

Quintin Kynaston Academy

Marlborough Hill, London, NW8 0NL

Inspection dates 17–18 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Following the last inspection in 2011, the academy experienced a period of challenges and difficulties. This weakened the focus on driving actions to sustain continuous academy improvement leading to high achievement for students.
- The current drive for improvement is unremitting, but it is too early to see the full impact of planned changes, including professional development. Standards of attainment are not consistently in line with or above the national average in all subjects.
- The rate of progress overall is steady rather than good or better. The quality of teaching, over time, is not good enough in all subjects to ensure that all students achieve their full potential at the end of the key stages.
- The quality of target setting and marking is not consistently diagnostic to help students improve their work.

The school has the following strengths

- The senior leadership team, led by an experienced and visionary headteacher, has increased the academy's capacity to improve quickly.
- Students behave well and have good attitudes to learning. They are happy and safe.
- Good care and support for students with additional needs contribute to the success of the academy.
- The governing body provides strong strategic direction and takes decisive actions to support improvement.
- Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength.
- The sixth form is good because of the effective care and guidance and strong leadership.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 parts of lessons, 10 of them jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Observations included tracking the learning of specific groups of students such as the most able and those from minority ethnic groups, for example Bangladeshi girls.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, senior and middle leaders, four groups of students and a few parents.
- Inspectors looked very closely at the academy’s work, including the self-evaluation and improvement plans, minutes of the governing body, students’ work and progress over time, policies and documents relating to behaviour and safety, the curriculum, teaching and learning, the monitoring and evaluation of teachers’ work and the provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Inspectors did not use the online Parent View questionnaires as very few parents responded.
- Inspectors took account of 101 responses to the questionnaires for academy staff.

Inspection team

Carmen Rodney, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Richard Boswell	Additional Inspector
James Coyle	Additional Inspector
Calvin Pike	Additional Inspector
Gill Walley	Additional Inspector
John Worgan	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school, and has more boys than girls.
- The vast majority of students are from minority ethnic groups, which is much higher than the national average. The largest groups are from Bangladeshi background, any other White background, any other Black background and African heritages.
- The proportion of students eligible for the additional government funding provided for students known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority and for pupils with parents in the armed forces is high.
- The proportion of disabled students and those supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high when compared with the national average.
- A high proportion of students are known to speak English as an additional language.
- The academy provides alternative provision for students in Years 10 and 11. The vast majority of places are taken up by students from other schools. A learning support centre offers support for students with a disability or special educational needs as part of a student support faculty.
- The academy works with other schools as part of a sixth form consortium arrangement.
- The academy meets the current government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher, who led the academy at the time of the previous inspection in 2011, was absent for the 2012-13 academic year before resigning in May 2013. An experienced deputy led the school in her absence. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2013 and took up the post in January 2014. Prior to this appointment, an interim headteacher covered the post during the autumn term 2013. A new senior leadership team is now established.
- The Education Funding Agency served the school with a financial notice to improve in December 2012. The notice was lifted on 1 April 2014.
- The academy will be moving into new purpose-built premises on site in January 2015.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the planned changes outlined in the improvement plan are implemented rigorously and evaluated for their impact. Specifically, that:
 - professional development is focused as a priority on improving the overall effectiveness of the academy
 - a whole-academy approach to assessment strategies is accurate and used effectively to improve achievement over time for all groups of students.
- Develop teaching and learning to ensure that, over time, all teaching is typically good or outstanding by:
 - improving and sustaining the achievement of students in a wider range of subjects
 - ensuring that teachers know how well students are doing through using assessment accurately to identify students' progress and targets, and marking their work diagnostically to help students improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's decisive approach and clarity of vision are key strengths in motivating staff to work with him to transform the academy. Within a short time, he has successfully managed to create and deliver a shared and corporate strategic vision for improvement. He is very well supported by new senior leaders, staff, students and parents and a strong governing body.
- Changes have been timely and underpinned by consultation, listening to staff at all levels, including the teaching unions, reflecting on views and communicating the new culture of continuous improvement.
- The academy, previously outstanding and renowned, became fragile because it did not build sufficiently well on the outstanding judgement, which involved improving and sustaining systems over time. The new senior leaders have therefore started a series of changes by demystifying the term 'outstanding' in order to update the academy on changes and move it on.
- Changes have been rapid and palpable. Areas for improvement are carefully deliberated to secure better outcomes for students. Comments from staff sum up the changes as 'outstanding' and 'massive'. The headteacher's shrewdness has paid dividends; notably, the sharp focus on tackling behaviour has led to significant improvements in students' attitudes to their learning. In addition, carefully selected strategies to sustain achievement meant that standards did not decline in 2014. As a result of prioritising these areas for immediate improvement, the headteacher has successfully focused attention on developing teaching and learning, and leadership and management, in particular the training and development of leaders and rigorously holding staff to account for students' achievement.
- As part of the transformation of developing a new culture of learning, better processes and systems have been developed. For example, the restructured pastoral system has created a model for nurturing and managing the needs of students effectively to deter potential failures and sustain their interest in learning.
- Provision for disadvantaged students, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is a strength. The academy has also moved forward in reviewing provision for these students. The special needs register, previously populated by over half of the intake is now being addressed by using clear rationale to meet the needs of students in the Learning Support Centre.
- The care and support provided to students who are disadvantaged and/or receiving additional help embody the academy's continuous approach to promoting equality of opportunity. Case studies show that timely use of personalised support, and a persistent approach, ensure that students get the help they need and achieve very well against all odds.
- The academy has well established links with multi-agency teams. These, combined with clear and strong line management systems, including training opportunities, consistently lead to good outcomes for students participating in collaborative tri-borough partnership work or managed moves. It includes students in care or on the edge of care, as well as those with special educational needs or a disability.
- Senior leaders and the governing body have not allowed the past challenges to detract from driving improvement. They understand very well the strengths and weaknesses and have used this knowledge to construct a succinct and accessible development plan. Priorities are very clear and the plan provides a solid foundation for driving improvement.
- Middle leaders embrace the plan because it is concise and they know what is required. Thoroughness is expected, particularly as senior leaders are focused on equality of opportunity for all groups. They scrutinise the outcomes for each ethnic group rather than simply accepting the results of a subject.
- Roles and responsibilities have been clearly defined, thus enabling middle leaders to work more cohesively rather than in separate units. Middle leaders are now outward looking and have been empowered to develop and share good practice. This has led to increased and tighter monitoring and reporting to senior leaders. As a result, there is no hiding place.
- While there is some variation in the quality of subject leaders, middle leaders have made a very good start to changing their practices. Professional development is mapped out to support their work. Similarly, newly qualified teachers are very well supported.
- Senior leaders at all levels have a good overview of the quality of teaching and learning. Their assessment is accurate and aligned very well to students' progress. Leaders are aware of the need for greater consistency and have taken swift actions to increase teachers' understanding of the Teachers' Standards. Internal and external reviews have been used to deliver tough messages about quality teaching and learning. Increasingly, staff are now more involved in critiquing their work, and working in teams to examine practice as they become more focused on helping students to learn well.
- Systems for tracking and monitoring students' progress over time are currently being revised. Plans to use

new procedures are developing, but it is too early to comment on the impact.

- A thorough programme of assessing how well teachers are doing is linked to salary progression. This shows a good link to appraisal and salary progression, but the current system is being strengthened. The new policy, agreed with governors, reflects how well progression on merit is underpinned by evidence.
- The curriculum provides breadth and supports the transition process very well in Year 7 through the 'Opening Minds' programme. The curriculum is kept under review so that it fully reflects national priorities and meets the needs of all students. For instance, there is emphasis in Year 8 on providing additional subjects linked to preparing students for modern Britain. The wide range of choices at Key Stage 4 serves to enhance students' learning and the demands of the community to concentrate on academic subjects. As a result, the majority of students select double and triple science and the EBacc subjects¹. Extensive enrichment activities and the plethora of activities for the most able extend students' knowledge. Flexibility and personalisation of the curriculum lead to some students taking examinations early in mathematics, French and science, with good results, and the option of taking additional mathematics or AS-level subjects early. It is not unusual for students to take up to 12 or more GCSE examinations.
- The personal development programme, including provision for students' spiritual, moral social and cultural development, enables students to examine and assess their values when considering complex topics such as democracy, for example the Scottish referendum; gangs, extremism, worklessness, and equality issues. Students use the debating society to consider topics on 'ambition', 'resilience', 'respect' and 'tolerance'. These key words underpin the new tone on driving improvement.
- Students, as ambassadors living in a diverse community, connect very well with each other. They say that their relationships are more comprehensive and meaningful than the topics they cover on multicultural Britain or diversity around the world. This is a profound understanding of community living harmoniously.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - A knowledgeable governing body, drawn from the corporate world and academia, knows very well the strengths and weaknesses of the academy.
 - Governors' clear management of the academy's financial, human and physical resources, led to the Education Funding Agency lifting the financial notice to improve within 18 months. The governors are more stringent in their approach to holding senior leaders to account for their work. Governors' attention to financial diligence and probity are shown in their approach to supervising the new building. This includes the complex land-swap with the council and the development of a new alternative provision centre, whilst preserving educational continuity for the students.
 - They are undertaking a skills audit to match their expertise closely to the needs and priorities of the academy, which is linked to accelerating change. Governors assess their own training needs and seek out external courses to update their skills on educational practices.
 - Governors are clear that the key priorities for the academy are the quality of leadership and management before other provision can be improved. Consequently, the new culture and re-building of the academy now involve greater transparency, integrity and accountability. For example, they know the examination results and use of pupil premium funding very well. Aggregate examination results are no longer taken on trust, but analysed and carefully considered by group and value for money. This framework of accountability is now established. They are knowledgeable about the steps being taken to develop the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, they have worked closely with senior leaders to develop a more rigorous performance management system so that only good teaching is rewarded.
 - They ensure that safeguarding arrangements are secure and meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students show good attitudes to their learning and behave well because staff have high expectations of work and behaviour. Parents, staff and students agree that there has been a massive improvement in behaviour under the new headteacher. During the inspection students behaved very well and occasionally, outstanding behaviour was seen in lessons. Around the academy they were courteous to visitors and those who took part in interviews were very good ambassadors.
- Students arrive early to lessons, remain focused and respond well to staff because they are eager to excel in their learning. Students are proud of being a part of the QK community. Sixth form students noted that, despite the recent difficulties which affected the academy's reputation, they regard their teachers' commitment and passion for teaching as the factors that make a difference to their future lives.

¹ The EBacc is not a qualification but a new approach to measuring how well students achieve in a core group of academic subjects in the GCSE examinations. Students are expected to achieve grades A*-C in English, mathematics, history or geography, two sciences and a language.

- In lessons, low-level disruption is uncommon. Senior leaders have invested a lot of time in revising the process for dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Students know the steps in the code of conduct very well and have responded positively to the new challenge to 'show pride and be positive'. This has left a strong impression as they speak and live the mantra. As a result, behaviour, punctuality and attendance management are good. The percentage of students who arrive late has fallen significantly from 5.2% in autumn 2013 to 2.92% in summer term 2014, and the numbers of fixed-term exclusions have also declined. The academy has not had any permanent exclusion for several years.
- Students are safe and parents agree. Arrangements to keep students safe are good. Students understand the different forms of bullying, and discussion with them indicates that incidents, if they occur, are dealt with swiftly and thoroughly. However, they feel that issues around homophobic bullying, although covered, could be highlighted more.
- Students' attendance is average, and improving. Attendance has improved because of the emphasis on reducing persistent absence. The intensive action of the academy and multi-agency work with families is helping to increase parents' awareness of the consequences of low attendance.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Over time, the examination results achieved do not reflect good teaching in all subjects. This means that students' progress is not as good as it could be because teaching is not consistently good or better in all departments. As a result, teaching requires improvement.
- Since the last inspection, the focus on teaching has not always been aligned very well with the quality of students' learning. Leaders' and teachers' acute awareness of what contributes to effective learning has not been sharp enough. Students appreciate and acknowledge their teachers' work with them. Nevertheless, discussions with them indicate that they perceive variability in the approach teachers use to motivate them to learn. Students wish to see more consistency; for example, all lessons being well structured; all teachers having high expectations of behaviour, so they can work at full stretch. The most able students believe they could be challenged even more, instead of being asked to take responsibility for leading a group. While they welcome the opportunity to use their skills, they believe teachers do not always recognise their need for additional support. Students also wish to see teachers being more creative in their teaching instead of going through a routine. Inspectors support these views.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and have high expectations of their students' work. Recent changes mean that there is a more incisive approach to teaching quality lessons that lead to strong learning because there is pace, effective questioning, use of talk and well-selected resources to deepen students' learning.
- In most lessons seen, the learning environment promoted learning well; teachers used information on students' starting points to plan the next steps of their learning. Examination requirements were used very well to increase students' understanding of the work; there was sufficient challenge with students working through a series of difficult tasks, as seen in Year 9 mathematics lessons. Students were given opportunities to talk about their work and expectations were high. For example, in French, low attaining Year 8 students were consistently taught in the target language. In this instance, students noted they were improving because of the teacher's insistence on using the target language throughout the lesson.
- The rate of students' progress slows when: marking is not diagnostic and provides clear enough pointers for improvement; chatter affects the quality and quantity of work; explanation is not sufficient; teachers do not check understanding well; questions are not targeted and communication skills are not good enough, including the oracy skills of teachers. These relative areas of weakness are not universal but point to the variability that remains.
- Support for students in class as well as in the Learning Resource Unit is never less than good. Intensive attention to addressing needs ensures that students receiving support make good progress.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Attainment on entry is in line with the national average; however, outstanding achievement at the last inspection has not been sustained over time. In 2013, standards were broadly in line with the national average in the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics. These results were slightly lower than the previous two years and mask underperformance in some subjects. Standards continue to vary between subjects because the quality of teaching is not consistently good or better in all subjects.
- Students consistently achieve better results in English than in mathematics and, overall, in 2013, they performed strongly in physics, history, graphics, product design and French.
- Standards among different groups of students also vary from year to year. In 2013, boys achieved well, as

did low attaining students, those who are disadvantaged and those receiving additional support. As a result of senior leaders taking clear and swift action for improvement in teaching and targeting support for students, the 2014 GCSE unvalidated results did not decline overall. Subjects such as science improved significantly because issues with staffing were addressed. Groups of students, such as girls, Bangladeshi and the most able, achieved better outcomes. Nevertheless, in the recent examinations, outcomes were still not consistently high across a wide range of subjects.

- Progress in 2013 was in line with expectations overall. Progress in English is consistently good and is much better than in mathematics. The rates of students' progress were lower in science and in humanities. Minority ethnic groups achieve in line with expectations; nevertheless, some groups achieve below their peers nationally, in particular those of Bangladeshi heritage. Senior leaders are aware of the variability and lack of sustainability in most subjects and have increased accountability for students' progress. Currently, students are making better progress.
- Whereas the most able students made progress in line with expectations in 2013, the current unvalidated GCSE results indicate that they made better progress, particularly in the sciences.
- Students with special educational needs, in particular those with a statement, made good progress in comparison to those with support at school action plus whose performance was significantly lower than expected. Students supported at school action made similar progress to their peers.
- Students identified as disadvantaged were at least half a GCSE grade behind the national average in English and almost one grade behind in mathematics. However, the 2014 unvalidated GCSE results show a significant improvement in their performance, with most of these students outperforming their peers. Action to support students in the 'Aspire' unit ensures that they make good or better progress year on year.
- The academy has invested in a new assessment system to track students' progress so information on performance can be reviewed and action taken quickly.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Students make good progress and achieve examination results that are broadly in line with, or above, the national averages in both academic and vocational courses. They have made modest gains in attainment over the last three years.
- The progress of groups of all students is similar, including disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Discussion with students, a scrutiny of information on their achievement and case studies show that there are no barriers to their achievement. For example, most students who retake the GCSE English or mathematics examinations successfully progress on to more advanced level courses.
- In recent years, students have not always been placed on the most appropriate courses, but current entry requirements have been raised. Students now research a wide range of destinations, including apprenticeships and entry to Oxford and Cambridge Universities and other Russell Group universities. One student said, 'They (staff) open doors for us.'
- The very good quality care, guidance and support evident in the main school persist in the sixth form. For example, case studies indicate that mentoring is highly effective. Such work has contributed to raising the aspiration of White boys to apply to the Russell Group universities.
- The close attention given to mentoring students is reflected in the exceptionally high proportion of Year 11 students who stay on in the sixth form. Almost all students go on to higher education, employment or training. The academy's attentiveness to working with corporate organisations and the excellent careers guidance ensure that students are well prepared for the next stage of their life. This was well illustrated in a Year 13 assembly.
- Consortium arrangements are highly individualised and offer further options for students. Regular monitoring ensures that the well-being of students is secure.
- Students are regularly assessed and closely monitored to ensure they remain on track. This is well supported by an effective tutor programme.
- Students are mature and very much involved in the wider life of the academy as mentors to younger students and as prefects. They are, however, keen to take on more responsibilities.
- The leadership of the sixth form is strong. In the last academic year since taking up the appointment, the director has galvanised students and staff, raised standards and introduced a culture of high expectations and academic rigour. This has resulted in increasing their enthusiasm for their courses of study.

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	137646
Local authority	Westminster
Inspection number	449436

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1364
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	350
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patrick Lees
Headteacher	Alex Atherton
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 December 2011
Telephone number	020 7722 8141
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