

Abington Academy

Station Road, Wigston, LE18 2DU

Inspection dates 7–8 May 2014

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	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The academy's students achieve well, including those eligible for pupil premium funding, disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- Teaching is usually good and sometimes outstanding.
- Behaviour in the academy is outstanding. The relationships between students and members of staff are excellent. Students are appreciative of the support they receive, polite, well-mannered and keen to learn.
- Students feel very safe in the academy and the systems to ensure their safety are outstanding.
- The number of student exclusions is very low.
- School leaders, including governors, are aware of what the academy needs to do to improve and they have detailed plans to address these areas. Actions to improve key aspects of teaching and achievement are already underway.
- The headteacher is justifiably well-regarded by staff, students and the wider community. He is devoted to the young people in his care and this has a direct and positive impact on their well-being and on the progress they make.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not consistently have high enough expectations of what students can achieve, particularly in their written work.
- The rate of progress made in writing by Year 6 students is not fast enough, specifically that of girls and of the most-able students.
- Teachers' marking of students' work is not always sufficiently informative. Even when work is very thoroughly marked, students do not always respond to it as they should.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 37 lessons taught by 35 different teachers, including eight joint observations with senior leaders. Inspectors also visited two tutor periods and an assembly.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, two deputy headteachers, other senior and middle leaders, and three members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors spoke with students in meetings as well as informally in lessons.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the academy’s evaluation of its own performance, its development plan, student progress data, attendance and behaviour records, safeguarding procedures and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors took account of the 29 responses to the Parent View questionnaire and the 59 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Ian McNeilly, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Alan Johnson

Additional Inspector

Susan Thomas

Additional Inspector

Deborah Mosley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Abington Academy converted to become an academy school on 1st April 2012. When its predecessor school, Abington High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The academy is an average-sized middle-deemed-secondary school for students aged 10-14. It is located in Wigston, to the south of Leicester.
- The proportion of students for whom the academy receives pupil premium funding is broadly average. This additional government funding is for students in care of the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and children from service families.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average; the proportion of students supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above average.
- The academy has specially resourced provision for students with special educational needs. This provides support for six students with autism.
- The school does not use alternative provision for any students.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 2.
- The headteacher is a National Leader of Education, and the academy is a National Support School. The academy has several accreditations, including the Inclusion Quality Mark which recognises the academy's work on how it cares for and supports its students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have consistently high expectations of what their students can achieve, particularly in their written work
 - ensuring that teachers' marking is always informative, is consistently applied by all staff, and that students use this guidance to correct their mistakes.
- Increase the rates of progress made in writing by Year 6 students, specifically girls and the most-able students.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the academy at the start of Year 6, having spent the first three years of Key Stage 2 at other schools. They arrive with levels of skill below those expected of them in both English and mathematics. Despite not reaching the levels of attainment expected of students by the end of Year 6, the students make good progress during their first year at the academy.
- Year 6 students achieved more highly in reading than in writing in 2012 and 2013. This is also the case this year. These students' rates of progress in writing were below those seen in Year 6 in the previous year. The school's current data show that while low ability students in Year 6 are achieving particularly highly in writing this year, rates of progress are not high enough for girls and for more-able students.
- By the time they leave the academy, students achieve well across all year groups and in a wide range of subjects, and they achieve very well in some instances. The progress made in mathematics is particularly good, with current students making twice the progress expected of them in Year 6. In 2013, higher proportions of Year 9 students than seen nationally made or exceeded the progress expected of them in mathematics.
- In 2013, the proportion of more-able Year 9 students making the progress expected of them in English was lower than the national average. However, current data show a significant improvement in this regard.
- Students in receipt of pupil premium funding and Year 7 catch-up funding make good progress. At the end of Year 6 in 2013, the attainment of these students was two and a half terms behind their peers in mathematics, and one and a half terms behind in English. By the time students reach Year 9, the gap has narrowed, particularly in mathematics.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress, both in Year 6 and by the end of Year 9. This is because of the effective support provided by specialist teachers and teaching assistants, which ensures these students achieve well.
- The enhanced resource provision for students with autism has a positive effect on those who benefit from it, particularly on the students' social skills. This helps them develop positive attitudes to learning. These students do not spend the majority of their time in the base; they are expected to attend mainstream lessons for at least half of their time in school. Rates of attendance of these students, both at the enhanced provision and in the mainstream school, are steadily improving.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good, as reflected by the good progress made by students across year groups and in most subjects. However, there are significant variations in teaching quality across the academy and, whilst some is outstanding, a small amount is inadequate.
- Exemplary relationships between teachers and students are evident across the school. Members of staff genuinely care about the students they work with and the students appreciate this. This leads to very positive attitudes to learning.
- Students get on very well together, and the best teaching builds on this strength to promote

students' good progress. In an outstanding English lesson, three groups of more-able students responded readily when asked to advise their peers on how best to answer an exam question.

- Teachers' specialist subject knowledge is used to good effect in many subjects. This is particularly apparent in mathematics, which is taught very well across the academy.
- The best teaching is very well-structured. Tasks are well-chosen and keep students stimulated and attentive. Questioning is used effectively to provoke thought and clarify understanding. This was particularly evident in an outstanding science lesson; students responded well to the challenge posed by the teacher's questions. As a result, they enjoyed the activities and understood why they were learning about the topic and its relevance to previous learning. One student described this staff member as 'a good teacher who makes you learn and makes you laugh'.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs, including those in the enhanced provision, are very appreciative of the support given to them. This is a strength of the school.
- Teachers do not consistently have high enough expectations of what students can produce in writing. As a result, literacy skills are not as good as they should be.
- The quality of marking in the academy varies greatly. Even when there is outstanding marking, for example, in English, it does not always have the positive effect on progress that is intended. This is because teachers do not sufficiently ensure students take marking comments into account in their future work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Attitudes to learning are consistently positive across subjects, year groups and with different staff.
- Outside of lessons, students behave in a manner which is a credit to themselves, to their school and to their parents. Students were invariably polite, well-mannered and behave with respect towards adults and each other.
- In a recent survey of parents conducted by the school, only 2% of respondents felt that the academy did not deal with poor behaviour effectively. A similar level of response was found in Parent View. All staff who responded to the inspector's questionnaire agreed that behaviour is good.
- Although attendance was just below the national average in 2013, there has been an improvement in overall attendance and a reduction in the number of persistent absentees in 2014. Non-attendance is noted and quickly addressed.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students appreciate the high level of care that is shown to them. They could describe what they should do in the event of any bullying taking place, though such incidents are very rare. The school has effective policies in place to address any bullying where it occurs.
- The academy ensures students fully respect the needs, interests and feelings of others, which contributes to the excellent relationships between staff and students. Some members of staff are prepared to go beyond their normal duties to develop positive relationships; for example, two

learning support assistants were seen taking part in playground games with Year 6 students at lunchtime.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is an asset of the school. A National Leader of Education, he has a positive impact both on the academy and also in the wider community through his work with other schools. He successfully encourages his teachers to share his caring attitude towards children.
- The headteacher has secured good outcomes for the academy's students; he is aware of what needs to be done to further improve the school and has plans in place to do so. The academy has an established, annual cycle of self-evaluation. A comprehensive overview of the school's performance has been produced; a separate development plan has been written to address identified improvements. At the time of the inspection, effective action had already been taken to improve the achievement of those students eligible for pupil premium in both English and mathematics.
- The academy has a well-established process for monitoring the quality of its teaching. All leaders involved in this process are effective at identifying improvement points for individual teachers and, where necessary, take appropriate action to ensure they improve. In joint lesson observations conducted during the inspection, senior leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching were in line with those of inspectors. The academy's performance management procedures are key factors in ensuring that teaching overall is good.
- The headteacher has a high degree of trust in his middle leaders. They therefore feel empowered to try new things in their own areas of responsibility. This independence has sometimes led to some unevenness across departments, for example, in the approach to marking students' work. Middle leaders are involved in monitoring the quality of teaching in their own areas. If they or their colleagues have developmental needs, they are encouraged to seek suitable training.
- Literacy is an area of development for the academy. Two initiatives have been launched recently: 'Everyone Reads In Class', which involves students stopping their normal lessons once a week and reading for 20 minutes; and 'Words of the Week', which sees four new, challenging words introduced each week in an attempt to extend students' vocabulary. It is too early to see the impact of these initiatives, and students' books clearly indicate that literacy skills continue to require further development.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and gives students an opportunity to experience a variety of subjects. Year 8 students can choose a 'taster' of future GCSE options, for example, in Digital Media or Spanish. Extra-curricular activities are wide-ranging and students appreciate these opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Art and sport are popular choices. Music is considered a strength by students, with one Year 8 student keen to tell an inspector how 'awesome' it is. Students are encouraged to participate in Holocaust Memorial and Remembrance Days.
- The academy has a clear strategy for providing independent careers advice and guidance, using an external provider in conjunction with nearby schools. Students receive GCSE options guidance through PSHE lessons, assemblies and by individual interviews. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs get further support in this regard. Students have the opportunity to attend introductory sessions, for example at college on courses such as vehicle maintenance and hair and beauty. Parental engagement is encouraged through evening meetings. Students

consistently express the desire to achieve and to progress to higher education.

- The academy uses their primary school sport funding in a variety of ways, for example, membership of local sports networks allowing access to specialist coaches; providing places for pupils in after-school sports clubs; and developing teachers' skills in teaching sport. Students value the opportunities available to them such as dance and football for both boys and girls; sport is a popular choice of activity.

- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very supportive and proud of the academy. They are well-organised into committees, meet frequently and are led by a well-informed and committed chair. The governors make good use of school and national data to ensure that they know the academy's strengths and areas for development. They have rightly identified better marking of books and the need for an increased challenge for more-able students as areas for development. Governors have a positive impact on the school and hold senior leaders fully to account for their decisions. Governors are involved in decisions about the pay progression of teachers and are prepared to question these proposals to ensure they are merited. They manage the academy's finances effectively and know how well the pupil premium is helping eligible pupils to achieve. Governors ensure safeguarding arrangements do much more than just meet requirements; consequently, safeguarding in the academy is outstanding.

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	137984
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	443809

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	10–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	643
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoffrey Hall
Headteacher	Alex Green
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