

Magnus Church of England Academy

Earp Avenue, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG24 4AB

Inspection dates

30 April–1 May 2019

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 principal and her team have successfully dealt with many long-standing issues which were holding the school back.
- Leaders effectively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.
- Pupils are happy and well cared for. They are friendly, courteous and polite. Pupils take pride in their work and their appearance.
- The school's effective off-site unit for pupils at risk of exclusion helps vulnerable pupils stay in education. These pupils achieve well.
- Sixth-form teaching is strong. Students make good progress. They attain equally well on academic and vocational courses. Leaders encourage students to aim high. More students now go on to university than in the past.
- Leaders' high aspirations have contributed to improvements in pupils' progress. Current pupils are making strong progress. Pupils' attainment is rising but does not yet match the national average.
- Teachers' questioning is often skilful. Excellent relationships between teachers and pupils support learning well. Occasionally teachers do not challenge the most able pupils with targeted questions to develop their learning further.
- Most teaching is very effective. For example, teaching is now stronger in English, mathematics and geography. Pupils' progress in these subjects has improved. Teaching in some subjects, such as history and technology, is not yet consistent.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress. However, occasionally, teachers do not check that these pupils understand what they need to do in lessons.
- Leaders have developed an innovative curriculum. This supports many pupils to achieve their potential. However, occasionally some of the most able pupils do not have enough opportunities tailored to their needs.
- Pupils' conduct in class and around the school is exemplary. Leaders set very high standards for pupils' behaviour, which staff consistently enforce. The attendance of sixth-form students, disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is low.
- Some disadvantaged boys do not make as much progress as they are capable of. Despite recent improvements, the quality of their writing still varies too much.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes by:
 - continuing to improve rates of progress so that even more pupils are able to attain the standards they should
 - improving the quality of disadvantaged boys' writing.
- Improve teaching so that:
 - pupils with SEND are clear about what they need to do
 - technology and history are consistently well taught and accurately assessed
 - teachers' questions regularly challenge the most able pupils.
- Improve attendance, including the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND and students in the sixth form.
- Improve the curriculum by increasing the number of opportunities available that challenge the most able pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership, at all levels, is strong and effective. The principal is uncompromising in her ambition for pupils. She has helped the school overcome a culture of low ambition, which slowed improvements. In its place, the principal has encouraged the highest aspirations for all pupils. She has also ensured that poor behaviour is no longer tolerated. Pupils' outcomes have improved because of these high expectations.
- The school roll is rising. The local community has recognised how much the school has improved. Leaders and governors have worked together to include parents and carers in school life. School leaders have taken time to explain to parents the reasons for the changes they have made. Parental engagement has increased significantly. Initiatives such as a parent leadership group have encouraged parents to feel part of the school. Parents' attendance at school events has improved.
- The school has many talented senior and middle leaders. They have raised standards in their areas of responsibility. Many of these leaders are teachers but some are highly effective members of the school's support staff. Senior leaders have been quick to recognise the potential of staff from a range of professional backgrounds, and use the talents available to the school well. Non-teaching staff contribute particularly well to pastoral care and business management.
- Leaders have fully involved teachers in their work to improve the school. This is helping to drive improvements in teaching. Leaders prioritise high-quality training. Teachers share good practice across departments. They are highly motivated. A high proportion of staff responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire. They were unanimous in their support of leaders. Members of staff told inspectors about the improvements they had seen in teaching and pupils' behaviour.
- Leaders make good use of additional funding to support pupils' achievements. Following a review of the school's use of the pupil premium, leaders' use of this funding is having a greater impact on the progress that most disadvantaged pupils make. Leaders also use literacy and numeracy catch-up funding well. Extra funding for pupils with SEND has helped leaders provide effective in-class support from support staff, and specialist teaching.
- School leaders offer a rich environment for pupils' SMSC education. The school's core values are 'Determination, Integrity, Ambition, Humility, Compassion'. These values are visible in signage throughout the school but are also obvious in the interactions between teachers and pupils. Staff consistently refer to the school's values when they reward or sanction pupils. Pupils learn about British values. They are well prepared for the opportunities and challenges of life in modern Britain.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, with many opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills. All pupils take part in enrichment activities designed to develop their cultural awareness. Recent improvements in the curriculum mean that pupils no longer study a narrow range of subjects in Year 9. Pupils now have a stronger foundation for their GCSE studies. The proportion of pupils who take all the English Baccalaureate subjects is rising. Leaders have designed a curriculum which meets the needs of many

pupils. The most able pupils, however, have a more limited range of opportunities to meet their interests and aptitudes.

Governance of the school

- The local governing body and the trustees of the multi-academy trust (MAT) work effectively together to support and challenge leaders. The trust has delegated clear duties to local governors, while meeting its own legal responsibilities for governance.
- Governors continually seek to improve their effectiveness. They have developed their understanding of school performance information. This has helped governors to hold leaders to account for pupils' progress.
- The MAT has supported the school to improve the quality of pupils' education. This support has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and leadership. MAT support has reduced as standards at the school have improved.
- The chief executive officer (CEO) provides an effective link between local governors and the board of trustees. Governor accountability days also provide opportunities for local governors to explain their work to the trust.
- Governors have a deep understanding of the school's curriculum. They have helped leaders to shape the curriculum in line with the school's core values.
- Local governors are very knowledgeable about the school's use of the pupil premium. They have not, however, fully evaluated leaders' use of funding for pupils with SEND or for literacy and numeracy catch-up.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have created a culture where all staff understand their role in keeping pupils safe. The school works closely with parents and support services to make sure that pupils who need help get it quickly. Leaders' systems to check that adults in the school are suitable to work with children are robust.
- Governors make sure that the school's safeguarding arrangements are externally audited. They carefully check that staff follow the school's safeguarding policy. Staff and governors complete regular training to help them protect children. They know, for instance, the signs that a pupil may be at risk of extremist influence.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection. In English, mathematics and geography, teaching is more effective than in the past. Most teaching is now of a high standard. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. In mathematics, for instance, pupils completed mathematical transformations in Year 8.
- Most teachers use questions well to probe pupils' understanding. In mathematics and geography, for example, inspectors saw pupils of all abilities respond well to

challenging questioning. In some classes, however, teachers' questions made too few demands on the most able pupils. A few pupils told inspectors that questions were too easy.

- There are excellent relationships between pupils and teachers, which support pupils' learning well. Teachers and pupils are mutually respectful. Staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour. This means that pupils can learn without interruption.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. Their enthusiasm has a positive impact on pupils' learning, especially in geography.
- In line with the school's policy, teachers give pupils time to practise and review what they have learned, particularly in English and science. The curriculum in science is very well planned, which helps structure pupils' learning well over time.
- Most parents are pleased with the quality of teaching at the school. This positive view was reflected in responses to Parent View and comments parents made to inspectors.
- Staff promote pupils' literacy well. Personalised programmes to improve reading help pupils with low reading ages to make progress. Many teachers take every opportunity to support pupils' literacy. Teachers were especially effective in teaching pupils the meaning and spelling of difficult subject-specific words. Teachers insist that pupils use standard English in the classroom. This approach is helping to prepare pupils well for examinations.
- The school's roll is rising, and several teachers have joined the school recently. Leaders support new teaching staff well in order to maintain the quality of teaching.
- In history and technology, the quality of teaching and the accuracy of assessment have varied over time. Pupils' progress in these subjects has not been as strong as in other subjects.
- The specialist teaching of pupils with SEND in small groups is highly effective. Classroom teachers usually plan carefully to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Teaching assistants support pupils well. On occasions, when teaching assistants are not present, teachers do not always ensure that pupils with SEND understand instructions and know what they need to do to complete tasks.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy school. They are self-confident in social situations. Inspectors noted that pupils were well mannered, welcoming to visitors and keen to help. Pupils come to school with the right equipment, ready to learn. They present their work neatly.
- Staff care well for pupils' physical and emotional well-being. Teachers take a healthy, balanced attitude towards examinations. They avoid placing pupils under undue pressure.
- The pastoral system supports all pupils well. Very vulnerable pupils, such as children looked after, receive high standards of care.

- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. They know, for example, the risks young people face online and how to seek adult help if they need it. Pupils told inspectors that bullying at the school was rare. If bullying does happen, pupils say that staff always help them to deal with it.
- The school supports pupils with characteristics protected by law. For example, the school has carefully considered the needs of its transgender pupils.

Behaviour

- Pupils' behaviour has improved since the last inspection. Pupils behave very well in lessons and during social times. Leaders' records show a significant reduction in poor behaviour. Inspectors saw no disruptive behaviour in any of the 52 lessons visited.
- The school has a clear and highly effective behaviour policy, which all staff follow. Pupils carry conduct cards, which have a powerful, positive impact on their behaviour. The cards provide a record of pupils' good and inappropriate behaviours. Staff use conduct cards to give out rewards and sanctions. The rewards available to pupils motivate them and they understand the reasons for the sanctions. A few pupils find the school rules strict but most know why the rules exist.
- The school is calm and orderly. Staff work together to ensure high standards of behaviour. Pupils dress impeccably. They wear their uniform exactly as leaders say they should. Leaders' excellent routines for sensible movement around the school help ensure that pupils are safe on-site.
- Very small numbers of pupils attend external alternative provision. School staff check their progress, attendance and welfare carefully. These pupils are making stronger progress in their alternative placements than they had at school.
- The proportion of pupils excluded from school has reduced significantly, although exclusions are still slightly above the national average. Staff consistently reinforce the importance of being on time, and pupils' punctuality is good. Leaders have reduced the number of pupils who are regularly absent from school. However, the rates of absence overall for pupils with SEND and for disadvantaged pupils are still high.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' GCSE examination results in 2018 indicated that they had made better progress than in previous years. Formerly, pupils' progress had been weak because the quality of teaching was inconsistent across the curriculum. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work shows that current pupils are making good progress in a wide range of subjects and across year groups.
- Historically, pupils of middle and high ability did not make as much progress as they were capable of, while pupils of below-average ability made stronger progress. More effective teaching means that pupils of all abilities are now making progress that is similar to pupils with their starting points nationally.
- Careers education is effective. The school has a comprehensive careers programme that meets the latest government requirements. This support helps to prepare pupils successfully for the next stage in education and employment. Last year, almost all Year

11 pupils continued their education or found employment at age 16. The proportion of pupils going on to take A levels rose sharply last year.

- Pupils who attend the school's Magnus Church of England Academy off-site unit (MAPLE) achieve excellent outcomes, taking into account their individual needs. They are well taught and go on to achieve relevant qualifications. The centre has well-developed links with local employers. In recent years, all pupils who completed their studies at MAPLE went on to study courses or jobs which matched their interests.
- In the recent past, pupils made weaker progress in English literature than in English language. Current pupils are making stronger progress in English literature and this difference is now less apparent.
- Many pupils join the school with attainment which is below the national average. While current pupils are making strong progress, this has not been consistent. Pupils' progress has not been strong enough for long enough to enable them to make as much progress as they are capable of.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making stronger progress than they have in the past, and their progress is drawing closer to the national average. The quality of disadvantaged boys' writing is improving. However, some disadvantaged boys do not write in enough depth or detail to enable them to do well in examinations.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership of the sixth form is effective. Teaching, learning and assessment are consistently effective in the sixth form. Students make strong progress studying A-level and applied courses. Students' attainment has improved and was above the national average in 2018.
- Work-related learning makes a positive contribution to students' study programmes. All students benefit from relevant work experience. The school has an effective careers programme which prepares students well for higher education, apprenticeships and employment. Last year, all sixth-form students went on to either university or employment. Staff support students well and encourage them to be ambitious. Many more students now go on to university when they leave school than in the past. Students are increasingly applying to universities, including Oxford and Cambridge.
- The number of students in the sixth form is growing. More students are now choosing to stay at school and join the school's sixth form. A number of external students have also joined the sixth form. High numbers of students complete the courses they start. The range of courses available to students is broad and meets their needs.
- Support for students' personal development and welfare is strong. Leaders plan mentoring and pastoral support time well. They ensure that students have a well-rounded education and are well prepared for life when they leave school.
- Students benefit from the full programme of extra-curricular opportunities available to them. Many take the Duke of Edinburgh's Award or join the school's Combined Cadet Force, for example. The activities available support students' personal development well.
- Leaders provide a range of opportunities for students to develop their skills in

mathematics and English, including the chance to take foundation courses, GCSEs and A levels. Students who join the sixth form without reaching grade 4 in English and/or mathematics always take a course to improve their skills in these subjects.

- Students enjoy being part of the sixth form and the school. They are very loyal to the school. Their behaviour is mature and they are conscientious in their studies. Students' punctuality is good but their attendance is not.

School details

Unique reference number	140549
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10087383

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	654
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	75
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Phillip Blinston
Principal	Anna Martin
Telephone number	01636 680 066
Website	www.magnusacademy.co.uk/
Email address	office@magnusacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 January 2017

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils from White British backgrounds is above the national average.
- The school is sponsored by the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham Multi-Academy Trust. The trust provides a broad range of support to the school. The trustees delegate some functions to the local governing body. Local governors make checks on the day-to-day running of the school, especially teaching, learning and assessment, and pupils'

progress. The CEO of the MAT helps manage the relationship between trustees and local governors.

- The school uses Hill Holt Wood, First Class Solutions and Fountaindale School for external alternative provision.
- The school has an off-site unit, MAPLE, which caters for up to 20 key stage 4 pupils. This facility is shared with Newark Academy.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout the school and in a range of subjects. Many lessons were observed jointly with school leaders. Inspectors also made a number of short visits to lessons to evaluate pupils' progress and behaviour in classrooms.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books during lessons and at other times during the inspection.
- Inspectors met with the principal, other leaders, members of the governing body and the CEO of the MAT.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, the school complaints file, minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors looked at the 66 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 57 free-text responses from parents.
- The inspection team listened to the views of pupils in key stage 3, key stage 4 and the sixth form during meetings, in classrooms and around the school. Inspectors also considered 42 pupil survey responses.
- Inspectors considered the views of 43 members of staff who completed the Ofsted staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Ellenor Beighton, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Nina Bee	Ofsted Inspector
Tim Croft	Ofsted Inspector
Laurence Reilly	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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