

Malcolm Arnold Academy

Trinity Avenue, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN2 6JW

Inspection dates

24–25 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Despite important improvements since the last inspection, the quality of teaching in some subjects and key stages is still inconsistent.
- In recent years the attainment and progress of pupils in a number of subjects has been too low.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do, particularly at key stage 3, are not always high enough. Consequently, pupils are not challenged to achieve as well as they could.
- Not all pupils display high standards of conduct in lessons and around school. Teachers do not apply the behaviour policy consistently.
- The information, advice and guidance given to pupils are not effective in helping them to make decisions about the next steps in their education, training and employment.
- The systems to track and monitor pupils' progress at 16 to 19 are not sharp enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress.
- Not all leaders know whether the work that they are doing is helping to improve pupils' outcomes.
- Not all teachers use assessment information about pupils to plan learning that is at the right level.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher is held in high regard by staff, parents and pupils. A culture of high aspirations is developing and pupils' outcomes are improving.
- Leaders have taken prompt action to tackle underperformance in English and as a result the quality of teaching and progress in this subject has improved.
- Governors know the school well and provide a good level of support and challenge to leaders.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport and music, which broaden pupils' experiences.
- The support provided for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is strong and enables them to make good progress.
- Work done to keep pupils safe online has been highly effective and is valued by pupils.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - eradicating the inconsistencies in teaching quality, particularly at key stage 3
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations for what pupils can achieve and provide them with work that is appropriately challenging
 - making sure that all teachers use information about pupils to provide work that is at the right level.

- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - reducing the amount of low-level disruption that remains in some classes
 - making sure that all teachers use the new behaviour system consistently across the school
 - improving the provision of impartial careers advice and guidance to pupils in Years 8 to 11, as well as in the sixth form.

- Improve outcomes by ensuring that:
 - pupils' attainment and progress at key stage 4 and key stage 5 continues to improve and meets national expectations
 - more pupils exceed national expectation across all subjects.

- Improve the quality of 16 to 19 provision by:
 - providing better careers information, advice and guidance for students so that they are prepared well for progression to the next stage of their education, training or employment
 - improving the progress made by students in the sixth form, by monitoring and tracking their progress more robustly and using this information to structure learning effectively.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels monitor and evaluate the impact of their work to raise standards.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the quality of teaching and achievement is not consistently good in all subjects and all key stages.
- Not all leaders have developed a clear strategic overview of the areas they lead, or know which actions are having an impact. This has slowed the rate of improvement across the school in some areas.
- Leaders have improved monitoring and tracking systems of pupils' performance and have trained staff in how to use this information to help plan pupils' learning more effectively. Teachers do not use the new system consistently well. In key stage 3 in particular, the low expectations and poor planning do not meet pupils' needs or provide sufficient challenge for all learners.
- Leaders have used additional funding to provide pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds with a range of extra activities and pastoral support. These measures are helping to improve their attendance. However, leaders do not monitor the impact of interventions on pupils' progress to ensure that achievement gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers continue to narrow.
- In recent years, predictions about pupils' attainment and progress have not been accurate. Leaders have now implemented much more rigorous systems for checking the accuracy of performance information. The David Ross Education Trust has supported the school in this by providing access to external moderation and examination markers. As a result, leaders and governors are now more confident in current predictions, which show continued improvement in English and mathematics.
- The additional funding intended to help Year 7 pupils who did not achieve a level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of key stage 2 has been spent on extra help for these pupils. There has been some improvement in their skills in English and mathematics as a result. The additional support has been more successful in mathematics, because leaders of this subject carefully monitor the impact of the interventions on pupils' understanding.
- Since the last inspection there have been significant changes to both the senior leadership team and to staffing in general, including the appointment of seven teachers to develop teaching and learning through coaching and training. This is leading to improvements in the overall quality of teaching. For example, teaching of English is improving strongly as a result of more opportunities to share good practice.
- The headteacher is highly regarded by staff, parents and pupils, who report that there have been significant improvements in the school since he has been in post. One parent commented, 'The headteacher listens and acts upon issues.' A member of staff stated how well staff are supported by the headteacher who is, 'always visible and approachable'.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum. Extra-curricular clubs are wide-ranging, well attended and enhance pupil's learning; particular strengths are music and sports. One sixth-form student said, 'There are endless opportunities to develop learning.' In addition, leaders plan and promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well across subjects and prepare them fully for life in modern Britain. Assemblies, tutorials, outside speakers, trips and charity events take place regularly.
- The school's use of alternative provision is carefully chosen, monitored and evaluated.
- As a result of good leadership of this area, pupils who have special educational needs or disability receive effective support and make good progress.
- Middle leaders now feel part of whole school leadership and are positive and clear of their role. As result, they are beginning to hold teachers in their departments to account more stringently and are helping them to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders have strengthened the performance management of teachers and are now using it to good effect to develop teaching and learning and therefore pupils' outcomes across the school.
- Staff value the new, individual programme of training and development. As one member of staff commented, 'There is now a buzz and excitement about training.'
- Leaders have a clear action plan to address underperformance and a positive impact has already been seen in English.
- The school has provided support for parents who speak English as an additional language to help them gain English language qualifications, which has enabled them to support pupils at home and has also improved pupils' attendance at school.
- There were 117 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire and the large majority of parents were positive about the school in all categories.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Following the last inspection there have been further changes to governance. A local governing body

and committees are now in place, as well as the academy improvement board. This has further strengthened governors' ability both to support leaders and hold them to account. Governors have faith in the headteacher, they have a clear understanding of the school's priorities and are aspirational for its future.

- Members of the governing body have a range of skills. Some have a background in education. Governors are fully committed to their own training and make sure that they carry out all their statutory duties, including those related to safeguarding and financial management.
- Governors have had training on how to analyse performance information and increasingly use this knowledge to challenge the school's leaders and set clear performance targets for the headteacher. However, they do not monitor the impact of the pupil premium money on pupils' progress closely enough.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective:
 - Governors are highly knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures, the school's legal requirements and potential risks to individual pupils. They use this expertise to provide effective support and guidance to the school and to ensure that leaders and staff are kept up to date with safeguarding legislation. As a result, all staff spoken to were confident about identifying possible safeguarding concerns and were clear about how to report them.
 - The school's checks on the single central record meet requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good across the school and as a result not all pupils and groups of pupils make good progress.
- Not all teachers, particularly those at key stage 3, make best use of the assessment information which they have about pupils. This means that in some lessons work is not appropriately pitched and therefore rates of progress vary too much.
- Teachers' expectations are sometimes too low and pupils are not challenged to achieve the highest levels possible, given their starting points.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils and between pupils are good and there is generally a positive learning atmosphere in classrooms. When pupils find their work too easy, they lose concentration and engage in low-level disruption.
- Pupils told inspectors that homework is inconsistent and depends upon the teacher. Leaders acknowledge that this is something which needs to be improved.
- Where expectations are high, pupils are keen and motivated and show a real love of learning and aspiration to do well. Where this happens, teachers promote effective learning through lively discussion and skilful questioning. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils responded to a challenging poem on Vietnam with impressive vocabulary and thoughtful interpretations.
- At key stage 4 there has been a whole-school focus on exam technique and improving spelling, punctuation and grammar. As a result, pupils are increasingly confident in how to approach exam questions, and can identify and therefore improve their own common mistakes. The benefits of teachers' high expectations were seen in a Year 10 science super learning session where pupils responded to the challenge by using powerful command words and subject-specific vocabulary.
- The whole-school focus on assessment has led to improvements in the feedback that pupils receive. This is helping pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding and make better progress.
- Teaching of pupils who have special educational needs or disability and those who speak English as an additional language is good. Pupils' needs are accurately identified and interventions to help them improve their learning are effective, especially in literacy. Pupils receive very effective support in the school's hearing-impaired unit and as a result are making good progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- The school's careers education, advice and guidance programme requires improvement. Pupils say that

they would like more support and advice to help them make informed choices about the next stages in their education, employment or training. Some 16 to 19 pupils said they felt unprepared for post-16 studies.

- Over recent years attendance has not been good enough but the school have started to take steps to address this and improvements are starting to be seen, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- All the pupils who spoke with inspectors confirmed that they feel safe and that bullying is very rare. They are confident that when it happens, teachers deal with it quickly and effectively. The school's own records support this. However, in the online questionnaire some concerns were expressed by parents about bullying.
- There has been some impressive work to teach pupils about keeping safe, especially online. Pupils appreciate the fact that they get frequent information and advice related to this and they know that teachers respond quickly to any local issues that might put their safety at risk. Year 10 pupils talked maturely about how powerful they had found a recent assembly on the dangers of grooming and how it had helped prepare them to better protect themselves.
- The school provides good support to pupils who are vulnerable and have significant emotional needs. One pupil said, 'Teachers have had a big impact on my life and have helped me to become a better person.'
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils are encouraged to explore their own and others' beliefs, to develop and express their views and to listen and debate with others. At breaktime a group of pupils were playing their own musical composition as other pupils listened respectfully. This helped to create a positive atmosphere around the school.
- All staff have appropriate training for child protection and understand their roles in keeping pupils safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Where teaching requires improvement, pupils' behaviour is characterised by a lack of involvement and some low-level disruption. Where teaching is good, pupils are keen to answer questions and are completely focused on their learning.
- The school has put in place a new 'on-call' behaviour system, which is starting to help support improvements in behaviour in lessons. Pupils say they now want all staff to apply the new system consistently so that 'all teachers can teach and all pupils can learn.'
- Most pupils behave well around the school site and at break and lunchtimes. However, some pupils exploit opportunities for silly behaviour when they think staff are not watching. Too many pupils arrive late to lessons.
- Attendance is improving but remains below the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced and this is largely the result of strategies which the school has put in place to support these pupils' welfare and re-integration into lessons. The school has further plans to use their inclusion unit to help support pupils' behaviour.
- Exclusions are reducing but are still too high. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils excluded compared to others has reduced considerably.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision are closely monitored. The school makes sure that they are safe.
- Pupils are polite and open doors for adults. They look smart in their blazers and their presentation in books is generally good.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes for pupils remain below national averages in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Leaders have taken action to tackle underperformance in English, leading to improved results in the January GCSE examination in English literature. Current assessment information shows that pupils in Year 11 and Year 10 are continuing to improve in both English and mathematics.
- In 2015 the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics.
- Pupils generally enter the school with below-average levels of attainment in the basic skills of English and mathematics. In recent years, the proportion of pupils making expected progress in English at the end of key stage 4 has been below the national average. The proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in English and mathematics at the end of key stage 4 has also been below the national average.
- The gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others both in school and nationally are closing this year.

Work undertaken to support this group is becoming more successful. Early intervention has allowed many to make accelerated progress.

- Not all pupils in both key stage 4 and key stage 5 feel well prepared for their next steps, because their levels of achievement at both key stages are too low and they do not receive appropriate guidance.
- The school's current performance information is based on a more rigorous system of assessment. Staff compare their assessments with those of teachers at other schools and work with examination boards to make sure that their assessments are accurate. However, improvements are not evident or consistent across all subjects. The school have identified that they need to improve outcomes in humanities and core science.
- Specialist support for pupils who need to catch up with their peers in reading and mathematics has had some impact, more so in mathematics than English. Progress for the most able pupils is starting to improve. They have been given a range of opportunities to help develop their aspirations with trips to universities and the chance to apply, through the David Ross Education Trust, for sports scholarships.
- Pupils who receive part of their education elsewhere attend well and take part in courses which are suitable to their needs. They are making good progress towards achieving qualifications.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability, and the small number of looked after children, are well supported and are making good progress.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- Outcomes in the sixth form in academic subjects have not been good enough. In recent years the progress made by students in academic subjects has been in the lowest 10% nationally. Girls' and disadvantaged students' progress was the lowest.
- Work experience has been successful for a small number of students, but not all students can benefit from this experience. Students told inspectors that they want more support and guidance with their choices and options for careers and further education.
- Students who have been following GCSE English and mathematics courses have made some improvements, but progress rates for these students are low.
- Leaders are not precise enough at setting and monitoring students' targets and therefore do not always identify students who are underperforming quickly enough to give them the extra support they need to improve their outcomes. Some students spoken with were confused about which grades they are aiming for. For example, one student said that her target grade was a C when she was already on course for an A*.
- In recent years students who entered the sixth form with GCSE grades of C or below did not achieve well and left the sixth form before completing their studies. The school has now raised entry requirements to the sixth form for academic subjects to ensure that students have the appropriate prior subject knowledge to meet the demands of key stage 5. This has improved retention rates.
- Where learning is more effective, there is a high level of challenge and as a result students produce a high standard of work. The benefits of high expectations seen in art lessons are evidenced in the impressive quality of students' artwork displayed around the school.
- Attendance gaps in the sixth form have improved and are now more closely monitored. The number of students who go on to education, employment or training are in line with national expectations.
- 16 to 19 students are positive about the school and have high aspirations. They see themselves as role models and say they would like to do more to help pupils lower in the school.
- Students have traditionally performed better in vocational subjects and this is still a strength of 16 to 19 provision at the school.
- The pastoral programme in the sixth form has been effective and is appreciated by students. Students say they are, 'treated as independent adults, not students. We feel we can approach anyone.'

School details

Unique reference number	136201
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10011673

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	School sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,300
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Wendy Parmley
Headteacher	Chris Steed
Telephone number	01604 778000
Website	www.malcolmarnoldacademy.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@malcolmarnoldschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 March 2015

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school is sponsored by the David Ross Foundation and managed by the David Ross Education Trust.
- It is a designated Church of England faith school in the Diocese of Peterborough.
- Pupils are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, with the largest from White British, Eastern European and Bangladeshi backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special education needs or a disability is above average. The school hosts a specially resourced provision in the form of a centre for 15 pupils whose hearing is impaired. These pupils receive teaching in a designated unit and in lessons in the main school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for children looked after.
- A very small number of pupils receive some of their education outside the school. These pupils are undertaking various vocational courses at three different CE Academy campuses.
- Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in staffing, including at senior leadership level, and the appointment of seven teachers to lead on teaching and learning in core subjects.
- This school website meets current statutory requirements.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 42 lessons, 12 of which were seen jointly with senior leaders. During lesson observations, inspectors sampled pupils' books and talked to pupils in order to evaluate the quality of their learning. Inspectors also made short visits to tutor time and enrichment activities.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils at break and lunchtime and as pupils moved around the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised, in detail, a range of pupils' books in a range of subjects.
- Inspectors held a number of meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer from the David Ross Educational Trust and trainee and newly qualified teachers. Telephone conversations were held with staff from the centre which provides alternative education for a small number of Malcolm Arnold pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with a wide range of pupils from all year groups in meetings, in lessons and around the school at breaktime.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of the school's documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school action plan, data on pupils' attainment and progress, attendance and behaviour records, safeguarding procedures, evaluations of the quality of teaching and minutes of the governing body and academy improvement board.
- Inspectors took account of 117 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire, 29 responses to the online staff questionnaires and eight online pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

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