

Kettering Science Academy

Deeble Road, Kettering, NN15 7AA

Inspection dates 12–13 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2
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

- Not enough pupils make good progress across the key stages and subjects. The most-able pupils do not always reach the higher levels and grades of which they are capable.
- Too few pupils gain five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including in English and mathematics. In the primary phase, attainment in writing is lower than in reading and mathematics.
- Teaching over time has been inconsistent. Work given to pupils does not always take into account what they already know and can do.
- Occasionally, the feedback given to pupils does not make it clear what they need to do to improve their work.
- Pupils do not always complete a sufficient quantity of good-quality work. Sometimes, the homework set makes little contribution to pupils' learning, as it is too easy.
- A few pupils are not fully attentive when the work does not engage them. On these occasions, they disturb the learning of their classmates.
- Not all parents feel that the academy keeps them informed enough about on-going changes. Some feel it does not respond quickly enough to their concerns.
- Although students otherwise feel safe at the academy, a small number say they are not confident that adults would deal with any worries they might have.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, including governors and the academy trust's leaders, have taken action that is transforming the school. They have improved the quality of teaching and are raising attainment. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. The new leader has ensured that they are taught well in a stimulating environment.
- The sixth form has improved and is now good. Leaders ensure that students are taught well and make good progress. They are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- Pupils' progress is improving at all key stages, especially in mathematics. The proportion of current Year 6 pupils making good progress in all subjects from their starting points in Year 3 is now similar to that found nationally.
- A higher proportion of Year 11 students are on track to achieve five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, than in previous years.
- Attendance has improved and there are fewer exclusions.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout all parts of the school. Some of these observations were made jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors looked closely at the work in pupils' books to inform further the judgements made about pupils' progress, attainment and the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors met with five groups of pupils, including sixth form students, and spoke informally to other pupils in lessons and during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with academy leaders, with the Chair and another member of the Local Governing Body, and with the Chief Executive and three representatives of the Brooke Weston Trust.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation such as that relating to pupils' achievement and progress, the academy's development plans, information about how teachers' performance is managed, and minutes of governing body meetings. They also looked at records and documentation about pupils' behaviour and attendance and the ways in which the academy keeps pupils safe.
- Inspectors considered the 82 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also received emails and telephone calls from a few parents and spoke to others at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors also took into account the 122 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- During the inspection, inspectors did not observe lessons in Year 6 as pupils were taking their end-of-key-stage assessments.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Ronald Munson	Additional Inspector
Sue Child	Additional Inspector
Margaret Jones	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Needham	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Kettering Science Academy is a much larger than the average-sized all-through school.
- The academy is part of the Brooke Weston Trust, which is a sponsoring chain of academy schools. The academy principal primarily leads the secondary phase; the headteacher is responsible for leading the primary phase.
- The early years provision comprises of two part-time Nursery classes for three-year-olds and two full-time Reception classes for four-year-olds.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and looked-after children) is average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well below average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6 and the end of Year 11.
- A small number of secondary pupils experiencing behavioural and emotional difficulties or who have special educational needs attend alternative provision at: London Road Academy, Kettering; Torch Academy, Northamptonshire; Youth Works, Northamptonshire; or Moulton College, Northamptonshire.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a large turnover of teaching staff. In addition, the majority of senior and many subject and other leaders are new, many taking up their posts in September 2014 and a few in the spring term.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils make consistently good or better progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers use the information that they have on pupils' achievement to set them work that supports and challenges them to achieve their best, especially the most able
 - work is always engaging and well planned so pupils are interested, attentive, concentrate and behave well
 - pupils are expected to complete a good quantity of high-quality work
 - feedback always make it clear to pupils what they need to do to improve their work and teachers check that pupils act on their advice
 - homework activities are not too easy and so extend pupils' knowledge and deepen their understanding
 - pupils in the primary phase have more opportunities to apply their spelling, punctuation and grammatical skills and write for a wide range of purposes.
- Improve communication with parents and students so that academy leaders always respond to parents' and students' concerns in a timely fashion, and so that parents fully understand what leaders are doing in their drive to improve the academy.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The principal, headteacher and all other leaders, including the local governing body, are transforming the culture and ethos of the academy. They have focused sharply on improving the quality of teaching, with much success so that it is improving rapidly. A comprehensive training and support programme and robust systems for holding all teachers to account for the progress of their pupils, have improved teachers' effectiveness. Consequently, pupils' achievement is improving at a fast rate across the academy, and the early years and sixth-form provision are now good.
- There has been a highly effective and uncompromising approach to improving behaviour on the secondary school site since the start of the autumn term. Staff now feel more equipped to deal with poor behaviour owing to the new policy and procedures. Pupils know that high levels of disruptive or inappropriate behaviour will lead to serious consequences. As a result, exclusions have decreased markedly since the early part of the autumn term and there are fewer incidents of low-level disruption in lessons.
- Leaders have good systems in place to help them check on the progress, attitudes and behaviour of every pupil. The information is used well by leaders. For instance, in the primary phase, leaders identified a heightened number of behaviour incidents at a certain point in the morning. As a result, leaders changed the organisation of the day and this led to a notable improvement.
- Leaders do not tolerate any form of discrimination. All pupils have equal access to all aspects of academy life. Pupils not meeting their targets are given additional support to help them improve. In this way, leaders make sure that every pupil has an equal opportunity to succeed.
- Subject, phase, pastoral and special educational needs leaders are driving up effectively the quality of teaching and achievement, as well as improving attendance and pupils' behaviour across the academy. These leaders benefit greatly from sharing best practice and from the many training opportunities provided by the trust. They check on the work of their colleagues regularly and provide them with good support and training.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to support the learning and progress of disadvantaged pupils. As a result, the gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers at the end of key stages are narrowing.
- The primary physical education and sport premium is used effectively so that the quality of physical education is now good. External sporting specialists lead activities for all pupils each week. All primary pupils participate in a range of physical activities such as tag rugby and Zumba. This contributes well to their improved skills and to their fitness and well-being.
- Leaders' monitoring of pupils attending alternative provision is good. They receive daily information on pupils' attendance and regular reports on their progress and behaviour. They liaise frequently with staff at these provisions. As a result, these pupils succeed and gain accreditation on programmes of study that are well-suited to their needs.
- Leaders have made good improvements to the curriculum across the school. In the primary phase, leaders have successfully introduced the new National Curriculum. It is giving pupils many memorable experiences and improving their learning, especially in mathematics. There are not enough opportunities however, for them to apply their spelling, punctuation and grammatical skills and write for a wide range of purposes.
- Leaders have reviewed the secondary curriculum with the result that many more students are pursuing GCSE qualifications than was previously the case. This is giving them a stronger base for continuing into more academic post-16 courses. Leaders and teachers have also begun planning for the forthcoming introduction of the new GCSE courses. These developments are helping to raise pupils' academic standards.
- Leaders carried out an audit of how British values are promoted across the academy and subjects. They

are using the findings to broaden further the academy's work to ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is being well-promoted and that pupils are fully prepared for their future lives in modern Britain. For example, inspectors observed an assembly in Year 1 where pupils discussed why it is wrong to hurt each other's feelings. In the secondary phase, assembly topics include tackling bullying and extremism. Pupils across the academy raise funds for a range of charities, learn musical instruments, visit art galleries and the theatre, and go on residential trips in this country and abroad. A few pupils, however, have not yet fully understood the need to show their classmates and teachers due respect by not interrupting learning during their lessons.

- Careers education and advice are taught from Year 8 upwards and contribute well to pupils' preparation for the next stages in their education and life. The academy employs an impartial external provider to ensure that all pupils are well informed about the range of options on offer and are helped to choose courses suitable to their interests and aptitudes.
- The academy trust provides very effective support to the academy and makes a very strong contribution to the academy's ongoing improvements. It checks closely all aspects of the work of the academy and holds leaders to account. It provides good-quality training for leaders, teachers and local governors. It has contributed to the introduction of the new curriculum elements that have helped to raise standards.
- Leaders ensure that safeguarding and child protection policies and practices meet current requirements and are effective and that staff know what to do if they have any concerns.
- Since the previous inspection, the academy has worked closely with parents to help them support their children's learning. This includes workshops in the primary phase to help parents understand how to support their children's learning of phonics (letters linked to sounds) and mathematics. In the secondary phase, meetings to review their children's progress and targets are now extremely well attended by parents. As a result of a recent consultation with parents, written reports on their children's progress are now more detailed and easy to understand.
- A small number of the parents who communicated with inspectors expressed concerns that they are not always kept well informed about changes in the academy, especially when their child's teacher changes mid-year. Others say that when they have raised concerns, response times have been slow or telephone messages not responded to. Inspection evidence confirms that this has been the case in a few instances.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The very effective group of local governors bring a range of expertise to the board, including in education and business. They work closely with the academy trust to check all aspects of the academy's work and to hold leaders to account for improving all aspects of the academy's work.
 - Governors have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress across the academy. This is because they are well trained in scrutinising performance information. They make good use of external support, their own visits to classes and discussions with staff and pupils to help them evaluate the accuracy of academy leaders' views of the quality of teaching and progress. They challenge and support the principal, headteacher and other leaders effectively.
 - Robust appraisal systems are in place and aspirational performance targets are set for leaders and staff to improve the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and their behaviour. Governors make it clear that teachers and leaders should only be considered for salary increments based firmly on their performance. They know what to do to challenge any underperformance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. A small minority of students, mainly in the secondary phase, are inattentive when the teaching is not sufficiently engaging. This results in some low-level disruption. At times, this prevents others from learning.
- Some secondary students feel that the current policy of having to stay indoors during break and lunchtime can lead to boisterous behaviour. The academy's records show that, since the introduction of the new

behaviour policy in the autumn, patterns of reported poor behaviour are reducing at a very steady pace but there is still some way to go to completely eradicate all inappropriate behaviour.

- Cases of extremely poor behaviour are now very rare. As a result, the number of exclusions has reduced markedly since the middle of the autumn term. Leaders now identify early any pupils at risk of exclusion. Staff give these pupils additional personal help and this helps them to modify their behaviour appropriately.
- Inspectors saw pupils generally behaving well around the academy and in the dining hall. The vast majority of pupils are polite, respectful and welcoming. Pupils wear their uniform with pride, as do students in the sixth form, where the dress code is business-like. The academy is virtually free of litter.
- Overall attendance is increasing and is now close to average. This is because leaders are working effectively with external agencies, parents and carers to make sure that all pupils attend school regularly.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. A few students, predominantly in the secondary phase, told inspectors that they do not always feel able to confide in an adult if they have a concern, as they feel that staff are slow to take action. This is based primarily on their experiences in the past. A very small number of parents who communicated with inspectors raised similar concerns about a slow response when they have contacted the academy. Leaders are aware of these concerns. They have already begun the process of recruiting additional staff with specific responsibilities to work with students and their parents and to address any concerns in a more timely fashion.
- Pupils are aware of the various types of bullying and the academy is effective in helping pupils to understand and respond to risk appropriately. Inspectors observed a tutor session, for instance, where pupils were discussing the dangers of extremism.
- Leaders are well aware of the range of potential safeguarding issues in the academy and wider community. They have good vetting procedures in place. They ensure that all staff are trained to identify anyone at potential risk, including from child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. The academy site is safe and secure.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils on courses away from the academy are good. This is because those pupils on part-time courses travel together by transport provided by the academy, accompanied by a member of the academy's staff. The various provisions also specialise in helping pupils who find it challenging to behave well to modify their behaviours. This helps them to become successful learners.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good enough across different subjects to fully eradicate a legacy of past underachievement and to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve well, including in literacy, reading and mathematics.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have much information on each pupil's progress. Some do not, however, use the information sharply enough to ensure that they plan and set activities that support those needing additional help or are difficult enough to make the most able think deeply. This slows learning, and in a few instances, leads to some inattentiveness and low-level disruption.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough. As a result, in a few cases, pupils work too slowly and their teachers accept work of a low standard.
- All teachers regularly mark pupils' books. However, the feedback given does not always make it clear to pupils what they need to do to improve their work. Even when they are given clear guidance for improvement, teachers do not routinely check that all pupils act upon this advice.

- The homework that some teachers set makes little contribution to improving pupils' learning. It is sometimes too easy. Where teaching is more effective, pupils are given activities that extend their knowledge and deepen their understanding. A few pupils expressed well-founded concerns to inspectors that their homework is not always marked.
- The teaching of writing requires improvement at Key Stage 1 and in some classes at Key Stage 2. This is because teachers have not developed well enough pupils' skills in the correct use of grammar, punctuation and spelling. In addition, the opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and audiences have been too narrow. Leaders have identified these shortcomings and provided training for teachers, as well as adapting the curriculum so that there are more varied opportunities for writing. It is too early to judge the impact of these recent developments.
- The quality of teaching of science is variable across the key stages. As a result, the progress made and standards reached at the end of Year 11 in the various course options range from low to well-above average.
- The teaching of English in the secondary phase requires improvement as too many of the most-able students are not challenged enough to make good progress.
- The teaching of reading is improving at a good rate and is now good in the early years, Key Stage 1 and Years 4 and 6. Teachers and teaching assistants have recently received high-quality training, and a new scheme for teaching phonics (the sounds that letters make) is raising standards, especially in the early years and Key Stage 1. Right from the start, children in the early years are helped to develop a love of books and reading. Teachers are using more appropriate texts for teaching reading and there is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' inference and comprehension skills. Reading at home is actively encouraged and teaching assistants provide additional help for those pupils experiencing difficulties.
- The teaching of mathematics has markedly improved across the academy. In the primary phase, leaders plan many opportunities for pupils to solve problems in real-life situations. Pupils have responded enthusiastically and are now making good progress across the primary phase. In the secondary phase, the mathematics leader has led the team in improving the quality of their teaching. As a result, many more students in Key Stages 3 and 4 are now making good progress.
- The work in current pupils' books, folders and 'learning journeys' indicates that the quality of teaching is better than it has been in the past, especially in the sixth form and early years, where teaching is now consistently good.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement as not enough pupils across the key stages and subjects make consistently good progress, including in English and mathematics.
- Over time, pupils have started Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 with standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are well below national averages.
- In the Year 2 tests in 2014, the standards reached in reading and mathematics were below average, although this represented a small improvement on the previous year. In writing, standards continued to be well below average. Current Year 2 pupils are making good progress in mathematics. Progress in reading and writing, though, is slower.
- Current progress across Key Stage 2 varies across the subjects and year groups and requires improvement.
- In the Year 6 tests in 2014, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics combined increased considerably from the previous year and was broadly average. However, the proportion attaining higher levels was well below average. Progress across the key stage in reading

and mathematics was average but, for writing, it was below average. Pupils in the current Year 6 are expected to attain slightly lower standards. They started Year 3, however, with exceptionally low attainment and so this represents good progress for them over their time in Key Stage 2.

- In 2014, the proportion of pupils in Year 11 who gained five or more good GCSE grades, including in English and mathematics, was well below average. This was a decline on the previous year, mainly owing to the much lower standards attained in mathematics. Progress made in pupils' overall best eight subjects was very low. Attainment was above average in business studies, religious studies and media. Attainment in English was broadly average.
- Attainment in the range of science options was variable. In additional and separate sciences, attainment was well below average, as students made slow progress from their starting points. In science entries that qualified for Ebacc, both attainment and progress were average. The majority of students in the cohort were entered for applied science. Students on this course made good progress to reach above-average standards. Differences across the science courses are a result of the variability of the quality of teaching in science.
- Inspection evidence confirms the academy's view that progress in mathematics has improved considerably and is now broadly average. Year 11 pupils are on track to reach higher standards overall as they are making faster progress in most subjects. However, not all pupils have yet made up ground lost previously, and so their progress from Key Stage 2 to 4 requires further improvement.
- The most-able students do not achieve well enough. Too few reach the higher levels at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 and the highest grades at GCSE. This is because teachers' expectations of what they can achieve are not always high enough. Consequently, teachers do not always plan and set work that is demanding enough to help them attain the higher standards of which they are capable.
- In 2014, disadvantaged Year 11 students were two grades behind their classmates, and two-and-a-quarter grades behind other students nationally in both English and mathematics. In Year 6, disadvantaged pupils' attainment in reading was similar to their classmates and other pupils nationally. In writing they were about two months behind their classmates and two terms behind other pupils nationally. In mathematics, they were four months behind their classmates and two terms behind other pupils nationally. However, across all key stages, disadvantaged pupils within the academy are now making notably faster progress and gaps in attainment are narrowing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. Their progress is accelerating because of the improvements in teaching but it is not yet good. In the past, the academy has not always provided effectively for these pupils' specific learning needs, but work and resources are now more effectively tailored to meet these.
- Additional teaching funded by the Year 7 'catch-up' premium is helping low-attaining pupils in the secondary phase to catch up with their peers in mathematics and in reading at a fast rate.
- The academy no longer enters students early for GCSE examinations. This is so that they have the opportunity to study for the full duration of Year 11 to attain their best possible grades.
- The students studying a range of qualifications off-site learn well, as the courses are well suited to their particular needs and interests.
- Children join the early years with skills that are below those typical for their age in language and communication, mathematics and social skills. They are making good progress in all areas of learning.
- In the 2014 Year 1 national phonics screening check, a broadly average proportion of pupils reached the expected standard. This represented good progress in relation to the pupils' starting points.
- Students join the academy's sixth form with below-average GCSE standards. They are making good progress in both Years 12 and 13 and are on track to reach a high pass rate.

The early years provision**is good**

- The new early years leader is providing good leadership. She has quickly brought about major improvements in the quality of the early years provision. Accurate self-evaluation and improvement planning have ensured rapid progress. The curriculum has been revamped, as have the indoor and outdoor areas. In this stimulating environment, and with many exciting learning opportunities, all groups of children are thriving.
- Children join the early years with skills that are below those typical for their age in language and communication, mathematics and social skills. Ongoing assessments of children's achievement are thorough and are shared with their parents. The information gathered informs subsequent planning for each child to extend their skills. With the good-quality teaching and support they receive, children are making good progress in all areas of learning.
- The introduction of a daily 'Big Talk' activity, where children are encouraged to discuss characters in books, is having a marked impact on improving children's communication and thinking skills. Well-planned cross-curricular activities and visits, such as going on a steam train, capture children's imagination. Teachers use these activities as a springboard for conversation, further reading, writing and mathematics, as well as for collaborative play. As a result, the proportion of children, who are on track to leave the Reception Year with a good level of development, and well prepared for entry into Year 1, is much higher than in previous years and getting closer to that seen nationally.
- Children are well cared for and work in a safe environment. They behave well and learn to share and work together, such as in building 'Thomas the Tank Engine'. They also learn about other cultures, such as the Chinese New Year. Children gain in self-confidence, learn to respect others and understand how to stay healthy. As a result, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

The sixth form provision**is good**

- Good and determined leadership of the sixth form has ensured that the quality of teaching, students' behaviour and achievement have improved and are now good. This is because the leader knows the strengths and what needs improving, and quickly acts on her findings to secure rapid improvements in this safe learning environment.
- Leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and students' progress to ensure that students of all abilities are supported and challenged to achieve their best. Students say that teachers care about them and readily respond to their requests for help, including by email outside of normal school hours. Students value highly the one-to-one mentoring that they receive from their tutors. Evidence in students' books and folders shows that teachers give students helpful guidance on how to improve their work and that students are now making good progress.
- Students join the academy's sixth form with below-average GCSE standards. In 2014, overall progress for Year 13 was below average and for Year 12 broadly in line with that expected nationally. Attainment and rates of progress in science subjects was broadly average in Years 12 and 13, except for biology in Year 12, where attainment was well above average. In 2014, all Year 12 students continued into Year 13. They have built on their successes well. Academy information and inspection evidence shows these students are on track for a high pass rate, with a higher proportion than ever attaining A* to B grades.
- Students now make good progress because teaching has improved across all subjects, and the work and support are well tailored to challenge them to achieve even more. Students who join the sixth form without a good GCSE pass in English or mathematics are taught well and supported to retake the GCSE examination. Most are successful. This means they are better set up for their choices for the next stages of their lives.
- Students' behaviour is good. Their attitudes to learning are good. They attend regularly and are punctual to the academy and lessons. All students take a leadership role on a committee to help the academy or the broader community. These activities, combined with topics covered in tutorials and work experience, help to develop students' employability skills and other important skills for life after they leave the academy.

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	135967
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	461995

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1585
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	121
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Barton
Headteacher	Paul Davies (Secondary Phase Principal) and Jo Fallowell (Primary Phase Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	18 September 2013
Telephone number	01536 532700
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