

# St Gregory the Great Catholic Secondary School

Cricket Road, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 3DR

**Inspection dates** 24–25 March 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students in the academy, including the more able, do not achieve well enough during Key Stages 3 and 4. They do not make good progress overall. GCSE examination results have not improved rapidly enough since 2013.
- In 2014, disadvantaged students did not achieve well enough in examinations at the end of Year 11. The gap between disadvantaged students and others remains too wide in Key Stage 3.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent in Key Stages 3 and 4. Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve, and how well they should behave, are not high enough. Policies for managing pupils' behaviour are not applied consistently.
- Some subject leaders do not routinely analyse information from teachers' assessments of students' progress in Years 7 to 11. Some students' weak progress is, therefore, overlooked.
- The quality and accuracy of a number of students' writing are poor. Not all pupils take enough pride in the presentation of their work.
- Attendance has improved, but is still below average. Some students have poor attendance.
- Some leaders and governors are not sufficiently knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching. Governors do not check that there is a close link between teachers' pay and their performance.

### The school has the following strengths

- The new Principal has begun to make necessary improvements. She has gained the confidence of staff, students and parents rapidly.
- The staff in the provision on site for students who have significant needs employ highly effective approaches. They combine care with academic support and close monitoring.
- Safeguarding is strong. Leaders monitor their actions to keep students safe robustly and follow-up concerns assiduously.
- Early years and Key Stage 1 are very effectively led. The leader has high expectations of the children and staff and checks that they are met. As a result, children achieve well.
- The sixth form provision is strong. Leaders carefully monitor students' progress and support the students in gaining a wide range of good academic and life skills.
- The academy provides high quality experiences that enhance students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the quality of teaching across the academy in 47 lessons. They were accompanied by senior leaders during eight of them. Inspectors made short visits to classrooms accompanied by the literacy coordinator. Inspectors visited the academy’s own provision for students who need extra support and help.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work, met separately with groups of students, including a group of more-able students, a group of students for whom additional support has been provided, a group of Key Stage 1 pupils and a group of Key Stage 5 students. Inspectors conducted a scrutiny of more-able students’ work.
- A range of documents was scrutinised, including the academy’s own data about students’ progress, records relating to behaviour and attendance, safeguarding records, the academy’s own analysis of how well it is doing and how it plans to improve, and teachers’ plans and information regarding the classes they teach.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 69 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and a letter sent to inspectors by the parent of a child who attends the early years provision. Inspectors met with groups of parents and carers, including parents of children attending the early years provision and Year 1.
- Inspectors analysed 65 questionnaires from staff, including support staff.

## Inspection team

Sarah Hubbard, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Lynne Kauffman	Additional Inspector
Cliff Mainey	Additional Inspector
Janet Morrison	Additional Inspector
Clive Butler	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This academy converted to become an academy school on 1 April 2013. When its predecessor school, St Gregory the Great VA Catholic Secondary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The academy is sponsored by the Dominic Barberi multi-academy company.
- In January 2015, the vice-Principal, who joined the school in September 2014, became the acting Principal. In March 2015 she was appointed as Principal of the academy.
- St Gregory the Great Catholic Secondary School provides for a range of age groups. It comprises a larger-than-average 11 to 18 secondary school and a primary school which currently caters for Year 1 pupils. It also has early years provision which includes a nursery, where children attend part time or full time, and Reception, which children attend on a full time basis.
- Year 1 and the early years provision are all located in a new building which opened in February 2015.
- The academy has several units on site to support students on a part-time basis. An inclusion unit supports students who are disabled or have special educational needs, and the GAP unit provides for students whose behaviour is challenging. The academy also houses a unit to support students for whom English is an additional language and a nurture unit for students in Year 7 who need additional help.
- Students come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, with just less than half being White British. Just over four out of every 10 of students speak English as an additional language.
- The academy is divided into four houses.
- A new Chair of Governors was appointed in January 2015.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium (additional funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after) is above average.
- A number of students are educated off site. There are 79 students in Key Stage 4 who attend part-time vocational programmes at Oxford City College, and a very small number attend Meadowbrook.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs is above average.
- The academy meets the government's floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4 so it is consistently good by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what students are capable of achieving
  - ensuring teachers set work that is sufficiently challenging for all students.
- Raise students' achievement during Key Stages 3 and 4 by:
  - accelerating students' progress so that they make good progress over time
  - ensuring that students reach higher standards in GCSE examinations
  - improving the quality and accuracy of students' writing
  - making sure that more-able students reach the high standards they are capable of
  - rapidly closing the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and other students.
- Improve students' behaviour in Key Stages 3 and 4 through:
  - making sure teachers have consistently high expectations of students' behaviour and always apply agreed approaches to managing behaviour
  - further raising students' rates of attendance
  - ensuring that all students take pride in the presentation of their work.
- Improve leaders' and governors' effectiveness by:
  - ensuring subject leaders in the secondary academy have greater impact on the quality of teaching and students' achievement
  - providing opportunities for leaders in the sixth form, primary and early years section of the academy to share good practice with secondary colleagues

- ensuring governors make better use of information on students' achievement to hold leaders to account
- making sure governors have a more detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching so they can more rigorously monitor the link between teachers' performance and pay awards.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

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## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management requires improvement

- The new Principal is resolute in her determination to improve students' achievement. She has rapidly strengthened the leadership team, appointing new leaders to key roles such as improving Key Stage 4 achievement. These changes have not yet had a consistently positive effect on students' achievement.
- In the short time since being in post, the Principal has made significant changes to the way leaders monitor the quality of teaching. Although leaders now have a sharper picture of where strengths and weaknesses lie, it is not detailed enough. Leaders' monitoring has not yet led to improvements across all subjects.
- The senior leader responsible for Year 1 is highly effective. She has high expectations of what pupils can achieve and regularly checks that class teachers are planning to ensure pupils are stretched and behaving well. She has trained Year 1 staff so they are skilled in managing the behaviour of pupils who have significant needs.
- Until recently, targets to manage teachers' performance were not sufficiently focused on ensuring identified groups of students made progress. As a result, some teachers accepted too readily the poor progress made by a number of students. New targets are better, but not all of them are sufficiently specific.
- The Principal has established a culture where all staff, including senior leaders, are more accountable. She meets with senior leaders to review the progress of the academy-wide approaches they manage and identify next steps. As a result, some priorities for improvement have developed quickly, but not all. For instance, teachers and leaders are making better use of data from students' assessments to check how well students are doing against their targets. However, improvements in students' behaviour have been slower.
- The consistency with which senior leaders use their overview of students' progress to challenge subject leaders has improved. However, it has not yet improved sufficiently the progress of disadvantaged students in Key Stage 3. The gap between their progress and that of other students remains too wide.
- The associate principal responsible for tracking students' progress has a highly detailed understanding of the subjects and groups where progress is strong and where it is weaker. This knowledge is well used to focus help and support for students who need extra help to meet their targets, including additional staff. As a result, achievement in Key Stage 4 is improving.
- Subject leaders' contributions to improvement are too varied. Some subject leaders, including those leading English and mathematics, have a sharp understanding of where improvement is needed. They train and support the teachers they manage, and evaluate the impact of the changes they have made. However, not all subject leaders are skilled enough in using the online system to track students' progress and identify where further support for teachers and students is needed.
- Leaders' evaluations of the academy's performance are largely accurate. However, leaders do not evaluate the impact of actions to improve behaviour in enough detail, especially the impact of disruptive behaviour on students' achievement.
- As a result of close monitoring, the senior leader responsible for additional pupil premium funding has a strong understanding of which actions make the most difference. Actions taken are improving the achievement of those eligible for this funding in Key Stage 4. The funding is not yet improving the achievement of this group of students in Key Stage 3, especially the more able.
- Leaders and staff adhere to the academy's values of 'wisdom, justice, integrity and compassion'. As a result, students are well cared for in an environment free from discrimination which promotes equal opportunities. They are supported and nurtured so that they gain the skills and confidence to succeed in their next steps, for example through an effective programme of careers guidance. Consequently, the vast majority of students who leave the academy go on to further their education or pursue work-based training or employment.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school. It is broad and balanced and provides opportunities for all students to achieve. The academy ensures equality of access to GCSE options, which means students who may have underachieved at Key Stage 3 because they joined the academy after Year 7 are supported in taking GCSE subjects, allowing them to access further and higher education. To support the more able, the academy has introduced a wider range of academic GCSE subjects, for example classics.
- The values of modern Britain are woven effectively through the strong religious culture within the academy. A highly visible noticeboard depicts the ways that democracy, tolerance and respect for others ties in with the school's values. These links are strengthened through a variety of curricular and extra-curricular activities, including debating clubs, a very active school council and the use of restorative justice

where appropriate. In tutor time, students discuss the news headlines and teachers use this as an opportunity to promote these values further.

- The academy provides well for students' spiritual and moral education. All students study religious education. The academy provides space and time for students to develop spiritually through, for example, open access to the academy's chapel, weekend retreats and assemblies led by religious leaders. The social and cultural education of students is equally as strong. Summer schools and a well-planned activities week provide opportunities for students to develop their creativity and confidence in performing, and to experience the artistic cultures of a wide range of different countries.
- Leaders closely monitor the attendance and behaviour of the students who are placed in alternative provision. They are informed of any absences from the City of Oxford College by lunchtime of that day, and follow them up in the afternoon. As a result of collaborative monitoring by the college and academy, many students remain at the college to pursue post-16 courses.
- The senior leader responsible for the primary provision effectively promotes sport and fitness through a plan financed by the academy. She makes good use of the coaches who work with the older students. Consequently, pupils are developing their sports skills and learning how to transfer them between different disciplines. The leader rightly plans to use the sport funding that she has just received to access a broader range of sports coaching.
- The multi-academy company has used expertise from within this academy to improve the primary academies in its partnership. It has provided support for the academy by managing the building of the new primary and early years block. The representative from the multi-academy company rightly identified that, until very recently, the company had provided limited support for leaders and governors, which contributed to declining achievement. However the multi-academy has robust plans in place to improve its support of the academy in this respect.
- Safeguarding requirements are met in all areas of the academy. Leaders are highly alert to keeping students safe and take swift action where necessary.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The Chair and vice-chair of Governors have accurately evaluated the impact of the governing body to date. They know that, in the past, governors were too reliant on receiving information from the academy. They were not clear enough about the academy's strengths and weaknesses, including how well the academy's students achieve compared to other students nationally and the impact of pupil premium funding. Although they offered some challenge to the academy's leaders, it was not robust enough and achievement declined.
  - The governing body has recently made significant improvements to the way it works. These changes include identifying link governors to monitor specific areas of the academy's work, asking leaders to report to governors on the impact of the work they do and scrutinising students' examination results. As a result, governors are better informed. Governors' judgements are now sharper, so the governors are able to challenge leaders more effectively. For example, governors instigated interviewing a panel of pupils because they wanted to find out more about behaviour.
  - The governing body still does not have a detailed enough view of where the strengths and weaknesses lie in teaching, however. Governors have a broad overview of the targets set to manage teachers' performance, but are not yet checking that there is a close link between teachers' pay and their performance.
  - The governors have been trained in safeguarding and how to recruit staff more safely. They check that the academy meets safeguarding requirements.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

## requires improvement

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. While behaviour in class is good in Year 1, the early years and sixth form, students in Key Stages 3 and 4 told inspectors that some of their lessons are disrupted by the poor behaviour of a minority. One student commented, 'It is just a few, but they mess up lessons.'
- A thorough review of behaviour was recently carried out. As a result, a new approach to managing behaviour in lessons in Key Stages 3 and 4 was agreed. Staff are not yet implementing this new approach consistently. In most cases, where teachers employ agreed approaches to manage behaviour, students modify their conduct. However, as a result of variations in the standards of students' behaviour that teachers accept, a small minority of students challenge some teachers when they ask for their behaviour

to improve. These students do not treat their teachers respectfully.

- The presentation in some students' books is poor. A number of students scribble in their books and tear pages out. Teachers do not always challenge students' lack of pride in their work or respect for property. Some teachers' low expectations mean that a number of students often do not challenge themselves to improve.
- The academy has effective approaches to managing the behaviour of students at break and lunchtime. For example, students are allowed to use the main hall to eat their lunch, and relax with their friends. As a result, students' behaviour at lunchtime is more consistently positive than during lessons.
- Leaders and staff monitor students' behaviour closely at break and lunch time. They intervene to ensure students pick up litter and speak to each other appropriately. Despite this, a small number of students do not show enough respect for each other or their environment and they occasionally use offensive language.
- The academy has good provision to support students who exhibit very challenging behaviour. The behaviour of students within the GAP unit is largely positive. Teachers and assistants have been well trained so they can teach students methods to manage their own behaviour.
- Attendance has improved since 2014. However, despite being closer to the national average, it is still too low. The attendance of some students remains a concern to the academy and is monitored closely. New procedures for latecomers provide disincentives for those who arrive late and rewards for the houses that have the fewest 'late marks'. Good attendance and punctuality are rewarded in assemblies, and both are improving.
- The behaviour and safety of students attending alternative provision is monitored effectively by the academy's staff and the off-site staff who support the students. As a result, students attending alternative provision behave well, are safe and make good progress.

### Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders have relevant local knowledge which they use effectively to ensure their efforts are appropriately targeted. Leaders do everything they can to ensure the students identified as being at risk rapidly access support from external agencies and the dedicated units within the academy. They monitor the impact of this support closely.
- Leaders work well with Oxfordshire's Kingfisher Team (the multi-agency team set up to prevent sexual exploitation) to keep students safe who may be targeted for grooming. Leaders closely monitor the attendance of students identified as being at risk and take immediate action if students do not attend, including contacting the Kingfisher Team to obtain further guidance. Leaders are meticulous in ensuring that records belonging to students identified at risk are passed on to post-16 providers.
- The academy has a good relationship with the local authority's social services. As a result of their close collaboration, the process of referring students to social services runs smoothly. The academy receives timely updates from the local authority regarding the progress of referrals.
- The academy's safeguarding leaders are highly skilled at identifying students who may need extra help. For example, having identified young carers as a group at risk of feeling under-valued, the academy provided extra support for these students and marked Young Carers' Awareness Day.
- The academy provides good guidance and training for staff and students about how to keep safe when online. Procedures and systems for trips are thorough, including risk assessments. Records of bullying indicate that incidents are relatively low. Parents and students commented that, when they do occur, staff deal with them effectively.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11 is too variable to be good. In some lessons the work is well planned so it challenges all the students. However, in a small number of lessons, including those in English, mathematics and science, students are not being stretched by the work. However, teaching in the early years and sixth form is good.
- The quality of teaching in some Key Stage 4 lessons in mathematics and English is effective because students are given opportunities to practise and apply their skills and understanding. Teachers make good use of information about students' achievement to identify who needs extra help and what they need to re-visit in lessons. In Key Stage 3 mathematics lessons, the quality of teaching is more varied. In some lessons, teachers do not check well enough to see if students understand the work set. This slows the progress of some students.
- When some teachers mark students' work, they provide detailed guidance about how to improve it and



make sure students act on this advice. This helps students make good progress. However, this is inconsistent.

- A number of teachers have low expectations of how accurate students' writing should be. They do not pay enough attention to correcting the mistakes of students whose knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar is weak. As a result, the accuracy of their writing is not improving fast enough. More-able students are not always challenged by the writing tasks they are set. In some lessons teachers have high expectations of students' conduct and attitudes to learning. They apply academy-wide policies to reinforce their expectations and, consequently, students make better progress. This is inconsistent in Key Stage 3 and 4, however, and consequently some students disrupt the learning of others.
- In some practical lessons, typically art and physical education, teachers ensure students are able to complete tasks well because they have provided them with opportunities to discuss their ideas before starting. They often observe the teacher or other students modelling effective skills and techniques. In these lessons students are clear about what they need to do to succeed and stay focused on achieving their goals.
- The quality of teaching in the units dedicated to supporting students is typically stronger than in the rest of the secondary part of the academy. Teachers and assistants have expertise which is regularly refreshed. Consequently, the work they set meets the needs of the students well. The unit managers all work closely with the different curriculum areas to ensure that, whilst in the unit, students can still make progress in their studies. In the nurture unit, high quality marking, which identifies when students use key words, is helping students make progress.
- In Year 1, the thematic approach to learning means that teachers set tasks that require pupils to combine skills from different disciplines. These tasks are often linked to 'real world' events and situations, so as to maximise pupils' learning and interest. For example, pupils wrote a newsletter report based on *Three Little Pigs*. The task also involved a numeracy and performance element. Pupils' reading and numeracy skills are reinforced effectively through working with adults in small groups.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students start Year 7 with below-average attainment but not enough make good progress by the end of Year 11. Consequently, the proportion of students achieving five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, in 2013 and 2014 was below average. Students' progress has not improved consistently enough.
- Students do not achieve well enough in the range of academic GCSE subjects known as the EBacc. The proportion of students achieving pass grades in EBacc subjects is significantly lower than average. White British students are underachieving in these subjects compared with other students nationally.
- A significant number of students took their mathematics GCSE examinations early and did not subsequently resit them. This meant that many of them could concentrate on English in Year 11. Although this approach led to improved progress in English, it did not support some students well in reaching their target grades in mathematics. Their progress was too slow.
- More-able students do not achieve well enough. They often make average progress during Key Stages 3 and 4. As a result, not enough of these students reach the highest grades in their GCSE examinations.
- The students who attend part-time courses at Oxford City College make good progress. Reports from the college show all the students enrolled have gained passes in many of the vocational qualifications they take. Consequently, a high proportion of students who attend the college at the start of Key Stage 4 remains there to continue training and studying post-16.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs work well with assistants in the inclusion unit and are effectively supported when they attend lessons in the main academy provision. Leaders monitor students' progress from their starting points and make good use of diagnostic tests to identify students' needs. As a result, most of the students make progress and a significant number make rapid progress.
- Disadvantaged students' achievement is not good enough. In 2014, the gap in the proportion of disadvantaged students who gained five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics widened compared to other students, both within the academy and nationally. Disadvantaged students' slow progress meant that, on average, their attainment in English and mathematics was two grades below that of other students. While current information indicates that disadvantaged students currently in Year 11 are making better progress, gaps in achievement remain too wide during Key Stage 3.
- Students in the unit for English as an additional language make good progress. They are initially immersed in English through a highly structured four-week programme. Students are well supported by additional



staff, many of whom speak the students' first language. They help students effectively bridge the gap between their first language and English. Students have the opportunity to take GCSE examinations in their first language which further support them in their next steps.

- The secondary part of the academy is developing students' reading skills by improving the range and depth of students' subject-related vocabulary. Students' writing skills are not yet strong enough to help them achieve well in examinations. For example, in some science lessons, students mostly write short answers on work sheets. These do not prepare them for the questions in science GCSE examinations which require discussion and detailed explanations of scientific processes and theories.
- Sixth form students make good progress. In 2014, students made good progress from their starting points for both AS and A level. However, the attainment of the more able students was below average in 2014. Fewer students achieved A\* to B grades at both AS and A level than the national picture, although a higher than average proportion of students entered the sixth form with below average achievement.
- The proportion of students achieving A\* to E grades was broadly average at A level and slightly above average at AS level. Current tracking shows students' attainment is higher and most are on track to meet more ambitious targets.
- Pupils in Year 1 make a good start and achieve well. The tests they take when they join Year 1 have been modified so they provide a more accurate baseline from which teachers can measure progress. The most recent tracking shows that the majority of pupils are on course to achieve the targets set for the end of Year 1.
- In the early years, children make good progress from starting points, which are lower than those typical for their age. The proportion attaining a good level of development in 2014 was broadly in line with the national average, although it was slightly lower than average for reading and numbers. In 2014, fewer girls reached a good level of development than boys. The current early years information shows this gap is closing.

### The early years provision

is good

- The highly-skilled senior leader responsible for the provision ensures that the early years environment helps children to develop the skills they need to be healthy, well socialised, successful, and happy. Children learn well in this setting and are effectively prepared for the challenges of Year 1.
- The majority of children enter the nursery with skills in language and communication and personal and social development which are much lower than those typical for their age. Staff rightly give priority to developing children's skills in these areas. At lunchtime, for example, children sit with their key worker to eat a proper 'family' meal. They are joined by their siblings from Reception and Year 1 and the students who help out in the early years provision. The key worker models the skills involved in sharing a meal, including correct use of cutlery and turn-taking during conversation. This daily ritual supports children's acquisition of communication and social skills.
- Key people, working with children in the early years setting make good use of the indoor and outdoor environment to engage the children and arouse their intellectual curiosity. Staff take great care to ensure the equipment meets the emotional and social needs of individual children. For example, a yurt is available those who need quiet, well-contained spaces in order to feel safe.
- Highly effective planning and training by the senior leader ensure that adults help children effectively to develop crucial numeracy and literacy skills through role play activities. There are well thought out question prompts for adults to use when they join in the play activities. These questions are helpfully attached to role play equipment. Consequently, adults make the best use of opportunities that arise to move children's learning on through play.
- Staff develop parents' involvement in their children's learning effectively. Parents commented that they appreciate the home-school journal which records children's learning and development. To ensure that their involvement leads to improved progress, some parents have attended training delivered by staff on how they can best support their children's learning at home.
- In 2014, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was broadly in line with national average. The proportion of girls achieving a good level of development was well below that of boys which was above the national average. There is strong evidence that many of the children entered the nursery with skills well below those typical for their age and made good progress.
- Adults carefully monitor the progress children make in their learning and development. This year there has been a sharper focus on teaching children the sounds that letters make and developing their number skills. Children take home letters matched with their sounds and practise them with their parents in six-

weekly cycles. As a result, children are making better progress than last year and are securely on track to meet national averages for good levels of development in all areas of learning.

- Children behave well and care for each other because they are explicitly taught how to do this. Adults keep a careful watch over the children and quickly intervene if they become too excited. Staff are trained about safeguarding and procedures meet requirements.

### The sixth form provision

is good

- The quality of provision in the sixth form is more effective than that in Key Stages 3 and 4 because most students make good progress from their starting points and are well supported in their studies.
- In keeping with the values of the academy, all students who apply gain entry to the sixth form, regardless of their ability or behaviour record. As a result, students with a wide range of abilities and needs join the sixth form. They are well catered for by the array of academic and vocational courses offered and the support they receive from their subject teachers and the sixth form leadership team.
- In lessons with larger groups, teachers plan the sequence of activities carefully so each builds upon the one before. They plan opportunities for students to share and discuss their own ideas and those of experts in their field of study. In some very small groups, the learning is less formally structured and this slows the progress of some students.
- Sixth form leaders have worked alongside subject leaders to ensure that assessment across different subjects and courses is more effective. Sixth form leaders use their regular analysis of assessment data to identify students who need extra help and challenge subject teachers to ensure targeted students catch up. Leaders also arrange for teachers to share good practice to support improvements. Consequently, the most recent information on students' progress indicates that a higher proportion of students than last year is on track to meet their targets.
- Sixth formers find the uniformity in teachers' assessments helpful. Their progress is given a traffic light colour and where students are 'red' they are offered extra help. They see this as positive because both their teachers and sixth form leaders are very encouraging towards students with 'red' progress and openly identify them as 'a priority'.
- A relatively high proportion of students who enter the sixth form re-take mathematics and English GCSE. Most of the students achieve grade C in the resits because of the way teachers use probing questioning to check their understanding. Teachers have a sharp focus on the skills students need to demonstrate to achieve success. Where students lack these skills, teachers work intensively to ensure they obtain them quickly.
- Students are well provided in choosing their next steps by the wide range of information, experiences and guidance available to them. This supports students in making well-informed decisions. For example, the academy hosted an 'apprenticeship day' to assist students in applying for apprenticeships; they also took students to a careers fair at a local car manufacturer. Staff provide effective support for those aiming to go to university, including organising motivational speakers from local universities and a club dedicated to helping students write their university applications.
- The opportunities provided by the academy for students to develop their leadership and social skills are strengths of the provision; of particular note is the qualification offered in youth work. Sixth form students are leadership ambassadors, mentor and coach younger students, and also work on the tills in the canteen. As a result, sixth formers leave with the interpersonal and leadership skills to succeed in their next steps.
- Sixth form students are all trained in safeguarding because the vertical tutoring system enables them to support and act as role models to the younger members of their tutor group. Sixth formers are proud of the fact that younger students look up to them and, as a consequence, they behave well.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139528
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	449798

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

<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,333
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	206
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Margaret Madden
<b>Principal</b>	Dr Marcella McCarthy
<b>Telephone number</b>	01865749933
<b>Fax number</b>	01865717314
<b>Email address</b>	stgregory@dbmac.org.uk

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