

North Liverpool Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131065
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	381298
Inspection dates	16–17 January 2012
Lead inspector	Neil Mackenzie

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

Type of school	Academy
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	1,408
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	265
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel Ward
Headteacher	Kay Askew
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Neil Mackenzie	Additional inspector
Nell Banfield	Additional inspector
Michael Cooper	Additional inspector
Andrew Henderson	Additional inspector
Alan Parkinson	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors saw 43 lessons and 43 different teachers. They listened to students read during reading recovery sessions. Meetings were held with three members of the governing body including the chair, staff and groups of students. Inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including internal and external student progress data, academy development planning and students' work. They scrutinised 26 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and 42 completed by members of staff. They analysed external surveys completed by students, parents and carers. Inspectors looked at the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), but no responses were recorded.

Information about the school

The academy is larger than most secondary schools and in 2009 it moved to a new purpose-built site. The majority of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. More boys than girls attend the academy and the proportion of students identified as having special educational needs and those with disabilities is significantly above average, but the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is below average. Nearly a quarter of students are from minority-ethnic groups, very few students are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The academy's specialisms are business and enterprise, and mathematics and computing. The academy has Healthy School status and numerous awards including the Becta Mark, Customer Service Excellence Mark (Charter Mark), Sportsmark and Inclusion Mark. It has recently been awarded both Studio School and University Technical College sponsorships. The government's floor standards have been met. Since the previous inspection, the number of students in both the main school and in the sixth form has risen by a quarter.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- This is a good academy. Leaders and managers have the highest aspirations for what this academy can offer its students and its community. All staff care passionately about the welfare and education of every student. As a result the academy is constantly reviewing its performance and changing its practice. It is improving rapidly. Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding.
- Students make good progress in most subjects and sometimes outstanding progress. Students achieve well in English and mathematics, but the academy recognises it needs to improve the GCSE results in these subjects for a small minority of the more-able students. Teachers ensure students enjoy their learning and students find lessons engaging. There is an outstanding curriculum which is highly personalised, provides clear purpose for learning and rapidly improves students' personal development, confidence and self-esteem. Student's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- During the inspection, inspectors found students' behaviour to be excellent. They showed respect and courtesy for each other and adults, their movement around the academy was orderly and virtually no learning was interrupted in lessons observed. Students worked enthusiastically and cooperatively. Students take pride in their academy and value their education. Although some parents raised concerns about incidents of bullying, they also trust the academy to deal with these effectively. Students say that when incidents do occur they are dealt with quickly and very effectively by staff. Attendance has been low; it is improving rapidly and is now broadly average. The numbers of exclusions is reducing rapidly. Students feel very safe in school and they are safe.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Every student is encouraged and supported to reach their potential. Few students leave the sixth form prematurely, and none leave without joining employment or moving on to further or higher education. The students are excellent role models around the academy and in the wider community. Their behaviour is outstanding. The quality of teaching the sixth

formers receive is outstanding, all staff are creative and have high expectations of themselves and of their students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement for the more-able students, particularly in English and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring work provides suitable challenge
 - the strategic use of questioning to develop understanding and students' confidence in developing a reasoned argument
 - improving students' skills in producing clearly structured writing that develops their analytical and evaluative skills.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Students enter the academy with below average attainment. Literacy skills for many students are underdeveloped. Numeracy skills, although stronger than literacy, are also weak. By the time they leave the academy, students' attainment is above average. Achievement is good because many students make rapid progress in a wide range of courses and qualifications which particularly suit their needs. However, a small minority of the more-able students make only satisfactory progress in English and mathematics GCSE courses. In lessons, teachers make significant efforts to systematically improve students' literacy skills in all subjects. These are effective in improving students' confidence and proficiency. In one lesson, a teacher translated key words into a student's first language. This ensured the student fully understood important concepts of the subject and improved their literacy skills. Students are enthusiastic about their learning which contributes to their good progress. The progress of students who have special educational needs and those with disabilities, and those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is particularly good and the gaps between their attainment and that of other students are closing. Almost all groups of students achieve as well as each other. The school is dedicated to providing equality of opportunity, and is already introducing strategies to improve its provision for the most-able. Parents and carers say they agree that their children are making good progress. The progress of students in the sixth form is outstanding. The academy sets challenging targets for these students; they achieve, and often exceed them.

Quality of teaching

Teaching in the main school is good and it is outstanding in the sixth form. Most parents agree that teaching is good. In the best lessons, teaching is inspiring. Students are motivated to succeed and thoroughly enjoy their learning. Lessons are broken down into different activities which can include group tasks, individual work and time for reflection. In a lesson in relation to children in Auschwitz, a video about

the camp was playing in the background as students worked, inspiring and thought-provoking music was also played. Difficult issues were dealt with sensitively and the ethos of care that exists throughout the academy was extended across cultures and time. Teachers plan in detail, ensuring lessons are engaging and well resourced. The use of computers in lessons is completely natural; students making their own minds up as to whether they are the best tool to use. Teachers use a wide range of strategies that maintain students' interest and pace is often fast. Teachers know their students well and provide for their emotional needs exceptionally well. Relationships between students and staff are excellent. The use of additional support is well targeted and effective, using learning-support assistants who are very well trained.

Assessment of students' learning is a very successful feature of teaching in this academy. Most teachers know the potential of their students and they monitor their progress systematically and often. Marking is regular and, as a result of effective feedback, students know how to improve. Students are taught how to assess their own work and that of others, giving them the skills they need to independently evaluate and improve their learning. Students appreciate what their teachers are doing for them and value their education.

Where teaching is less effective teachers miss opportunities to challenge the most-able. Resources are less well matched to their particular needs. Skills of speaking and listening are under-developed, limiting students' abilities and confidence in responding thoughtfully to a point of view. Students will discuss in small groups, but many are reluctant to express themselves in larger groups. Some teachers rely too much on talking to their students and questioning is less effective, not giving sufficient time for students to develop their own thoughts. The more sophisticated skills of analysing and evaluating, within writing, are not sufficiently well developed, and sometimes restrict the most-able students to reach the highest grades in GCSEs.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Almost all parents and carers say students are safe in this academy. The site is secure. Systems to ensure suitable recruitment are highly effective, promoting very high standards in safeguarding. However, the most important aspect to the sense of security is the trust the community has in the academy leadership team to deal very effectively with issues that do arise. The vast majority of problems start out of school and the consequences are felt within the school. Most typically, they are the misuse of social networking and other forms of territorial bullying. Over time, the academy has implemented policies and structures that have resulted in an academy that is considered by its students as secure and safe, one where they say they can thrive in a positive and supportive atmosphere, without discrimination. Exclusions have been high, but now the work of the academy is respected by the community; students genuinely value their education and exclusions are dropping rapidly. Numbers of students who were persistently absent were also high, again these numbers have reduced significantly. Attendance is now broadly average. Academic progress is rising. During the inspection, inspectors observed students integrating exceptionally well and group work was conducted harmoniously. Students are confident and happy and they are proud of their academy. They acted responsibly at all times, including at breaks and in the large dining area. Students' behaviour and positive attitudes made a significant contribution to successful learning in lessons observed.

Leadership and management

The governing body and the principal are passionate about driving whole-community improvement through the work of the academy. Their inspired leadership has radically improved student behaviour and attitudes to education. It has provided something of real value to the community. Promoting equality of opportunity is foremost on the academy's agenda for improvement. Most significantly, it provides students with the confidence, personal skills and qualifications needed to make a successful start in the next stage of their lives. Almost all leave the main school and enter education, employment or training. Community health programmes are delivered through the academy. When once parent consultation evenings were poorly attended, year group consultations now need to be spread over three evening sessions. Student achievement has improved significantly since the academy opened. These improvements are sustained and have only been possible through dedication and long-term strategic planning. For this academy, the job is never complete: it constantly reviews its work and changes rapidly for the benefit of its students. Governors and other senior leaders ensure safeguarding is of a high quality.

The curriculum is outstanding. It provides an excellent range of opportunities for students and motivates students to achieve. The academy alters its curriculum each year to ensure that it responds to students' needs, aspirations and interests. It is highly personalised and focused on the well-being of every pupil. Pupils respond very positively to these opportunities which provide clear purpose to their learning, including those at risk of disaffection with school. Developing literacy skills forms the foundation of the curriculum, and in this academy the curriculum is fundamental to improving achievement. It is powerfully enriched by an extensive range of experiences which support students' personal development and their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, which is good.

The academy has developed a very effective curriculum for the sixth form. Provision meets the individual needs of students at all ability levels. It offers a range of A-level, BTEC and GCSE courses that students can take in any combination, to meet their individual needs. Student choices and their progress are carefully monitored to ensure successful progression beyond the sixth form to higher education, training or employment. Students state that they enjoy being in the sixth form. Students feel valued and listened to. The Student Parliament and Faculty Focus Group representatives provide an effective student voice that contributes to academy improvement. Students feel very well supported. The highly-personalised provision and care that is a feature of the main school is also essential to the success of the sixth form. The sixth form is a strength of the academy.

Careful recruitment, high quality induction and continued training of all adults within the academy are of paramount importance. Weekend residential form part of teachers' continued professional development, many take leadership training. Highly effective performance management programmes ensure all adults are well motivated to improve. All staff agreed that they feel their contribution to the academy is valued. In-house training of staff is of exceptional quality. This careful development of all staff means leadership and management at all levels is outstanding and the academy has excellent capacity to continue its improvement.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



18 January 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of North Liverpool Academy, Liverpool, L5 0SQ

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your academy and working with us. We thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to talk with you about your work and to listen to your views. We judge that North Liverpool Academy is a good academy.

We recognised the positive relationships you have with your teachers and other adults. We were also pleased to hear how you appreciate the opportunities the academy offers you.

- There are many things we like about your school, the highlights were:
 - how well led and managed your academy is, and how passionate adults are to continue to make improvements
 - the sixth form; it is outstanding
 - the good care, guidance and support available for you
 - the way in which you and your parents and carers say you feel safe in school
 - the excellent range of courses and opportunities available to you.

There is one thing we have asked the senior leaders to do in order to improve your academy even further. It is to improve achievement for the more-able students, particularly in English and mathematics

The inspection team hope you are pleased with the things we have said about your academy and that you are proud of what has been achieved. You will see that there are still some important things to do in order to make further improvements. If you all continue to work together this should be achievable.

Yours sincerely

Neil MacKenzie
Lead inspector

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