

George Dixon Academy

Portland Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B16 9GD

Inspection dates

15–16 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headmaster, key leaders and the governing body are working successfully as a strong team on improving the academy and pushing forward the academy's ambitious vision to its students and the local community.
- All groups of students are achieving well and are making strong gains from their low starting points. The academy is taking successful action to reduce the gaps in performance between those who may be less advantaged and other students.
- The sixth form is good. Students achieve well and are making a positive contribution to the life of the academy.
- Teaching is good. Teachers are confident in their subjects and plan their lessons in detail. They feel valued and supported by the academy leaders and are keen to continually improve their skills.
- There are high expectations of all who work at the academy; performance is checked with rigour and any weaknesses are promptly tackled.
- Students behave well and feel very safe. They understand the academy's high expectations of their behaviour and say that only a small minority find these difficult to meet at times. Students from the many different backgrounds get on exceptionally well together.
- The school provides high-quality care and support for all students, particularly those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. These, along with the carefully planned courses of study, helps students to be well prepared to move on to the next steps in their education, training or employment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are insufficient numbers of students making outstanding progress in their lessons.
- There is some variability in the quality of teaching and, occasionally, the work set is not carefully matched to students' capabilities.
- In some lessons, teachers talk too much and there too few opportunities for students to learn for themselves.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons or parts of lessons, amounting to 20 hours in total. Ten of these lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors listened to students read and paid short visits to all classrooms with senior staff to look at how well disabled pupils and those with special educational needs were learning.
- Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and groups of students.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work and looked at the academy’s self-evaluation and planning documents, external evaluations of its work and examples of students’ work.
- Inspectors took note of the 70 responses to the online Parent View survey and spoke to groups of parents and careers at the beginning and end of the school day.

Inspection team

Michael Merchant, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Sa'ad Khaldi	Additional Inspector
Shahnaz Maqsood	Additional Inspector
Robert Ridout	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- George Dixon Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 September 2012. When its predecessor school, George Dixon International School and Sixth Form Centre, was last inspected by Ofsted in April 2010, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- The academy is an average-sized secondary school with a smaller than average sixth form.
- The very large majority of students come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of students who are learning English as an additional language is high.
- The proportion of students that are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding from the government for students looked after by the local authority, students known to be eligible for free school meals, or those with parents in the armed services) is high.
- The proportion of disabled students, those who have special educational needs supported through school action and those supported through school action plus is average, as is the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs.
- A very small number of students attend a local college, another local school or a skills centre as part of the programmes of study.
- The school is on track to meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' progress and attainment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching so that students make even more rapid progress and attainment rises further by:
 - making sure that all teachers plan tasks that get the most out of all students in every lesson, especially the more able students
 - ensuring that teachers spend less time talking in lessons and provide more time for students to learn actively by working things out for themselves and discussing their work with others
 - giving more opportunities to students to practise their writing and reading skills when they are working in different subjects
 - consistently encouraging students to discuss their work at a higher level and in offering opinions and explanations to each other so they have greater confidence in their ability to communicate clearly
 - improve the quality of teachers' marking of students' work so that it consistently shows students how to correct mistakes and provides clear guidance as to how they can improve further
 - making sure that teachers have more chances to share what works best in lessons with each other.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When students join the academy, many are working significantly below the nationally expected level for their ages in most subjects. Students' skills in reading, writing and speaking are particularly low.
- The records of students' progress since the academy opened shows that progress is accelerating and that many are making faster than expected progress. The academy confidently anticipate that 58% of all students will attain five or more A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics. This is a big improvement on that attained by students at the predecessor school in 2012.
- Work seen by inspectors and the results of module tests already taken by students in Year 11 show that attainment in English and mathematics is broadly average. This represents good progress given their students' starting points.
- Good progress is evident in most lessons and work in students' books shows that that students are working at a good rate. They are making good gains in communication, literacy and numeracy skills and regular reading for pleasure is encouraged across the academy.
- Students in danger of falling behind their academic targets are identified quickly and staff move swiftly to make sure that these students are given every chance to catch up.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress. The gaps in attainment between students working at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs and other students in the academy are narrowing.
- There is no difference in the rates of progress being made from students from the wide range of heritages seen at the school and all groups are achieving well. Leaders actively promote equal opportunities, foster positive relationships and tackle any forms of discrimination.
- Students learning English as an additional language are given prompt and effective support, both in class and in small groups. Most make similar progress to their peers over time but the achievement of some is held back because not all teachers consistently plan to develop and extend students' literacy skills in all their lessons.
- Students known to be eligible for pupil premium funding make better progress and are attaining more highly than students in similar circumstances nationally and other students in the academy. Most of the pupil premium funding is spent on providing extra adults to support these students and some is spent on providing essential equipment and helping students to participate in school visits and excursions.
- The academy enters some students early for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics. Leaders believe this approach offers students the greatest chance of succeeding in these subjects, and school data shows that progress in both of these subjects, particularly for higher attaining students, is accelerating.
- Those students who follow more practical courses off site enjoy the opportunity to gain experience in a range of practical subjects and are acquiring the necessary skills to find suitable employment or further training.

- Most students in the sixth form are making at least the progress expected of them and many are making fast progress. Students in the sixth form enjoy their studies and a higher proportion are working towards the top grades at A level than seen under the predecessor school.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers expect much of their students. A very positive climate that encourages good learning has been created in the academy. Students greatly appreciate the help they get from staff. One student spoke for many when she said, 'Teachers here give you the confidence to work hard and aim high.'
- Most lessons are purposeful because teachers make it clear to students what they are trying to achieve. Students learn fastest when they are busy and active in lessons, finding things out for themselves or talking about their work with their classmates.
- Most teachers make sure that work set in lessons helps every student, irrespective of their abilities, to do well. Here, students become absorbed in the tasks, relish the challenge and work flat-out putting energy and thought into all they do. They are constantly encouraged to do so by the teachers' use of questions that probe the way students are thinking and encourage them to debate and discuss their work with others.
- Where teaching is not yet outstanding or in the small amount of teaching that requires improvement, learning is held back because:
 - teachers do not get the most out of every student because all students complete the same task and these are not always hard enough for the most able students, or occasionally, are too complex for some
 - students spend too long listening to teachers talking and are not active or busy enough
 - teachers do not always make the most of chances for students to debate or discuss their work and learn from each other and so to improve their speaking and listening skills.
- Teachers' marking of students' work is usually very helpful and shows students how to improve. This is not always the case, however. Some marking is superficial or the improvement suggested by teachers are not always carried out by students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Most students behave well in lessons and around the academy and treat others with appropriate respect and courtesy. Students say that they feel safe and that adults will help them overcome any difficulties they might experience.
- Although most students display positive attitudes to learning, a small minority are passive in lessons and depend on prompting from adults to keep them working at the right pace. Consequently, these students do not develop sufficient resilience and independence; skills that are important for their future success.
- Attendance has improved. Most students come to school regularly and are punctual.
- Most parents, staff and students judge behaviour to be good. As behaviour has improved, the number of incidents which have resulted in students being excluded from the academy has fallen. Students are confident that the rare instances of bullying will be dealt with promptly and

effectively by staff.

- The academy's very positive and supportive ethos promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. A good range of trips, visits and other enrichment activities helps to build their confidence and self-esteem.
- Students understand about how to deal with risks they might face and have a good understanding of issues relating to substance abuse and dangers associated with using the internet.
- Students take their responsibilities seriously and develop good leadership skills. Their ideas are used extensively. For instance, students helped to design the new school uniform and now wear it with pride.

The leadership and management are good

- The headmaster, key leaders and the governing body set high expectations of the school community and have brought about significant improvements in students' achievement. They have successfully managed the move into new buildings and the development of a new academy community.
- Leaders have an accurate and realistic view of how well the school is performing. Action plans set out clear priorities and underpin the drive for improvement. Strong systems for checking on the performance of students and staff are helping to support continuous improvement.
- Students are given challenging academic targets that have raised their ambitions. Leaders at all levels make good use of information on students' progress to check any slowing down. Checks are followed up swiftly with well-thought-out support that helps students to catch up.
- Teaching has improved because leaders carry out rigorous checks on its quality. This leads to staff training and support that is well matched to the areas that need to improve.
- Systems to manage the performance of staff are rigorous and linked to school priorities and current teaching standards. Staff are gaining confidence in leading staff training, although teachers do not always share what works well with each other in order to improve teaching further.
- The courses and subjects on offer have much improved. More students are able to pursue the subjects included in the English Baccalaureate and a range of vocational courses meets students' needs well. The number of students taking courses off the school site has reduced but staff maintain a watchful eye on how well these students are getting on.
- Although students develop secure literacy skills in English lessons, students are not practising these skills often enough in different subjects
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring a good range of relevant skills and have had training on their roles. They have high ambitions for the academy and are a driving force in bringing about improvement. Governors hold leaders closely to account for the school's performance and are kept well informed about students' achievement compared to the national picture. They make sure that better pay and promotion of staff are closely related to performance in the classroom and are well aware of where teaching is in need of additional support. Governors know how pupil

premium funding is spent and that achievement for these students is improving but have not looked closely at the impact of each of the different ways in which the funding is used. Governors make sure that students and staff are kept safe and that statutory requirements are met.

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	138695
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	409371

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	915
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Dowling
Headmaster	Anthony Hamilton
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0121 5666565
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Email address	contact@georgedixonacademy.com

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