

Malcolm Arnold Academy

Trinity Avenue, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN2 6JW

Inspection dates

9–10 May 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The executive principal provides highly effective leadership. The strong senior leadership team shares his ambition and focuses relentlessly on school improvement.
- The trust, governors and senior leaders know the school well. They are determined that all pupils will make at least good progress.
- The school's values of 'friendship, truth, peace' underpin the ethos of the school. There is a strong culture of openness, honesty and respect.
- Pupils make good progress across a range of subjects and all current year groups.
- The leadership of the school's work with disadvantaged pupils is good. As a result, the gaps in achievement between them and other pupils nationally have narrowed rapidly.
- The leadership of the school's work with pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is strong. Pupils make good progress from their starting points, including pupils in the school's specialist provision.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is a strength of the school and contributes well to pupils' personal development and good behaviour.
- Teaching is now good and teachers benefit from an effective programme of training and development.
- Procedures to safeguard pupils are robust. Pupils feel safe and are taught well how to keep themselves safe. The school provides good support to vulnerable pupils.
- Attendance has improved and is now in line with national averages.
- The curriculum is regularly reviewed and adapted to meet the needs of pupils.
- The extra-curricular opportunities offered to pupils are outstanding and make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Governors robustly challenge senior leaders to ensure that outcomes continue to improve.
- Teachers plan well but these plans do not always lead to all pupils making good progress.
- A few teachers do not consistently apply the school's policies which support teaching and learning.
- Very occasionally some sixth-form subject teaching is not strong enough to ensure that students achieve well, especially the most able.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that all teachers translate their planning into challenging and effective learning experiences for all pupils so they all focus fully on their lessons
 - making sure that all teachers consistently implement the school's policies to support teaching and learning so all pupils make good progress.
- Improve the quality of leadership of the 16 to 19 study programmes by:
 - streamlining the curriculum so that teachers can focus fully on providing equally high-quality teaching in all subjects and for all students, especially the most able.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive principal is a highly effective leader. He has built a senior leadership team who share his ambition for the school. There is a relentless focus on school improvement and there are effective systems in place to check on how well the school is doing. Leaders take decisive and prompt action to address any shortcomings. This means that much has been achieved since the last inspection.
- Trustees, governors and senior leaders know the school well and articulate what improvements need to be made and how the school is addressing them. They are determined that all pupils will do well and regularly monitor performance information to ensure that no child is falling behind. As a result, pupils and groups of pupils are now making good progress.
- The school values of 'friendship, truth, peace' underpin the ethos of the school. Leaders have created and model a strong culture of honesty, openness and respect, and a great emphasis is placed on taking care of the well-being of staff and pupils. Morale is high.
- All pupils are known as individuals. The positive relationships which exist create an inclusive and welcoming environment enabling pupils to thrive. A representative parental comment was, 'Since attending this school my child has grown in confidence and ability and her talents have been nurtured and celebrated.'
- A comprehensive programme of personalised training and development for teachers has resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Teaching is now good. Teachers new to the profession feel well supported and appreciate the opportunities they have to develop their practice. Good practice is shared widely through teachers visiting each other's lessons.
- The system to manage the performance of teachers is used effectively to tackle any weaknesses in teaching. Teachers are expected to develop their practice according to the stage they are at in their careers, and they are given robust targets to ensure that they strive for excellence. Teachers have a number of opportunities within the trust to progress in their careers
- The curriculum is constantly reviewed to ensure that it is meeting the needs and abilities of all pupils, and is enabling them to make good progress. Leaders are not afraid to make brave decisions to change the curriculum, even in the middle of the school year, if they feel pupils will benefit.
- The range and quality of extra-curricular opportunities offered to pupils is outstanding. Pupils have access to a large number of activities before school, at lunchtime, after school and in the holidays. There is something for everyone and participation rates are high. The quality of music provision is exceptional. Pupils know how lucky they are to have such opportunities, because they make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development and life experiences.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. The way this aspect is to be included in each subject is comprehensively mapped. Pupils enjoy many opportunities to explore their spirituality through the school's Christian

ethos. The promotion of the school's values, encompassing British values, and activities such as singing and listening to sacred music from the school's choir are also contributing to pupils' spiritual and personal development.

- Parents receive regular communications from the school about their child's progress and parents' evenings are held once or twice a year. There are monthly 'drop in' sessions run by senior leaders where parents can come and discuss anything they wish, including any concerns. A typical comment from parents was: 'It's very easy to contact teachers if I ever need to.'
- The funding the school receives to help pupils in Year 7 catch up with their peers if they fall behind in English and mathematics has been spent effectively on extra support. This has helped pupils make more rapid progress, especially in English.
- The leadership of the work to support disadvantaged pupils is good. There has been a whole-school focus on improving their attainment and progress, and a variety of strategies have been put in place to ensure that this happens. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are now making good progress across a range of subjects in all year groups.
- The leadership of the work to support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is good. Pupils are supported well both in and out of the classroom and make good progress from their starting points. Pupils who are part of the school's specialist provision receive good support in the main school and separate lessons and they, too, make good progress from their starting points.
- There have been a number of changes to the team of teachers who lead subjects. They are all clear on the priorities for improvement in their subjects and have appropriate plans in place to improve outcomes. They are now a strong team who understand and use performance information effectively and hold teachers to account for their pupils' outcomes.

Governance of the school

- The governing body carries out its duties as delegated by the board of trustees. They are very committed to the school and have a broad range of skills and experience. Governors robustly challenge the executive principal and the senior leadership team about the school's performance.
- Governors have a clear vision for the school and articulate the school's journey of improvement. They are not complacent, know there is still much to be done and know the school well.
- The governing body makes sure that no one is rewarded for poor performance. They understand information about pupils' progress and attainment and ask appropriate and challenging questions of leaders.
- Governors carry out most of their statutory duties effectively, including those related to safeguarding. They make sure that they have oversight of the school's finances and they keep up to date with their training in safer recruitment.
- Governors' work to monitor the impact of the spending of the pupil premium funding and their understanding of the 'Prevent' strategy are limited.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils are safe and looked after well. They particularly appreciate the school's work to support their mental health and well-being. Pupils feel supported by their peers and staff.
- The open-school culture means pupils feel very safe and there is always an adult they can talk with if they have a worry or concern. Vulnerable pupils are well supported and the school puts in place a wealth of strategies to ensure that they remain in school and do well.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Staff follow the school's clear procedures if they have a concern. Pupils talk openly about issues which may affect their safety. All staff have been trained in their duties in relation to 'Prevent'.
- Staff receive regular updates regarding safeguarding, and training is offered three times a year. All staff are aware of the procedures they must follow should they have a concern about a child.
- Pupils are taught well how to keep themselves safe, including online, through life-skills programmes, tutor times and in assemblies.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The school has, understandably, focused much of its work since the last inspection on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Pupils now benefit from good teaching, which means they achieve well.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and their enthusiasm for their subjects inspires pupils. Pupils show enjoyment in their learning. In key stage 4, teachers' thorough knowledge of GCSE examination specifications is resulting in focused teaching, which is giving pupils the best chance of succeeding when they sit the examinations.
- Teachers know how well pupils should be doing and set them challenging targets so they aim high. Pupils all know these targets and this helps them to do well in lessons.
- Positive relationships mean that pupils show good attitudes to learning. They work well on their own and in groups, making good progress.
- Teachers use subject-specific words and terminology well so that pupils get used to the expectations required to make good progress in each subject area. This also helps develop pupils' literacy skills.
- Inspectors saw example of teachers asking challenging questions to make sure that pupils could demonstrate full understanding of their learning. Pupils made good progress as a result.
- Other adults in the classroom are used well to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This helps them to make good progress.
- Pupils are keen to read out loud in class. They are not afraid of making mistakes with their work and see it as part of learning. They reflect on the good feedback they are given on their work so they can improve it.

- In line with the school's policy, teachers set homework regularly and pupils expect it as part of their learning. Most parents feel that their child is taught well.
- Each teacher has a personal programme of development and training, and the school offers coaching and an 'open door' policy, where teachers are encouraged to observe good practice in the school. This is helping to improve the quality of teaching and is much appreciated by teachers.
- Teachers plan well to take account of pupils' needs and abilities. On occasion, this detailed planning does not translate into lessons which engage pupils' interest and enthusiasm for learning. When this happens, some pupils lose focus on their learning, engage in low-level disruptive behaviour and do not always make the progress of which they are capable.
- The school has a number of detailed policies which support good teaching and learning, such as the feedback policy and the behaviour and standards for learning policy. When these policies are followed, teaching, learning and assessment is good. A very few teachers do not consistently follow these policies. On these occasions, pupils' progress is not good.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good
- The school is a very inclusive, welcoming and supportive environment, within which pupils unanimously feel they are valued as individuals. Pupils feel very safe and know the school places a high priority on their safety and well-being.
- Pupils are taught well how to keep themselves safe. They discuss sensitive issues with maturity and respect. The school's life-skills programme, tutor times and assemblies are used well to address important issues around pupils' well-being, including their mental health. This is appreciated by pupils.
- The support given to vulnerable pupils and those who find it difficult to manage in school is good. A range of strategies is used to ensure that they are comfortable and well supported. Staff work well with outside agencies to support pupils.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including those in the school's specialist provision, are well supported through individually tailored plans. They make good progress as a result.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They appreciate the lengths staff go to to support them, and know that teachers are ambitious for them and want them to do well.
- Most parents agree that their child is happy and safe at school. Pupils say that bullying is very rare and that if it happens, it is always dealt with quickly and effectively.
- The personal development and welfare of pupils who receive some of their education elsewhere are well supported. The school makes regular checks on their attendance and progress.
- The school's strong provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the outstanding extra-curricular provision make a very positive contribution to pupils'

personal development.

- The careers programme is wide-ranging and runs from Year 7 to Year 13. Pupils benefit from a variety of opportunities the programme offers in school. The school also provides impartial careers advice to all pupils. There is extra careers advice provided to more vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils. The number of pupils who do not go on to education, training and employment after school is low.
- Pupils are confident, articulate and self-assured. They know their school well and are keen to be involved in work to continue to improve the school. However, pupils feel that their opinions are not always taken into account.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and arrive well prepared and eager to learn. A few pupils are regularly late to school and leaders have recently put in place a new policy to improve punctuality further.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is almost always good. Very occasionally, there is some low-level disruptive behaviour in lessons. Large numbers of pupils moving around the school between lessons mean that behaviour is sometimes a bit boisterous. However, this is good-natured and pupils are universally polite and well-mannered. During the inspection, pupils regularly opened doors for inspectors and greeted them politely.
- Attendance has improved and is now average. The numbers of pupils who are regularly absent from school is reducing; this includes disadvantaged pupils.
- The numbers of pupils who have been excluded from school for a short period of time have reduced each year and no pupil has been permanently excluded from school this year. This is because staff work successfully to identify pupils who might be at risk of exclusion and support them well.
- Pupils look smart in their school uniforms and there is almost no litter around the large school site.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are significantly below average. From these low starting points, the proportions of pupils gaining good grades in GCSE examinations has improved since the last inspection. Pupils are making faster than average progress in a number of subjects.
- The progress that pupils made in GCSE English and mathematics in 2017 was higher than average. The most able pupils made progress in English that was significantly above the national average.
- The school predicts that the good progress made in 2017 is set to continue this year in almost all subjects. The performance information that the school collects related to pupils' progress is checked against the same information in a large number of schools. Teachers work together to ensure that it is accurate and historically the school's

predictions have proved to be reliable.

- Where performance information shows that individuals or groups of pupils are falling behind, teachers and leaders respond very quickly with extra support to ensure that they catch up and continue to make good progress.
- Performance in some subjects, most notably science and humanities, has not been as strong as in other subjects. Changes in leadership and the examinations that pupils are entered for have addressed any weaknesses in these areas and pupils' performance is predicted to show some improvement this year.
- The differences between the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils and those of others nationally have diminished rapidly. This is the case across a range of subjects, and reflects the focus of the school's work to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. This also is the case for the pupils who are part of the specialist provision at the school. This is because of the good support they receive.
- Targets set for pupils are challenging. They are set to ensure that pupils achieve results that put them in the top 20% of similar pupils nationally. The school will raise the bar further next academic year, with even more aspirational targets. Pupils' progress towards meeting their targets is rigorously tracked throughout the school year.
- Pupils who receive some of their education elsewhere are supported to make progress that is appropriate to their starting points, needs and abilities.
- A large number of pupils join the school in year groups other than Year 7. These pupils have a very thorough and well-supported introduction to the school and its expectations when they arrive. They make good progress across a range of subjects.
- Pupils read widely and often, and the school uses a number of strategies to encourage pupils to read, such as pupils spending 10 minutes reading at the start of each English lesson in key stage 3. The library is well used, as is a book exchange scheme. Pupils read some complex texts as part of their English lessons and this is contributing to them developing good literacy and language skills.
- The proportion of pupils moving on to further education, employment and training after school is high. This is because they are well prepared for the next stages in their lives and receive good-quality careers advice and guidance.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders have high expectations and work successfully to support students' aspirations and progress. The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching has been brought in line with the systems that operate across the school and as a result, there have been improvements in the provision in the sixth form.
- The study programmes include a very broad offer comprising three pathways – academic, vocational and a combination of the two. Students appreciate the amount of choice they have and courses often run with very small numbers of students. Very occasionally in a few subjects, teaching is not of the high standard seen in the majority

of lessons. This has an impact on the attainment and progress of some students, especially the most able.

- Teaching, learning and assessment overall is good and records show that it has improved over time. Students report that they receive valuable feedback from teachers, which helps them make good progress.
- Students who take GCSE English and mathematics resits as part of their study programmes achieve well, especially in English.
- Leaders track students' progress rigorously. They intervene swiftly to provide targeted support and intervention to address any underachievement.
- The support that students receive from adults was described by students as 'unbelievable'. Staff are available and accessible to students. Attendance is high.
- Students are confident and self-assured and show pride in their sixth form. They describe the sixth form as a welcoming and open community where people relate well to each other. Students behave well around the school and are good role models for younger pupils.
- Students receive comprehensive and appropriate careers advice, and good support for making applications to universities or for apprenticeships. Employers are regular visitors to the sixth form to talk with students about areas of their work, and students visit external work-related learning events. The work-experience programme is underdeveloped. Students are well prepared for the next stage in their education, employment and training.
- Results in vocational courses have been significantly above the national average for three years. Results in academic courses have been more variable but improved overall last year. Retention rates are high and the sixth form is a popular choice for pupils in Year 11.
- Safeguarding is effective in the sixth form.

School details

Unique reference number	136201
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10045233

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,320
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	130
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	David Ross
Executive Principal	Chris Steed
Telephone number	01604 778000
Website	www.malcolmarnoldacademy.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@malcolmarnoldacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 May 2016

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.
- The school is a designated faith school in the Diocese of Peterborough.
- Pupils are from a diverse range of backgrounds, with the largest group being White British.
- The school has a specialist provision for pupils with a hearing impairment. There are currently seven pupils using this provision, all of whom are on the school's roll.

- The proportion of pupils of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- A small number of pupils receive some of their education outside the school. These pupils are taking courses at three CE Academy campuses and Centurion, Northampton Saints Study Centre, Academy online, and through the hospital and outreach service.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 11.
- The 16 to 19 study programmes meet the minimum standards set by the government.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across subjects and year groups in 55 lessons and parts of lessons. A number of these were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspection team looked closely at pupils' work in a sample of books across a range of subjects and all year groups. They also looked at pupils' books in lessons.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, leaders in charge of subjects, teachers and other aspects of the school's work. Telephone conversations were held with staff at external providers and a member of the trust board. A meeting was held with the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in all year groups in meetings, informally around the school and in lessons.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included evaluations of the school's performance, improvement plans, performance-management documentation, records of training and development, and information on pupils' attainment, progress, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the 88 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View and the 73 responses to the online questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Denise Newsome, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Bernadette Green	Ofsted Inspector
John Edwards	Ofsted Inspector
Clare Considine	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Ferguson	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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