

Malcolm Arnold Academy

Trinity Avenue, Northampton, NN2 6JW

Inspection dates 4–5 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Students' achievement is inadequate because of the inadequate diet of teaching they have received in the past. Though teaching is improving, it remains inadequate because not enough teaching is securing the rapid gains in progress needed to make up for past underachievement.
- Teachers are not equally skilled in providing work which provides the necessary support and challenge for all groups of students.
- Results in GCSE English were poor last year. Too many students did not make the progress they should have made.
- The achievement of White British boys and disadvantaged students is not rising quickly enough and the most-able students do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- The proportion of students subject to permanent exclusion has been far too high in the past two years. Too many students continue to be excluded from the academy on a temporary basis.
- Students' behaviour requires improvement. Though most students are well behaved, in some lessons low level chatter and calling out slow the pace of learning. Some students do not always arrive to the academy on time.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Achievement in A-level courses is not as good as it is in vocational subjects.
- While attendance is rising, the proportion of students who are persistently absent from the academy remains higher than average.

The school has the following strengths

- The Academy Improvement Board has improved governance. Members check students' progress rigorously, including that made by disadvantaged students. Members also make sure that there is a close link between teachers' pay and students' achievement.
- The new headteacher has quickly won the confidence of staff and students. He and his much strengthened senior team are working quickly and effectively to improve teaching. As a result, the proportion of inadequate teaching is reducing rapidly.
- The academy's work to keep students safe is good. Students of different faiths and backgrounds get on well together.
- Students benefit from a rich programme of sporting and cultural activities. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Most parents are highly supportive of the academy.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 40 lessons, five of which were seen jointly with senior leaders. They also made short visits to Year 7 and 8 enrichment activities and conducted walks around the academy during lessons and at break time to observe students' behaviour. Inspectors observed a talk to students given by an Imam from a local mosque.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives from the David Ross Educational Trust. Telephone discussions were held with staff from three centres which provide alternative education for very small numbers of Malcolm Arnold students.
- Inspectors spoke with a wide range of students in meetings, in lessons and around the academy during break times.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the academy's evaluation of its own performance, the academy improvement plan, data on students' attainment and progress, attendance and behaviour records, safeguarding procedures, evaluations of the quality of teaching and minutes of meetings of the governing body and Academy Improvement Board.
- They took account of 100 responses to Parent View and 67 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Daniel Burton, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sheelagh Barnes	Additional Inspector
William Cassell	Additional Inspector
Annetta Minard	Additional Inspector
Neil Stanley	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- The academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The academy is sponsored by the David Ross Foundation and managed by the David Ross Education Trust. It is a designated Church of England faith academy in the Diocese of Peterborough. Students are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, with the largest groups from White British, Eastern European and Bangladeshi backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is more than twice the national average and the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is much higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average. The academy hosts specially resourced provision in the form of a centre for up to 14 students whose hearing is impaired. These students receive teaching in a designated unit and in lessons in the main school.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is average. This additional government funding is for students in the care of the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- A very small number of students receive some of their education externally to the academy. These students are undertaking various vocational courses at Cromwell Academy, Rushmore Academy or Gateway School.
- Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in staffing, including at senior leadership level. The headteacher took up his post in September 2014 and since January 2015 has taken on full responsibility for leading the academy, following the departure of the Executive Principal. Two new deputy headteachers have also joined the school this year. One of them is currently on a part time secondment from another school and will join the academy on a full-time contract from September 2015. The academy receives weekly support from two advisers from the academy trust.
- The academy does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment in English and mathematics.
- The academy meets the government's 16-19 interim minimum standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment in academic and vocational qualifications in the sixth form.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in English and across the academy so that students' make the rapid progress needed to make up for past underachievement, by:
 - eliminating the remaining teaching which is inadequate or requires improvement
 - ensuring that all teachers make use of their knowledge of students' capabilities to provide work which is appropriately challenging for all groups of students, especially the most-able students
 - improving teachers' skills in supporting the learning of students who speak English as an additional language, disabled students and those who have special educational needs and monitoring this aspect of teaching closely so that further improvements can be identified and acted on strengthening teachers' questioning skills so that questioning so that the use of these makes students think hard and engages the whole class
 - continuing to monitor the quality of marking and feedback so that remaining weaker practice is rapidly addressed.
- Raise the achievement of boys from White British backgrounds and disadvantaged students in English and

mathematics by ensuring all teachers take swift action to support any students who are underachieving.

- Increase the achievement of the most-able students across the curriculum and particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that work is always challenging enough and that their achievement is not compromised by early or repeated entry to examinations.
- Reduce the proportion of fixed term exclusions and maintain the large decrease in the proportion of students permanently excluded, including students who are disadvantaged, disabled or who have special educational needs.
- Continue to reduce the proportion of students who are persistently absent from the academy to be in line with or better than the national average.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- While this academy has serious weaknesses, actions taken by trustees to strengthen the leadership of the academy, including governance, are having a clear impact in raising the quality of education it provides. Recent improvements to the quality of teaching, attendance and students' behaviour clearly demonstrate that the academy's leadership now has the capacity to raise standards quickly.
- The headteacher has made very effective use of the short time he has been in sole charge of the academy. He has quickly won the support of staff, students and parents who appreciate his openness, willingness to listen and sound judgement. All 67 staff who completed the Ofsted questionnaire judge that the academy is now well led. Staff share the headteachers' determination for the academy to improve quickly. Staff morale has improved, despite the headteacher restricting teachers' pay rises this year because of the poor GCSE results. The appointment of two experienced and capable deputy headteachers has added strength and expertise to the academy's senior leadership.
- The quality of middle leadership is improving quickly and middle leaders are having an increasing impact in raising students' achievement. Effective training has helped to strengthen their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their departments and how these should be addressed.
- Academy leaders know that the use of pupil premium funding has not had enough impact in raising the achievement of disadvantaged students. A thorough internal review by a representative from the academy's trust has accurately identified how this additional funding should be used to have the best possible effect in raising the achievement of disadvantaged students. It is too early to assess the impact of these changes.
- The academy has not been effective enough in promoting equality of opportunity. A disproportionate number of disadvantaged students have been excluded permanently from the academy since the last inspection. The academy is now addressing this weakness and the proportion of students permanently excluded is reducing, with no groups unequally represented.
- The academy's leadership team know that the curriculum has not been effective enough in securing good achievement. Improvements have already been made to provide better support for students who have fallen behind in English through small-group teaching, including by external examiners. From September, the academy will return to three year Key Stage 3 courses, having recognised that its previous practice of beginning GCSE courses at the start of Year 9 has not given students enough time to secure their basic skills.
- The academy is now receiving very effective and regular support from expert specialist advisers from the academy trust, including leaders with proven experience in improving other schools in the trust. The headteacher and advisers from the trust work seamlessly together in their drive to raise standards.
- The recent but rapid improvements to the academy are underpinned by unflinching self-evaluation. Leaders and managers have identified where the academy's work is inadequate. They have taken swift action to address the weakest teaching.
- The range and take-up of extra-curricular activities is a real strength of the academy. Year 7 and 8 students benefit from the rich variety of sporting, cultural and academic activities provided as a regular part of their education, and participation rates among older students are good.
- The academy has a strong understanding of its duty to prepare students for life in modern Britain and ensures the curriculum promotes the values of tolerance and respect well. Students of all faiths and backgrounds get on well together as a result of their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- Sound careers advice is given to students which ensures that those who choose to leave the academy at the end of Year 11 find appropriate places in further education or training.

■ The governance of the school:

- The education committee of the governing body has been replaced by an Academy Improvement Board, chaired by the Director for the Trust. This expert team has an accurate view of the academy's strengths and weaknesses, including of the quality of teaching.
- Board members make rigorous and regular checks on students' achievement, including the progress that different groups of students are making, and hold academy leaders to account. Board members have strengthened their management of the performance of staff and so make sure that salary progression is closely linked to students' progress and achievement.
- There is a careful oversight of finances and resources, including how additional funding is spent to support disadvantaged students.
- Safeguarding procedures meet legal requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In the past two years, far too many students have been permanently excluded from the academy. This has included disadvantaged and disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Since September, 2014, however, only two students have been permanently excluded, which is a significant improvement.
- In the past, far too many students have also been excluded for short periods of time. While numbers remain higher than they should be, they are now reducing as a result of improved arrangements to support students who need help managing their behaviour.
- The behaviour seen during the inspection was often very good, particularly when the teaching was strong. However, in other, less effective lessons, too much chatter and calling out by a small number of students too frequently disrupted the learning of the rest of the class.
- Students who spoke with inspectors were generally in agreement that behaviour in lessons varies according to which teacher they have. However, they all agreed that behaviour has improved this year under the leadership of the current headteacher. Staff report that behaviour is quickly improving.
- Most students conduct themselves well between lessons and at break and lunchtime, heading off purposefully to lessons to make sure they are on time. However, a small number of students take advantage of the busy changeover times and do not arrive to lessons on time.
- Punctuality to the academy is improving, particularly in Key Stage 3, but a significant minority of students do not always arrive to the academy on time, including some sixth form students.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. This includes the very small number of students who receive part of their education elsewhere. Systems for checking the credentials of staff and visitors are robust and safeguarding procedures are regularly reviewed.
- All of the students who spoke with inspectors, including students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable, said they feel safe in school. Students who receive additional support in the designated special provision reported unanimously that they feel safe in the academy. Students who join the academy part way through their secondary education, including from other countries, say they are made to feel safe and very welcome as soon as they arrive. They appreciate the systems in place to support them as they get used to the academy's routines. A few students reported that they feel uncomfortable when other students from overseas occasionally use derogatory language towards each other.

- Students' attendance, which has been consistently below average, is improving and is now close to average. The proportion of students who are persistently absent is reducing, but remains too high. The recent appointment of a member of staff to work with students who do not come to the academy often enough is helping to raise attendance. Attendance in the sixth form is slightly lower than attendance in other year groups.
- School leaders ensure students' understand how to stay safe and respond creatively and quickly to emerging national priorities. For example, they have ensured that teenage girls are alert to the risks of child sexual exploitation and are working with a local Imam to help protect other students from the dangers of extremism and radicalisation.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- As a result of weak teaching over time, too many students have made inadequate progress from their different starting points. Although there is more good teaching than before, not enough lessons secure the good progress necessary to make up for students' past underachievement.
- Too many lessons and sequences of lessons do not take sufficient account of students' starting points. As a result, the work does not always provide the right level of challenge.
- In some lessons, students are allowed to choose the level of work for themselves. When this is managed poorly, students make ill-informed choices, sometimes selecting work that is either too hard or too difficult for them.
- Not all teachers are effective in providing the necessary support and challenge for disabled students and those who have special educational needs or for those who speak English as an additional language.
- Not enough teachers use questioning well enough to challenge and engage the whole class. In some lessons, the questions asked of students are too simplistic to contribute to significant gains in learning.
- Strategies to improve marking are having a clear impact in raising achievement. Students say the new 'green sticker' system is working well, particularly where teachers provide additional work to help them build on the gains made in previous work. Where marking is less effective, teachers' written advice is not precise enough to help students improve their work. Not enough marking focuses on strengthening students' skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar and in how to present written work well.
- The proportion of inadequate teaching is reducing quickly as a result of bespoke training for teachers who need extra support underpinned by robust leadership and much-improved systems for managing the performance of staff.
- Much more stable staffing than before, including a much higher proportion of specialist staff, is quickly improving the quality of teaching in English, though some English teaching requires improvement. Teaching in the sixth form is more consistently good than in the rest of the academy.

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Achievement is inadequate as a result of weak teaching and poor leadership. Although there are clear signs of improvement, achievement by the end of Key Stage 4 has been consistently poor for White British boys and disadvantaged students and has not improved quickly enough. There remains too much variation in the achievement of different groups across subjects and years.
- Last year's GCSE English results were extremely poor, with only 40% of students attaining grades A* to C. The proportion of students who made the expected gains from almost all starting points in English was well below the proportion seen nationally. New leadership in English, effective external support, a changed curriculum and better teaching are starting to help those who have fallen behind catch up. Students currently in Key Stage 4 are doing much better than those at the same stage at this time last year in

English. Academy data, underpinned by external moderation, indicates that students are set to achieve well in their final examinations. Students in Key Stage 3 English are still well behind where they should be.

- In mathematics, the proportion of students who made and exceeded the progress expected was just below the national average last year. The lowest attaining students made good progress. However, standards remained low because not enough middle ability disadvantaged students made enough progress and not enough of the most able students attained the highest grades. Current students in these groups are doing better than before, including in Key Stage 3.
- Many of last year's Year 11 students took their mathematics GCSE at the end of Year 10. While this enabled some students to secure the C grade they were aiming for, not enough of the most able students secured the highest grades at GCSE. Repeated entry at the end of Year 11 had little impact in raising attainment overall.
- In 2014 disadvantaged students attained less well than others in the academy. The decline in English results meant that gap between the academy's disadvantaged students and other students nationally widened to over a whole GCSE grade. The gap between disadvantaged students and their peers narrowed but this was due to the general drop in attainment in the academy overall. In mathematics, the gap between the disadvantaged students and other students in the academy was one-third of a GCSE grade. The gap in attainment between the disadvantaged students in mathematics and other students nationally widened and was a whole GCSE grade. Gaps are now narrowing but not quickly enough.
- Students who receive additional support make good progress when taught by specialists or in small groups. For example, students who speak English as an additional language make good gains in learning English through specialist tuition. Similarly, disabled students and those who have special educational needs, including those whose hearing is impaired, make good progress when taught by specialists. However, like other students in the academy their progress across the curriculum varies according to the quality of teaching they receive.
- The most-able students did not do well enough at GCSE last year and the academy's tracking data for current students shows that their achievement remains too variable. This is also the case for boys from White British backgrounds.
- The very small number of students who receive part of their education elsewhere make good progress in their vocational studies. Effective management of the curriculum now ensures that these students do not miss out on teaching in English and mathematics.
- Achievement in the sixth form is more consistent than in the main school and for some students and in some subjects is good. However, it requires improvement overall because the good progress seen in some of the vocational courses is not consistently matched across all A level subjects.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- Students' achievement in the sixth form is better than in the main school. This is because teaching is more consistent and the curriculum is generally well matched to students' needs. However, achievement in the sixth form requires improvement because students do not consistently make good progress across all subjects.
- Students' achievement in vocational qualifications is better than in academic courses. Achievement in information technology, business studies and public services is consistently strong. While achievement in some A level subjects, such as sociology, is consistently good, it is more variable in other subjects, for example in Art and Design.
- The achievement of students who are retaking GCSE English in the sixth form is mixed. Currently, about half of the 25 students retaking this qualification are on track to secure a grade C or above.
- Sixth form studies are punctuated by a small range of non-qualification activities which support students'

achievement and their career aspirations. All students who left the sixth form at the end of Year 13 last year secured places in higher education, training or employment.

- Students apply themselves well in lessons and most work conscientiously in private study. They take on a number of leadership positions within academy, for example in sports coaching and academic mentoring.
- The academy's work to keep sixth form students safe is good. Students are well-informed about how to manage risks such as those associated with social networking. Attendance in the sixth form is improving but remains lower than in the rest of the academy.
- New leadership arrangements in the sixth form have strengthened its capacity to improve. As in the rest of the academy, sixth form leaders have an acute understanding of what needs to improve and how to do it.

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	136201
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	461244

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1301
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Hayes
Headteacher	Chris Steed
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2012
Telephone number	01604 778000
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