

Magna Academy Poole

Ashtown Close, Adastral Road, Poole, BH17 8RE

Inspection dates

9–10 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Inspirational leadership by the Principal and senior leaders has brought about very rapid improvements in the quality of education which this academy provides. The highly effective support of the sponsors and governors has made a strong contribution to these improvements.
- Many students start at the academy with lower achievement in reading, writing and mathematics than expected for their age. Excellent teaching enables students to catch up quickly. They make outstanding progress in many subjects.
- In 2014, from these very low starting points, the proportion of Year 11 students achieving at least five GCSE passes at grade C or better, including in English and mathematics, was above the national average. Reliable inspection evidence shows that these achievements are set to improve still further in 2015 and beyond.
- Due to highly effective management of teachers' performance and very good training, the quality of teaching across all subjects and year groups is now very high. Teachers have high expectations of their students, who respond by producing excellent work.
- Students have an eagerness to learn. Many attend additional lessons before and after the normal school day, at weekends or during the school holidays. Behaviour in lessons is almost always impeccable.
- Students identify there is very little bullying, and the academy's records confirm this. Students say they feel safe at school and enjoy the responsibilities they are given. They are very aware of risks, such as those that arise through the misuse of electronic media.
- The curriculum is a growing strength. The range of GCSE and A-level courses is expanding. Students develop an excellent understanding of British values such as fairness, tolerance and democracy.
- With the guidance of the sponsoring body, governors provide a high level of challenge to senior leaders because of their thorough understanding of the academy's performance.
- The sixth form is excellent. Students are smart and hard-working. Many started secondary school with limited skills but are now able to tackle very demanding work that is leading to high achievement in the courses offered.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 35 lessons. In addition, inspectors made briefer visits to a number of other learning activities such as revision sessions taking place outside the usual school hours. Many of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised the written and other work of groups of students, notably in English, in order to determine their progress over a period of time.
- Inspectors reviewed documents, including those relating to students’ attainment and progress, behaviour and safeguarding. They also analysed data supplied by the academy concerning the attainment and progress of current students.
- Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body, the chief executive of the sponsoring body and several groups of students. A telephone conversation was held with an external consultant employed by the academy.
- The views of 63 parents, who submitted them on the Ofsted online Parent View survey, were analysed and taken into account, as were a very small number of other communications from parents. The views of 35 staff who completed a questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Paul Sadler, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional Inspector
Stephanie Matthews	Additional Inspector
David Herbert	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than the average-size secondary school.
- Magna Academy became a sponsored academy school on 1 September 2013. The sponsoring body is the Aspirations Academy Trust. When its predecessor school, Ashdown Technology College, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good overall.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs is average. Most of these students have moderate learning or behavioural difficulties, although some have more profound needs.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for children who are looked after) is above average.
- The proportion of students at an early stage of learning English is below average.
- The academy does not use any alternative provision.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the work already undertaken to broaden the curriculum, as resources allow, by:
 - expanding the range of GCSE courses available to students in Years 9 to 11, especially in the field of the creative arts
 - extending the range of AS and A-level courses available to sixth form students.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Since the academy was opened in September 2013, the Principal has pursued relentlessly and successfully his vision of the academy as an outstanding provider of education in the local area. In this he has been supported ably by senior leaders, other staff, the sponsoring body and the governors.
- Key to this success has been improvement in the quality of teaching. Accurate checks have been followed by very effective training and other support for teachers where needed, with robust action being taken when necessary. As a result, teaching is of consistently high quality. Staff morale is excellent, with all staff following agreed policies to ensure that students are clear about what is expected of them.
- Middle leadership is outstanding. Subject leaders know about recent developments in their subject and are anxious to bring about further improvements in students' achievement. For example, achievements in geography and mathematics have improved greatly during the current year. The findings of recent research into effective teaching of different subjects are used widely.
- The curriculum provides students with the right courses to move on to higher education or fulfilling employment and training opportunities. The range of challenging GCSE courses has been broadened, for example, to include separate physics, chemistry and biology courses, and a philosophy and ethics course. Advanced and AS level courses have been introduced for the first time. Leaders recognise that the school do not provide a full range of GCSE courses, such as in the field of creative arts.
- Students leave school well prepared for life in modern Britain. They understand matters such as tolerance and democratic values. Deficiencies in their skills of reading, writing and mathematics, present on entry to the academy, are rectified quickly.
- Senior leaders have been successful in attracting grants to improve library facilities. Students with particular communication needs, such as those at an early stage of learning English, receive excellent support that meets their individual needs. These aspects of the academy's work show the underpinning commitment to equality of opportunity for all students.
- Expectations of students' behaviour are very high. Their response is excellent because these expectations are straightforward and are made very clear. Students comment on the high expectations of staff and the very positive climate for learning. This extends to matters such as punctuality and smartness of appearance. For example, sixth form students are expected to wear clothing suitable for work in business. These approaches are very successful in fostering good relationships between students and in tackling potential discrimination.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged students is used exceptionally well. Gaps in their performance when compared with other students, both within the academy and nationally, are small. As with all students, the progress this group are making is checked regularly and action is taken quickly where progress might have slowed.
- The sponsoring body and other external consultants provide excellent support to senior leaders. This has contributed extremely well to the very rapid improvements made.
- Safeguarding of students and child protection arrangements meet requirements and are highly effective. Staff are trained successfully and students know where they can turn for help. Independent advice and guidance for those who are leaving or wish to continue their education is of high quality. External speakers and trips to well-known universities improve students' ability to make informed choices.
- Parents and others in the local community recognise and welcome the rapid improvements at the academy. A few parents have found the extra demands made on their children to be a personal challenge. There is evidence to support the view of a very small number of parents that the academy is occasionally slow to respond to individual enquiries.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly effective. They have a very thorough understanding of the academy's many strengths and of those areas that are in need of further development. They know how the academy's performance relates to that of other schools. They use this knowledge well to challenge senior leaders to make further improvements, often through the use of demanding long-term targets.
 - Governors keep a very close eye on the quality of teaching across the academy. They know how teachers' performance is checked and how the information is used to reward outstanding performance. They understand also the action taken to remedy shortcomings.
 - Governors check that additional funding for disadvantaged students is having the desired effect in improving their performance. They publish relevant information on the informative website, which meets other requirements for publishing information.

- Governors meet all their requirements, including those of keeping students safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**are outstanding****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. They are exceptionally keen to learn, and show real enthusiasm in lessons. For example, during the inspection students were heard pleading for a lesson to continue, rather than taking their break.
- Students behave exceptionally well around the academy. There is no litter, graffiti or other items of rubbish such as discarded chewing gum. They respond quickly to requests from staff or from prefects, for example to form an orderly queue for the dining hall.
- Students are polite to adults and to each other. They are very tolerant of differences. For example, they listen carefully to answers from those at an early stage of learning English and help them out when appropriate.
- Students say there is very little bullying. This is supported by records the school keeps, which show reductions over time from already modest levels. Students themselves do not tolerate bullying by others, and a recent anti-bullying campaign, led by sixth form students, was well received by others.
- Students are really proud to be members of the academy. They talk with excitement about the improvements and changes made.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Students believe rightly that staff care about them as individuals, and they appreciate the extra time that staff spend on ensuring they achieve the best possible results.
- The modern building with wide corridors and large circulation areas enables students to move safely from place to place.
- Students understand the importance of regular, punctual attendance and both these aspects of the academy's work have improved significantly. A few students continue to be persistently absent, and the school works successfully with these students and their parents to improve their attendance. For example, the school sometimes sends a minibus to collect them and bring them to school.
- Arrangements to ensure staff and visitors are suitable to have contact with children are very robust and effective. The academy has good relationships with external agencies and ensures that disadvantaged students receive the help they need.
- Students understand the dangers of misuse of electronic media, and the use of these in school is rightly restricted. Students are keen to help those who might be subject to racism or homophobia. Staff are well trained to recognise matters such as child sexual exploitation and students have confidence in speaking to an appropriate person about personal concerns.

The quality of teaching**is outstanding**

- The expectations of teachers are consistently very high, so students know what is expected of them in all lessons. Students are set very ambitious targets and staff realise that many will need much help to achieve them.
- Regular, accurate assessment enables any slowing of progress to be spotted quickly. Help is then arranged that best meets the needs of the individual. Often this will involve additional teaching outside the school day, or further support in a one-to-one or very-small-group situation.
- The teaching of reading and writing is especially effective. Many students start in Year 7 with limited skills in these areas. They make very rapid progress and are soon reading widely and in depth. Similarly, excellent teaching takes place in mathematics, where many start in Year 7 without secure knowledge of their times-tables.
- Lessons are very well planned and teachers make effective use of the extensive information they have on each student's progress. This is used, for example, to direct questions at particular students or groups of students. This strategy is often used very effectively to ensure that, for example, students who have special educational needs or who are at an early stage of learning English are fully included in discussions.
- There is also a consistent approach to marking and feedback on progress, given to individual students. Students know what to expect and usually respond to teachers' requests in order to improve their work. Students then understand how the quality of their work relates to that of other students nationally, and of

what they need to do in order to achieve a higher grade.

- Teachers are very knowledgeable about their subjects and use recent research to ensure that lesson content and structure reach the highest possible standards. Homework is used well to enhance students' learning. Completion of homework is checked regularly.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- From their generally low starting points, students make exceptional progress. Among Year 11 leavers in 2014, the proportions making good or better progress in English and mathematics were well above national averages. Staff predictions and scrutiny of students' work show that in 2015 the proportions making excellent progress will be even higher. Work seen in English, produced by students in Year 11 who could barely read and write at the start of Year 7, was of at least GCSE grade C standard. This reflected excellent progress in both reading and writing.
- In mathematics, there is a similar picture. Students who in Year 7 struggled with multiplication and division could solve complex mathematical problems by Year 11. This is because they are given extra help when necessary that enables their progress to accelerate rapidly. This approach is used in all subjects.
- There is no significant difference in the achievements of boys and girls, those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, or those who arrive at an early stage of learning English, when compared with other students. In the case of those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, individualised support brings about rapid progress, with many such students achieving highly in GCSE and other examinations.
- Disadvantaged students leaving Year 11 in 2014 attained GCSE passes in English that were, on average, about one-third of a grade lower than those of other students nationally. In mathematics, the gap was about half of one grade lower. When compared with other students in the academy, the gap in English was less than one third of a grade, and in mathematics was zero. The progress this group made in both subjects exceeded that of others nationally and was very close to that of other students at the academy.
- In 2014, the small group of most able Year 11 students did not make quite as much progress relative to other students. Analysis of information shows that this was because their choices were restricted by the curriculum they were offered at the predecessor school. Changes are being phased in to increase their choices, for example separate physics, chemistry and biology GCSEs, and there is good evidence that the achievement of this group is improving rapidly among current students.
- Evidence of excellent and improving progress over a sustained period of time was found in a range of subjects including, but not restricted to, history, English, mathematics, science and French.
- The academy is not using early entry for GCSE examinations.

The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- The sixth form is a rapidly developing strength of this outstanding academy. Until 2014, only vocational courses were available. Attainment and progress on these courses exceeded national averages.
- AS and A-level courses were introduced in September 2014. Students' work and records of their progress show that current students have made great strides, with many justified predictions of high grades, often from very low starting points. Achievement on vocational courses, observed, for example, in a Level 3 (A-level equivalent) sports studies course, remains strong. Students who are disadvantaged achieve as well as others.
- As an example of the outstanding achievement seen on advanced courses, students were observed embarking on the A2 psychology course. The teachers' records showed that none of these 14 students had attained the national mathematics standard at the end of their primary education. Drawing on their prior knowledge from the AS course, they were confidently and accurately discussing complex observational and statistical techniques used in psychological research. They were able to fully demonstrate the outstanding progress they have made over a long period of time.
- Few students entered the sixth form in 2014 without a GCSE pass at grade C or above in English, whereas in mathematics the proportion was somewhat higher. Most have now attained the higher grade or are in a position to do so in the current examinations.
- Both behaviour and safety are outstanding in the sixth form, as in the rest of the academy. Sixth form students are a great credit to the academy. Their smart appearance and involvement in the life of the school, for example in charitable work and drama productions, make them excellent role models for younger students. They show great enthusiasm in lessons and regard it as a privilege to learn in the

academy's sixth form. As with all students, they appreciate the extra time that staff commit to helping them. They also appreciate opportunities to widen their horizons beyond the learning of examination subjects, such as through debates and voluntary work.

- Teaching in the sixth form is superb. Staff have a very good understanding of students' individual strengths and weaknesses. The features of outstanding teaching outlined above continue into the sixth form in all subjects.
- Students receive excellent advice and guidance. Academy leaders have worked especially hard to forge links with universities as there is little history of university entrance from the school. Many students now aspire to degree-level qualifications, often in vocational areas such as nursing.
- Leadership of the sixth form is excellent. In particular the professional, business-like ethos makes a highly positive impression on the outside observer. Wise decisions have been taken to broaden the curriculum, especially at A and AS levels, within the available resources. The challenge now, as leaders appreciate, is to continue that expansion as numbers grow.

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	139711
Local authority	Poole
Inspection number	450143

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	637
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	91
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ken Rose
Principal	Richard Tutt
Telephone number	01202 604222
Email address	office@aatmagna.com

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