

Maltings Academy

Spinks Lane, Witham, CM8 1EP

Inspection dates 4–5 March 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The Principal and other leaders and governors have pursued improvements in teaching and learning relentlessly and successfully. Students believe that they can and will achieve and understand how to do so. They approach their learning with enthusiasm, confidence and determination. Levels of achievement have risen sharply since the previous inspection.
- Students' behaviour is excellent, both within lessons and around the academy site. Relationships are characterised by mutual respect. Students feel, and are, safe and well cared for. In the words of one student, 'teachers care for and support every single one of us.' These positive relationships help ensure students work productively and with purpose in lessons.
- Teaching is highly effective. Activities are always interesting, and teachers use a variety of very effective techniques to help students develop their thinking and responses.
- Teachers' regular and precise feedback help students to meet, and often exceed, their challenging targets. However, not all students always act on the advice they receive from teachers as promptly or purposefully as they could.
- The curriculum is broad and allows students to choose courses that are a good match for their abilities and interests. Effective advice about careers and higher education help students to achieve their ambitions.
- Students make rapid and substantial progress from their different starting points, regardless of their abilities. High proportions make expected, or above expected, rates of progress in English and mathematics at GCSE.
- The gaps between the progress and attainment of disadvantaged students and that of others have reduced dramatically since the last inspection. The proportion of these students gaining A* to C grades in English was higher than that of other students nationally in 2014.
- The sixth form is good. Students' progress is increasing because of the improvements that leaders have made. The academy makes a good contribution to sixth form students' personal development. Occasionally, some sixth form teachers do not set activities that are sufficiently challenging, or as well matched to the needs and abilities of different groups of pupils, as they are where teaching is at its most effective.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 40 lessons or parts of lessons, and during tutor periods and assemblies. Inspectors observed several lessons jointly with senior leaders. They examined evidence of learning over time in a large number of students' books and files.
- Inspectors observed behaviour during lessons, break periods and as students moved around the academy site.
- Inspectors analysed academy documentation, including that relating to: attendance, exclusions, safeguarding, behaviour, the academy's systems for improving teaching and learning, records of the academy's self-evaluation and improvement planning, and details of its use of additional funding to support disadvantaged students.
- Inspectors took account of the 113 responses to the online, 'Parent View' survey in addition to the academy's own survey results of parental opinion, and the 81 responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors held discussions with the Principal, other senior and subject leaders, teaching staff, members of the governing body and academy trust, a representative of the local authority and groups of students.

Inspection team

Jason Howard, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Lucas

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gillian Larkin

Additional Inspector

Lynton Karmock-Golds

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Maltings Academy is similar in size to the average secondary school. It has a small sixth form.
- The academy is a member of the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET). It has its own Principal, senior leadership team and governing body.
- Most students are of White British heritage, with a below average proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and few whose first language is not English.
- The proportion of students who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium, (which provides additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals or are who looked after by the local authority) is broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- At present, no student at the academy attends off-site or alternative provision.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all students respond promptly to the precise and clear feedback they receive from teachers, make the necessary changes and corrections to their work and accelerate their progress.
- Ensure that all sixth form teachers plan activities that enable groups of different abilities to engage in work that is appropriately demanding, so that more students make rapid progress and gain the highest possible grades.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The Principal and leaders at all levels share the same drive and determination to improve behaviour and standards and provide equality of opportunity for all students. They fully support of the academy's declared aim of 'making our best better.' They understand the academy's strengths, and evaluate carefully the impact of work undertaken to bring about further improvement, making changes wherever necessary. Standards have risen exceptionally rapidly in all key aspects of the academy's work as a result.
- Leaders apply rigorous and robust appraisal arrangements that hold teachers accountable for the progress and attainment of the students they teach at each key stage, including in the sixth form. Difficult decisions are taken quickly where necessary. Standards of teaching are consistently high, and constantly improving, because exceptionally well-targeted training helps teachers to learn from, and apply, the most effective techniques used by their peers, and those within other schools. Staff are universally positive about the impact of this upon their work.
- Highly effective provision for disadvantaged students has sharply reduced, and in some subjects eliminated, the gaps between their rates of progress and attainment and that of others, both within the academy and nationally. This improvement has been especially evident in English and mathematics.
- Subject leaders share the high expectations of senior leaders and have secured rapid improvements. They monitor standards in their areas carefully, and have done much since the previous inspection to dramatically improve the quality of teaching and the feedback that students receive. They have ensured that virtually all subject areas are developing students' literacy and numeracy skills to high levels. Support from senior leaders has helped to raise standards considerably in several subject areas, for example within the humanities.
- The academy's curriculum is broad and balanced. Recent changes have ensured that it meets the needs of the increasingly able student body well. At Key Stage 3, the system of 'extended enterprise learning' options allows students to study a variety of additional courses, such as extended writing, finance and hair and beauty. Students can choose from a range of vocational options at GCSE and in the sixth form. Parents and students are very positive about these opportunities.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is promoted exceptionally well. Students gain a good insight into the major world religions during Key Stage 3. Teachers' planning ensures that each subject contributes to students' moral and cultural education well. GCSE history students, for example, explore the ways in which the Nazis treated minority groups, and geographers consider the morality of China's 'one child' policy. Students take part in a wide range of artistic, cultural and sporting activities. The quality of teaching within art, drama and music promotes strong cultural development.
- Students review and discuss key news stories each week during tutor time, take part in elections to the student council, and develop important values, and an understanding of key ideas and patterns of social life, that enable them to fully appreciate the diverse nature of life in modern Britain. Topics covered by the assembly programme and during 'personal development' lessons help to promote tolerance and tackle discrimination, as does the fact that staff consistently demonstrate respect in their dealings with students.
- Students receive individualised information and guidance about possible careers so that they can choose the further education or training options that will match their abilities and interests. They benefit from regular talks given by former students and local employers. In discussion with inspectors, students were clear about the careers and professions that they were interested in, and understood the qualifications, skills and personal qualities they would need in order to access them.
- The academy trust has provided training that has helped leaders and teachers improve the impact of many aspects of their work, including in English and mathematics. Senior leaders from the trust's other academies help to check standards; effective teaching techniques are shared between colleagues across trust academies and other local schools. External marking of mock examinations has helped confirm the accuracy of subject leaders' predictions about how well students will perform. Many teachers have

benefited from involvement in the Academy Trust's 'outstanding teacher' programme.

- The overwhelming majority of parents have confidence in the academy's leaders; responses to the Parent View online survey indicate that almost all would recommend the academy to another parent. The academy's own survey results indicate levels of parental satisfaction are high and have risen over time as a result of changes leaders have made.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly effective. They ask challenging questions, based on the information they receive from the academy's leaders, about the impact of teaching on students' progress. They supplement this information with regular visits, and by arranging for external checks that establish the accuracy of teachers' marking and predictions.
 - Leaders are held to account because governors use their secure understanding of the data on students' performance to check that all groups make good if not better progress, and achieve well. Appraisal arrangements ensure that teachers' pay progression is carefully linked to the progress made by those they teach. Governors challenge poor performance robustly, urgently and with impact.
 - The governing body manages the academy's financial resources well. The extensive financial expertise of individual governors' enables the governing body to ensure leaders support disadvantaged students effectively in a range of ways, including by employing additional teachers and tutors. Careful checks on the impact of such spending ensure constant improvements in the targeting of these resources.
 - Together with academy leaders, governors ensure that the academy's statutory responsibilities concerning safeguarding are met effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Students, including those in the sixth form, almost universally show a determination to learn, to make improvements to their work and to meet their challenging targets. They do not tolerate disruption because, as they explained to inspectors, 'we want to learn.'
- Disruption to learning is extremely rare. The academy encourages students to develop 'discipline with dignity' very effectively and helps ensure that relationships among students, and between students and staff are based on trust and mutual respect. Leaders and teachers reinforce their expectations calmly and respectfully; students respond accordingly. They are highly attentive within lessons and work very productively as a result.
- Students are confident, courteous and present themselves exceptionally well. They move around the academy site calmly and arrive at lessons ready to learn. Students work effectively by themselves, and with others; they are willing to share their ideas and to consider those of others carefully. Often this helps them to reflect on their work and make improvements to it.
- Students treat the academy's attractive site with respect; litter or graffiti are almost unknown. Students and staff agree that unacceptable language of any kind is very seldom heard. Parents are confident that students behave well. The academy's leaders support the few who find it difficult to manage their behaviour effectively, so that they can remain within the classroom without disturbing the learning of others.
- Attendance is ahead of the national average. Leaders have used effective strategies to reduce the absence of a small number of disadvantaged students; as a result, this group's attendance is now above the national average.
- Students make a significant contribution to the academy community in a range of ways. Many sixth form students help those in younger years to improve their work in English and mathematics, for example.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Parents agree that students are well cared for and that the academy keeps them safe. Students know who to talk to if they experience

difficulties and are confident that they will receive the support they need.

- Bullying is rare; students are aware of the different kinds of bullying and confirm that it is tackled swiftly on the very few occasions when it does occur. The academy's incident logs indicate racist incidents are exceptionally rare. Students gain an expert understanding of how to stay safe online through the work of 'e-safety champions', as well as through presentations in assemblies and during form time.
- Students behave safely when undertaking practical activities within lessons and at all other times. Good levels of adult supervision help to maintain a safe environment around the academy. Leaders ensure that teachers organising trips plan them carefully to minimise risk.
- The academy's detailed records indicate the thoroughness, and impact, of its procedures for providing support and care for students whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Leaders liaise closely with external agencies. Arrangements for checking that potential employees, visitors or volunteers pose no known risk to children are exemplary. Members of staff consistently follow the correct procedures if concerns about the welfare of any student arise.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Consistently good, and often outstanding, teaching over time in most subjects, including in reading, writing and mathematics, is enabling students to make sustained progress. The overwhelming majority of students respond well to their teachers' high expectations and to the very clear and regular advice they receive about how to improve their work. They demonstrate real enthusiasm for learning and appreciate teachers' expert subject knowledge. One student told inspectors that 'teachers here know how we learn'; her peers agreed.
- At Key Stages 3 and 4, teachers consistently plan activities based on a detailed knowledge of what students already know and can do. They use their understanding of the demands of examination syllabuses to set tasks that help students take the next steps in their learning. During a GCSE mathematics lesson, for example, this helped all students to make rapid progress in their ability to solve algebraic problems. Sixth form teaching is also good but, in a few instances, is not always as challenging as it is when at its most effective.
- Teachers check how far students are making progress, and change activities when it is clear that they should accelerate the pace of learning, or that students need to spend more time on a task. During a Key Stage 3 Spanish lesson, this helped all students in the class to develop detailed and grammatically correct descriptions of their homes.
- Teachers' expert questioning and their use of many equally effective techniques help ensure that students think deeply. In a Key Stage 3 history lesson, questioning helped students to move on from simply describing the causes of the English Civil War, to consider their relative importance and the links between them. Teachers' careful use of questioning also helps them to spot where students have gone wrong quickly, so that misconceptions are corrected and learning can continue.
- Excellent relationships within the classroom aid learning. When students are unsure about anything, they confidently ask for clarification. In a Key Stage 3 geography lesson, this helped students gain a rapid understanding of key subject specific terms, so that they could start to consider some of the implications of China's 'one child' policy.
- Other adults offer very effective support to disabled students and those who have special educational needs. They understand the improvement points that students are working towards during individual lessons, and support and challenge any who need additional help so that they make as much progress as others. Students spoke with pride about their accelerated progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Teachers mark students' work regularly and give detailed and clear written and verbal advice on how to improve it. Across all subjects, this practice has developed students' awareness to an exceptionally high level so that they know precisely how to reach the next level or grade. The majority, though not all, make

the necessary changes or corrections and move forward quickly. In many subjects, students are able to assess their own work or that of others with accuracy and precision. In a Key Stage 3 English lesson, for example, they used this ability to give each other feedback on how to improve their poetry analysis, before acting upon the advice themselves.

- Across a range of subject areas, teachers are developing students' skills of extended writing to a very high level. 'Nurture groups' help those who join the academy with literacy and numeracy skills below those expected for their age to catch up quickly. By the end of Key Stage 3, the overwhelming majority of students write with fluency and an assured command of spelling, punctuation and grammar; many use sophisticated vocabulary. They can read challenging texts and gain information from them. Teachers reinforce students' numeracy skills effectively across a range of subjects, as well as during form time.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students enter the academy with attainment that is below average, and, for some year groups, significantly so. Teachers' expectations are high, and students receive good support so that they can meet them. The proportion attaining at least five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics was above the national average in 2014. This represents outstanding progress. The academy's monitoring information and scrutiny of students' work indicate that this progress is being maintained.
- Disadvantaged students' attainment at GCSE has improved considerably. In 2012 just over a third gained at least five A* to C grades including English and mathematics; in 2014, almost half did so – above the national average for this group of students.
- The gap between the progress made by disadvantaged students and that of others at the academy and nationally has narrowed dramatically. In 2014 the proportion who made expected progress in English was ahead of others nationally; students were almost as likely to make above expected progress as others nationally. In mathematics, the proportion making expected progress was close to that of others nationally. The gap between the proportion making more than expected progress and that of others nationally narrowed significantly between 2013 and 2014.
- The gap between disadvantaged students' attainment and that of others nationally was approximately one third of a grade in both English and mathematics in 2014. In English, the gap between their attainment and that of others at the academy was approximately half a grade; in mathematics it was approximately one third of a grade. The academy's monitoring data, and inspectors' own scrutiny of current students' work, indicate that these gaps are continuing to narrow; there is little difference between the rates of progress made by disadvantaged students and that of others in most subjects.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs usually make outstanding progress from their individual starting points because of the very effective support that they receive.
- The most able students achieve well at GCSE; in 2014, the proportion who gained at least five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics was above the national average for this group. Work scrutiny indicates that, currently, this group of students is making outstanding progress because teachers help them to understand precisely how to work towards the highest grades, and set work that is sufficiently challenging in almost all subjects and areas of the academy. Extended homework tasks help to deepen these students' understanding in all subjects.
- The academy has made use of early GCSE entry in the past, entering students for English at the end of Year 10. This has not limited the achievement of the most able students. Those who perform well and complete their English qualification receive additional tuition in other subject areas during Year 11, which helps boost their performance. The overwhelming majority of those who re-take English improve their performance.
- Students read exceptionally widely, can discuss their favourite authors, and make significant gains in their reading ages, such that they are often ahead of their chronological ages. Those who join the academy with weaker literacy skills make rapid improvements. This is because of the academy's very effective use

of 'Catch-up' funding and the intensive additional support that these students receive. They also benefit greatly from the academy's highly effective daily 20 minute 'drop everything and read' sessions that all students complete.

- The quality of students' extended written work in all subjects demonstrates their ability to communicate their responses to complex questions effectively. Students are confident and highly articulate when speaking aloud in class or in other situations. This, together with their ready engagement in extra-curricular activities, helps them develop other skills and qualities that prepare them well for the next stage of their education.
- The work completed in students' books over time, and the academy's monitoring information, indicate that students work hard in lessons and are making very rapid progress across many subjects. In the lessons seen by inspectors, learning was never less than secure and was often outstanding.

The sixth form provision is good

- Leadership of the sixth form is good. The recently-appointed head of sixth form monitors standards carefully and is working effectively with subject leaders to drive forward further improvements in teaching. Regular 'file checks' help to ensure that students complete their work fully and organise their notes well. Leaders' regular checks on students' progress and the provision of additional support for those who are struggling have helped increase the proportion of students who complete their qualifications. This is now in line with the national average.
- Leaders have ensured that sixth form students can choose from a wide range of academic and vocational subjects, so that all are able to study subjects that are a good match for their interests and abilities. In the large majority of subjects, students make progress that is at least in line with the national rate from what are typically below average starting points. Students make strong progress in many vocational subjects. Gaps between the progress and achievement of disadvantaged students and others are closing.
- The academy's monitoring data indicate that the progress of current students is accelerating, and that the academy is building on the improvement in examination outcomes seen in 2015, including for those re-taking GCSE English and mathematics. This indicates the continuing good impact of teaching in the sixth form over time.
- Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subjects and most use skilful questioning and other techniques to develop students' understanding and skills. Students appreciate the individual support and guidance they receive in the small teaching groups that are typical of most classes. Teachers regularly set students past examination questions and identify gaps in students' knowledge and understanding, and offer students precise feedback about how to close these. Most students respond well and quickly make the changes.
- In some subjects, teachers do not routinely plan activities that enable all ability groups to make rapid progress. This means that some students complete work that is too easy or too difficult for them.
- Sixth form students feel, and are, safe and secure. They have a good understanding of issues relating to cyber-bullying and internet safety. Students attend well and are punctual; their behaviour is excellent, and they make a positive contribution to the academy community.
- Students speak highly of the support and guidance they receive when preparing applications for university or employment. Students' success rates are high, and disadvantaged students are as likely to apply and gain places at university as their peers.

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	135653
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	453687

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	985
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lesley Guy
Principal	John Szynal
Date of previous school inspection	05 March 2013
Telephone number	01376 512911
Fax number	01376 533511
Email address	contactus@maltingsacademy.org

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