

Banbury Academy

Ruskin Road, Banbury, OX16 9HY

Inspection dates 17–18 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	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		Requires improvement 3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement to be good. It is not good because

- Progress from Year 7 to 11 in English and mathematics is not consistently good for different groups of students.
- In both English and mathematics, the gap between the attainment of Year 11 students who are eligible for additional free school meals funding and that of other groups is above average.
- Students' writing is not good. Teachers do not place sufficient emphasis on improving this basic skill.
- The quality of teaching is not consistent enough to be good. Teachers' marking and feedback are not detailed or regular enough to help students make good progress.
- Students' behaviour around the academy is improving but in lessons where teaching is weaker, students are less engaged in what they are learning.
- Apart from in the sixth form, leaders do not use the information about students' progress to full effect, to help to lift achievement to good.

The school has the following strengths

- The Principal sets high standards. She has raised the expectations for how much progress students are expected to make and has improved teaching.
- In GCSE examinations last year, students achieved well in a number of subjects.
- In most cases, students are respectful towards their teachers and their peers.
- The sixth form is good and students achieve well. Leaders guide and support students to help them gain the qualifications they need to move to the next stage.
- The sponsor has a clear view of the academy's strengths and weaknesses in teaching and in students' achievement. The governors and sponsor provide robust support and challenge.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 30 lessons. Most observations on the first day of the inspection were carried out jointly with senior leaders. The Principal also accompanied the lead inspector on short visits to a number of lessons.
- Inspectors talked to students informally and met with groups of students from different year groups. Inspectors considered 93 questionnaires completed by staff, 38 responses from the on-line survey (Parent View), and additional comments from a small number of parents.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, members of staff, representatives from the academy’s sponsor, including the Chief Executive, and members of the academy’s local advisory board, including a parent on the board.

Inspection team

Sarah Hubbard, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Margaret Dickinson	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Duncan Millard	Additional Inspector
Peter Thomas	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Banbury Academy converted to become an academy on 1 August 2012. When its predecessor school was last inspected, it was judged to be satisfactory under the previous inspection framework.
- The academy is slightly larger than average in size and has a sixth form.
- The Principal has been in post since September 2013. The Governing Body is known as the local advisory board. The Chair of this board is very new in post and was formerly chair of the district board that oversees a group of academies in Banbury with the same sponsor.
- The academy receives support from an Executive Principal and an Acting Associate Principal who works with the academy's sponsor.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for students eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is slightly above average. The proportion of students supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also slightly above average.
- The academy makes use of off-site provision at Meadowbrook College in Abingdon for a very small number of students.
- The academy meets the government's floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is typically at least good, by:
 - ensuring teachers use their knowledge of what students have achieved already to provide engaging lessons with an appropriate level of challenge in mathematics and science
 - insisting that teachers mark students' work regularly, giving detailed subject-specific guidance
 - implementing an effective whole-academy drive to improve the accuracy and quality of writing.
- Improve students' achievement in Years 7–11 to good, by:
 - ensuring the new system to track students' progress takes full account of their starting points and the progress of different groups of students, particularly those supported by the 'pupil premium' and those who are disabled or have special educational needs
 - identifying any gaps between the attainment of students who are supported by the pupil premium and those who are not when students first enter the academy, so that effective action can be taken to narrow gaps
 - challenging students when they do not try hard enough in lessons or when they produce untidy work.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - ensuring senior and middle leaders make better use of information on students' progress when judging the effectiveness of teaching and additional support for students
 - making sure leaders focus sharply, and in depth, on students' progress when they review students' books
 - ensuring leaders insist that all staff are consistently robust when dealing with racial bullying.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The progress of different groups of students between Years 7 to 11 is too variable in both English and mathematics for achievement to be good. The progress of students who are disabled and have special educational needs is slower than that of other groups.
- The standard of writing in students' books in Years 7 and 8 is not as good as it should be. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of students' writing in terms of quality or quantity.
- The academy uses the government's Year 7 catch-up funding to support literacy and numeracy skills for students who need this extra help. The extra programmes prove successful for some students but not others. Leaders do not analyse the impact of this extra funding to find out how it can be used to full effect to boost students' achievement quickly.
- Achievement is improving for students in English and mathematics but not in science. The students currently in Year 11 who benefit from additional 'pupil premium funding are on track to make better progress in English and mathematics than the students who left Year 11 last year. Nevertheless, the gap in attainment between the students who benefit from the funding and those who do not, is wider than the national gap.
- Students achieve well in some subjects. In the GCSE examinations last year, students achieved above-average results in a number of subjects, for example PE, drama and history.
- The academy entered a substantial number of its students for mathematics GCSE in November 2012. Nearly two thirds of those entered early passed their GCSE, despite their slightly lower than average starting points. However, the needs of the most able were not as well served by this approach as the middle-ability students, as relatively few attained the highest grade.
- The most able students' overall achievement at GCSE was broadly similar to national averages for this group of students. The achievement of most able students across the school is variable.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Students start the sixth form with below-average attainment and, by the time they leave, it has improved to average. The detailed tracking in the sixth form is used effectively to identify students who are struggling with the rigours of A-level study. These students are provided with good quality help by their subject teachers and form tutors.
- The achievement of the very small number of students who benefit from the additional offsite provision is good because the provision meets their needs effectively.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is better in English than in science and mathematics. However, in some English lessons, the quality of the students' written work needs improving.
- Students engage well in learning in English because the tasks are interesting and they have opportunities to develop their ideas further.
- In some lessons, teachers' expectations of what the students can achieve are not high enough. Teachers do not always make good use of the information they have from work they have assessed. As a result, they do not always challenge students when they are not giving of their best in lessons.
- In lessons observed where students' progress was more rapid, teachers used interesting resources to capture students' attention giving a brisk and focused start to the lesson. However, this was not the case in some subjects, where lessons started slowly without any attempt to hook students' attention.
- A key aspect of teaching that requires improvement is marking. The comments teachers make on completed work are often too brief to help students make progress. They do not give enough

subject-specific guidance about what students need to do to improve. Students' books are not always marked regularly. Some students produce work for several weeks without any written feedback from their teachers.

- The work seen in some students' books is not as good as it should be, taking into account their age and ability. Teachers do not place enough emphasis on explicitly teaching students how to show their knowledge and understanding of the subject through their writing.
- When teachers plan lessons in science and mathematics, they do not make enough use of the information they have on students' starting points. This means that some students can easily do the tasks they are set while other students, often those who have special educational needs, find them too difficult. As a result, some students become disengaged and stop working altogether.
- Students learn well when teachers are aware of the needs of most able students and deliberately ask them more challenging and probing questions. However, the most able are not consistently challenged by the work teachers set for them.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good because teachers take care when they plan to ensure there are sufficient pace and challenge in lessons. Teachers' questioning is more precisely targeted to develop students' understanding than it is in Years 7 to 11. Teachers train students in the skills they need to succeed in examinations and, as a result, they feel well prepared for the challenges of examinations at this level.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Although behaviour has improved and exclusion rates are lower, students' attitudes to learning are not good enough.
- Students in some classes do not take pride in the presentation of their work. When teachers set work in some subjects, it takes a long time before students settle down to work. This is not always challenged by the teachers.
- In lessons where teaching is stronger, students show positive attitudes to each other, their teacher and the work they are doing. In these lessons, students seamlessly move from working alone to sharing their ideas with the rest of the class in an orderly manner.
- In lessons where teaching is weaker, students talk when the teacher is explaining to the class what they need to do.
- Sixth form students are respectful to themselves and others. Their form tutors develop them as individuals, supporting them in gaining the skills they need for future success.
- Students report that in subject areas like mathematics, where they have had several teachers since the start of the year, behaviour is not as good as it should be.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement. Although there are robust procedures and policies in place to ensure safety, a small but noticeable group of older boys are overly boisterous. Some of these boys adopt language and a manner that could be perceived as threatening to younger students and visitors to the academy.
- Although students report that senior staff deal with incidents of racial abuse in a robust manner, some find this is not the case when they report racial bullying to lunchtime supervisors.
- The academy attendance officer knows the individual circumstances of students whose attendance is low and tailors the support provided accordingly. The attendance of children under the care of the local authority has improved due to this approach. The academy does not track the attendance of different groups of students as well as it does that of individuals.
- Leaders identify students in both Year 11 and the sixth form who are at risk of not moving on to education, employment or training. These students receive regular careers advice and guidance. Consequently, at the end of Year 11 last year, only three students did not move on to education, employment or training.
- The academy successfully uses alternative provision to ensure the progress of a very small number of students who are at risk of permanent exclusion.
- The academy's sponsor promotes high aspirations and has introduced an online computer

programme to record the goals students set for themselves. While the majority of students want to achieve well and aim high, some have low aspirations and do not expect enough of themselves.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The Principal has high aspirations for the academy and its students to ensure that all achieve as well as they can. She has not shied away from challenging other leaders to share and communicate her vision. The Principal is providing appropriate training to help senior and middle leaders play an effective part in improving the school. Although this has led to some improvements, it has not yet brought about good achievement for the academy's students.
- The Principal and sponsor have high expectations of the pace and extent of change. They have required improvements to be made in many different areas of the academy's work. For example, a new type of GCSE qualification has been introduced in mathematics this year. It is too early to judge what the effects of these changes have been.
- The academy's sponsor has an accurate picture of the quality of education provided by the academy and is providing good support to the academy. It has provided in-depth training for senior and middle leaders to sharpen their evaluation skills so they match the sponsor's judgements more closely.
- Middle leaders are challenged by senior leaders to account for the progress that different groups of students are making. This is leading to clear improvements in teaching.
- The current systems used to track students' progress are not used well enough to help leaders identify groups of students who are doing well or falling behind. Any gaps between the students supported by pupil premium, and those who are not, are not identified at an early enough stage.
- A lot of time and effort goes into checking students' work but this is not yet resulting in good achievement for the academy's students. Leaders rightly emphasise presentation skills but do not focus enough on checking students' progress and identifying how it could be better.
- Leaders are developing a range of resources, including online resources that support writing and students' understanding of subject-specific vocabulary. However, this has not consistently improved the way students write in Years 7 and 8. In these year groups, some students have noticeably weak writing skills.
- A range of useful work is being done to improve teaching. Teachers, along with middle and senior leaders, have good opportunities to work with colleagues both in the school and from other linked academies. Several spoke of the benefits these opportunities have brought to their work. This training has improved teaching in some subjects more than others and there is still work to be done to lift teaching to good.
- Decisions on pay are appropriately based on whether staff meet challenging targets for the progress students make. Consequently some staff have not progressed to the next pay scale. The Principal has worked closely with these staff to ensure they understand the reasons for this decision and are clear about what they need to do to improve.
- The leadership of the sixth form is good because the leaders are crystal clear about what areas need to be improved. The sixth form leadership team work closely with teachers to ensure they are using teaching methods that improve achievement at this level.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body (local advisory board) has very recently acquired a new Chair. The academy's sponsor has made changes to the local advisory board so that its approach to holding the school to account dovetails with theirs. This is an appropriate improvement. As a result, governors are making more accurate judgements about the academy's work and are challenging the academy to use additional 'pupil premium' funding more effectively. This has led to improvements in the quality of teaching in some subjects. Governors have worked successfully with the Principal and sponsor to establish high expectations when setting targets for teachers' performance. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching

and challenge leaders to ensure that teachers are only rewarded when their students achieve well. However, the academy's governors are not yet making enough use of data on students' progress, including those eligible for additional funding, when they judge the impact of changes on the quality of teaching. Governors have appropriate procedures to ensure students are safe. However some students report inconsistencies in how behaviour and safety are monitored at lunchtimes. Governors have worked effectively with the sponsor to ensure the academy operates on a sound financial footing.

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	138499
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	426389

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	1076
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	271
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Ingham
Principal	Emily Gent
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01295 251451
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