

Macmillan Academy

Stockton Road, Middlesbrough, TS5 4AG

Inspection dates 22–23 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- Macmillan Academy seeks to provide an education which is motivational, meaningful and memorable, and it is successful in doing so. Its motto, 'inspiring every student to succeed' is at the heart of everything the academy does.
- Most students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well.
- The sixth form is good. A wide variety of courses are on offer, and the advice and guidance given to students are excellent.
- A strong focus is given to developing wider employment skills. As a result nearly every student leaving the academy has a path to employment or further studies.
- Teaching is good overall. Teachers use questioning well to develop students' understanding. They plan interesting and engaging lessons.
- The curriculum has some exciting features which engage the students well. For example, a 'Macmillan Baccalaureate' for students in Key Stage 3 celebrates both academic progress and involvement in enrichment and enterprise activities. The academy uses outdoor learning exceptionally well to develop students' skills.
- Relationships between students and staff are very positive. Students behave very well and are respectful and supportive of one another. They are a credit to the academy.
- Senior leaders and the governing body set themselves high standards. Procedures for checking the quality of teaching and the progress students are making are strong. Plans put into place to improve the academy are focused. As a result the academy is improving.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Current achievement of students in English and mathematics, although much improved, is not yet outstanding.
- Some of the teaching could be better. The work set by teachers does not always match the abilities of the students. For example, the more-able students are not always stretched enough in lessons.
- Marking does not always help students see how they can improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 46 lessons and parts of lessons. Two observations were conducted jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspectors observed students during tutorial, registration, break times, and around the site.
- Discussions were held with the Executive Principal, the Principal, members of the leadership team, two groups of teaching staff (including middle leaders) and three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- The inspectors spoke to many students in lessons, and they spoke formally to four groups of students on the first day of the inspection.
- The inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the academy's improvement plan; the academy's own evaluation of its work; the academy's data for tracking students' progress; the work students were doing in their books; the academy's documentation relating to safeguarding; documents relating to the monitoring of the quality of teaching; and information about teachers' professional development.
- The inspectors took into account the responses to the academy's own surveys. There were 81 responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also took into account the responses from the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Michael Wardle, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Frank Cain	Additional Inspector
David Griffiths	Additional Inspector
Christine Kennedy	Additional Inspector
Colin Scott	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized secondary academy. The sixth form is also larger than average for a secondary academy.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for children in local authority care, those whose parents are in the forces and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of students identified with special educational needs and supported through school action is average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is above average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The academy has a variety of awards, including Learning Outside the Classroom (gold award), Adventure mark, Outdoor Learning Quality Badge, and Eco School (Green Flag).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' achievement, especially in English and mathematics by:
 - accelerating the progress of the more-able students in order to increase the number who get A*/A grades at GCSE and A* to B grades at A level and AS level
 - increasing the opportunities students have to write at length in different subject areas
 - embedding the academy-wide reading programmes, so that recent improvements in standards of reading continue
 - providing more chances for students to practise their mathematical skills in meaningful situations, for example, to solve problems related to everyday life.
- Improve the quality and impact of teaching by:
 - giving students clear guidance through regular marking so they know how to improve their work and ensuring that they have the opportunity to make those improvements
 - using assessment information to match work and activities more precisely to students' individual needs
 - giving the most-able students work that is suitably demanding in all lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students make good progress from their starting points. They attain above-average standards by the end of Year 11 on a variety of indicators. There was a dip in 2012 in the key measure of the proportion of students attaining five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics. However, inspection analysis indicates that improvements are in evidence for students currently at the academy. The decrease in attainment on this measure has not only been arrested, it has been reversed. Current achievement of students in English and mathematics, although much improved, is not yet outstanding.
- Attainment in English literature, biology, chemistry, physics, information and communication technology and modern languages, among other subjects, is strong. However, too few students attain the highest grades of A* and A at GCSE.
- Progress made by students in the sixth form is good, taking into account their starting points. They are very successful in gaining places at university, training or employment. The 'professional placement programme' supports this well. Progress in science subjects, mathematics, psychology, sociology and politics is particularly strong. Personal development in the sixth form is a strength.
- Students known to be eligible for free school meals and supported through the use of pupil premium make progress similar to other students in school. They achieve standards that are, on average, half a grade lower per subject than other students in the academy. The progress they make, when compared to similar students across the country, is better than it is nationally. This means that the academy is providing well for these students, and is promoting equality of opportunity.
- Students who are disabled and those who have special educational needs make good progress in the academy. In lessons, these students are fully involved in their learning. Inspectors also saw examples where students were overcoming difficulties and making good progress. For example, students who speak English as an additional language were found to be making good headway.
- Students from minority ethnic groups make good progress.
- The academy enters students in some subjects early for GCSEs. This is done carefully so that it maximises achievement.
- Students' progress in literacy is good. The academy is using a variety of programmes and strategies to ensure that students read widely and develop their literacy skills. This is having a positive impact on achievement. Academy leaders are aware that these programmes are still relatively new, and that they need monitoring so that they have the greatest impact on students' literacy.
- Almost all parents rightly regard their children as making good progress and lesson observations during inspection confirm this.
- Academy leaders are focused on continually improving teaching, and therefore achievement continues to improve.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most of the teaching observed during the inspection was good, and some outstanding practice was seen. Inspectors agree with the overwhelming majority of parents who say that teaching is good. Students' books and the progress they make indicate that teaching seen during the inspection is typical of teaching over time.
- In the best lessons teachers' planning makes sure that all students are given work that gets the best out of them. In these lessons students learn quickly due to a range of different teaching methods used. Teachers ask searching questions to get students thinking and to see how much they have understood. They then use information about how well students have learned to help them plan future lessons.

- For example, in a Year 8 English lesson students were identifying techniques used by writers to 'grip' their readers. Here, students were fully involved in discussions about suspense techniques and the teacher ensured that all of the students were stretched. The teacher had very high expectations of the students, and they rose to the challenge.
- In a Year 10 mathematics lesson students were animatedly discussing complex concepts. The teacher gave very precise explanations, and activities ensured that all of the students were stretched. Marking was thorough and helped students see the next steps they need to make, and pointed out areas where their understanding was weaker.
- Not all teaching is as good as this however. Sometimes teachers do not use information about the ability of the students in their group to ensure that activities are fully tailored to the group. The more-able students are not always developing their skills and understanding as quickly as they could. Marking is not always thorough or regular enough to have a positive impact on achievement, and students are not always given the opportunity to reflect and take action on the advice the teachers have given.
- Teaching in the sixth form is also good. In the best lessons, teachers ensure that the level of academic challenge is high, while planning interesting ways to learn. For example, in a Year 13 psychology lesson students enjoyed a variety of activities, and were making excellent progress in their understanding.
- The curriculum offers 'motivational, meaningful and memorable' experiences for the students. For example, 'mindset' is a lesson where students develop learning habits, practise collaboration skills and develop their cultural awareness. In one 'mindset' lesson, students were developing the skill of perseverance, by concentrating hard to break codes, mirroring their new learning about Enigma machines from the Second World War. All students were fully involved, including those with special educational needs.
- Teachers use extra teaching sessions and strategies in order to develop literacy skills. This is having a positive impact. However, some opportunities to write at length in different subject areas are not being used effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The curriculum is explicit about promoting good learning habits. Themes, special weeks, and the innovative tutorial programme develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness very effectively. The tutorial programme is organised in small groups, and is responsive to national and global news. It includes news broadcasts as written and filmed by older students in enrichment sessions. Together, this helps to shape the students into well rounded and sociable young people.
- In lessons, students behave very well and show keen interest in their work. They respond well to their teachers, and cooperate well with each other. Around the academy they are polite, courteous, and show respect to each other. For example, behaviour at break and lunch is mature and sensible. Movement around the site is calm and safe.
- Students have an excellent awareness of different types of bullying, including prejudice-based and cyber bullying, about which they have few concerns. They know that any incidents will be dealt with quickly and effectively by the academy.
- They have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and they say they feel very safe in the academy. Their awareness of personal safety is raised through assemblies and the tutorial programme.
- Students respond well to safety guidelines when involved in the exciting and wide-ranging outdoor learning activities. Groups of students were seen safely climbing and problem solving while engaged in such activities.
- Parents, students and staff say that behaviour is good, and that behaviour seen during the inspection is typical.
- As a result of enjoying being at the academy, attendance is above the national average and improving, and students arrive to the academy and to lessons on time.

The leadership and management are good

- The Executive Principal, Principal and senior team have high expectations for the academy. They have a clear understanding of how good the academy can be. They work well together and, together with the governing body, show great determination in driving forward improvements.
- They are having a positive impact on the quality of education at the academy. For example, the achievement of students in English and mathematics has improved markedly after a dip in 2012, achievement in the sixth form has remained strong, and the quality of teaching continues to improve. This is a result of leaders having an accurate view of the performance of the academy and putting plans into place to improve areas of relative weakness.
- The quality of the curriculum is a major strength of the academy. This is supporting achievement: both personal development and academic success. There are many innovative and successful aspects. For example, the focus on outdoor learning, the development of learning skills through 'mindset' lessons, the exceptionally wide enrichment programme, and the tutorial programme, feature among others.
- Sometimes, however, opportunities are missed to develop mathematical skills in meaningful situations. The curriculum needs to offer more to stretch the more-able students.
- Senior leaders have used performance management and the appraisal process to challenge areas of underperformance. As a result teachers currently at the academy meet the Teachers' Standards comfortably.
- Processes for checking the quality of teaching and the progress of students are strong. The information is used to improve quality further. Induction procedures for new teachers and training for those early in their career, are particularly strong.
- The academy works well with parents. Their responses, to both the questionnaires distributed by the academy, and Ofsted's 'Parent View' survey, show that parents are very supportive of the school and are proud of its achievements.
- The focus on the development of work-based skills is successful. The academy has an excellent record of ensuring that, when students leave, their next steps, either in employment or in further education and training, are secure.
- Many staff completed the voluntary questionnaire for the inspection. The level of pride and enthusiasm was impressive, a testimony to the sense of purpose and ethos that senior leaders have created.
- The academy meets statutory responsibilities for safeguarding.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is strong. It successfully supports and challenges the academy. They are aware of the strengths of the academy, including the quality of teaching. They ensure that finances support the needs of the academy, for example, in supporting staffing for English and mathematics. They have a good understanding of the progress the students are making. For example, they track the impact of pupil-premium funding. As a result these students are making better progress than similar students nationally. They ensure that the training and the performance of teachers are well managed so that salaries and promotion reflect performance.

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	130908
Local authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	412134

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	1,469
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	337
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Phillipou
Principal	Phil Latham
Executive Principal	Ken Fraser
Date of previous school inspection	11 December 2007
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