and the quality of the academy's work.
- There are effective methods to manage teachers' performance. Teachers are set challenging performance targets, which are appropriately linked to students' achievement. Salary progression is based on how well students achieve.
- A strong emphasis is placed on teachers' professional development. Support is planned well to develop individuals and the academy's priorities. The academy has developed a core of outstanding teaching and is well placed to bring about the next step to improving the quality of teaching.
- Subject leaders' systematic review and actions to develop teaching have focused more strongly on teachers' performance than the impact this has on students' learning and progress. Improvement points, given to teachers following lesson observations, are sometimes lax in explaining what needs to improve and by when to ensure consistency and swift improvement in teaching.
- Excellence in monitoring, and in using data to diagnose problems when the smallest dip occurs, is helping to drive further improvement in students' behaviour, attendance and safety. All checks and reviews of the academy's work are not yet of this high calibre. Consequently, self-evaluation is, at times, over-generous.
- Support from the Bradford Partnership and the sponsor, Dixons Academy Trust, is helping leaders to review and evaluate the work of the academy. This has led to changes, for example, in the way that mathematics is taught.
- Leadership in the sixth form is good. More frequent checks on students' progress have been introduced this year. Better information about courses and extra sessions for students who did not do well in Year 12 is promoting good learning particularly in mathematics and science.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. The provision for students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is a strength of the academy. A rich programme of visits and other activities help to promote students' cultural awareness and they are friendly, caring and supportive of each other. Equality is promoted well and there is no evidence of any discrimination within the academy.
- Students benefit from careers education, advice and guidance. In addition to access to a qualified adviser, many students find the expertise of subject teachers has usefully helped them to make decisions about their studies and the careers they can lead to. A very high proportion of students go onto training and higher education.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View feel the academy is well led and would recommend it to others. There are a few who feel that communication between the academy and parents could be better. The academy's regular surveys of students' and parents' views generate a high response and show a more positive picture.
- Leadership is not outstanding because not all leaders do enough to improve teaching by regularly checking the impact it has on students' learning and progress and acting quickly to

improve its effectiveness on learning.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is well led and organised, with a good range of expertise. Governors ask searching questions and have established practices to monitor the academy’s performance and hold leaders to account for students’ progress and attainment.
- Regular meetings with academy leaders ensure governors are well informed about the quality of teaching across the academy and have a good overview of procedures to manage staff and their salary progression.
- Governors are involved in decisions about how the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up money is spent. They are increasingly able to interpret data and have recently set targets and begun to scrutinise students’ progress more actively towards eliminating the gaps that exist with their peers in the academy.
- There are rigorous procedures to safeguard students and ensure their health and safety. All statutory requirements are met.

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	130909
Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	444449

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	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	1087
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	255
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jo Williams
Headteacher	Shirley Watson
Date of previous school inspection	20 November 2007
Telephone number	01274 776777
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