

The Isis Academy

Iffley Turn, Oxford, OX4 4DU

Inspection dates 10–11 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	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

- Very ambitious leadership and the pursuit of excellence have resulted in high expectations for all students.
- Leaders, including governors, have ensured that students make outstanding progress by providing rigorous checking of learning and high quality training for staff.
- Members of the governing body have increased their skills and they now use these well to challenge leaders and hold the school to account.
- Governors manage the budget extremely effectively, ensuring that disadvantaged students achieve as well as their classmates in English and mathematics.
- Parents are very pleased with their children's progress.
- Students achieve outstandingly well in literacy and numeracy, acquiring some excellent accreditation.
- The excellent range of subjects and exciting additional experiences support students' learning and personal development exceptionally well.
- Outstanding promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development leads to their exceptional personal development. This, alongside the high levels of attention paid to developing students' independence, confidence and self-esteem, means that their personal development is very strong.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding. The students are extremely polite and helpful. Students say they feel very safe at school and during their trips and visits.
- Teaching is typically outstanding. This is because of the very high quality of expectations and challenge. Very well-planned tasks fully engage all groups of students.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding. Students gain a wide range of qualifications and work-related experiences that will help to sustain them in their futures.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed students' learning in 12 lessons jointly with the senior leaders. In addition, the inspectors also listened to some students reading.
- The inspectors spoke with several different groups of students.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, and the Chair of the Governing Body.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents. These included the school's own information about students' progress, planning and monitoring documents, safeguarding information and students' work.
- The inspectors took account of the 13 parent and carer responses to the Ofsted online survey (Parent View). The 42 responses to the staff inspection questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Denise Morris, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fiona Robinson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Isis Academy converted to become an academy on 1 February 2013. When its predecessor school was inspected by Ofsted in 2010, it was judged to be good.
- The academy caters for students who are supported by a statement of special educational needs or an Education and Health Care plan, for their moderate and/or complex needs.
- About half of all students have behaviour, emotional and social difficulties and a quarter of students have a diagnosis of autism. A few others have additional physical difficulties or sensory impairments.
- Most students are of White British heritage. A very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly Pakistani, and a very small number speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is high. This is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after.
- The academy receives additional sport funding.
- Additional catch-up funding is provided for all students in Year 7.
- The nearby Abingdon and Witney College provides off-site training in vocational education for Year 11 and sixth form students for one day each week.
- The academy enters some students in Years 9 and 10 early for their examinations.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Consult with students and parents to develop an acceptable homework strategy so that students can improve their skills even further.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is highly ambitious for the school. She is effectively supported by other senior leaders and the governors, who regularly pursue excellence in all their activities. Leaders have made sure that students receive an excellent education through their high quality leadership of teaching. Improvement to all aspects of the school's work has ensured that the achievement of students is outstanding.
- Leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the school's performance. They show high quality professional standards in their work and have high expectations of students. Staff work rigorously to ensure that their students make the most rapid progress possible.
- Training for staff is carefully linked to school priorities, ensuring that students' achievement in literacy and numeracy is outstanding. Policies and procedures for setting targets for teachers are fully in place and leaders ensure that salary increases are not awarded until teachers have met targets based on students' progress.
- The excellent range of subjects engages students very well and ensures that they want to come to school and that they enjoy learning. Exciting tasks contribute very effectively to students' academic achievements, their physical skills and their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The experiences provided by the school support British values and contribute extremely well to students' preparation for life in modern Britain. For example, the students talked to inspectors about their fundraising activities, such as cake sales, showing empathy, outstanding behaviour and attitudes and excellent awareness of safety.
- Students' achievements are regularly checked by leaders through the school's tracking system, so that any student falling behind can quickly be helped to catch up. Consequently, almost all students make the progress expected of them in English and mathematics and a very high proportion exceeds the expected progress. Those entered early for examinations achieve very well.
- Middle leaders, including those in charge of subjects, are innovative and helpful. They have been fully involved in the drive to improve the school. They are urgently promoting best practice amongst all staff, helping the use of literacy and numeracy to improve.
- The vast majority of parents are very pleased with the school and those who responded to the online questionnaire said that their children are happy at the school. Home-school diaries are very well used to inform parents about their child's day. However, a high proportion of parents would like their children to receive more homework.
- There is clear evidence that students' achievements are moderated with other schools. Local partnerships with schools and colleges are very effective in ensuring accurate judgements about students' progress.
- Leaders receive high quality guidance from academy leaders who are supportive of improvements. Community links are strong, ensuring that students have some sheltered opportunities to learn about the world of work outside of school.
- The attendance and achievement of students who attend off-site provision are rigorously monitored so that school leaders are clearly aware of their impact.
- Careers guidance is provided from Year 9. Excellent attention is paid to ensuring that students are fully aware of their opportunities.
- Equality of opportunity is ensured for all students at the school through the broad curriculum. The study of different faiths and cultures and the regular assemblies ensure that there is no discrimination of any kind.
- All groups of students achieve equally well and disadvantaged students benefit from high quality support, technological aids and/or communication aids to support their individual needs.
- Primary sport funding and the sport premium funding are both used very well to provide new and exciting experiences for students so that they improve their fitness. The school's safeguarding procedures are very rigorous and meet current requirements. Leaders have ensured the school's procedures for keeping students safe and secure are exceptionally good. Staff are very well trained in identifying students at risk of harm and systems are extremely well followed. Risks are carefully assessed when taking students on visits outside of the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is very supportive and helpful. Members provide excellent support because their capacity to challenge leaders has improved. High quality training for all members has ensured that they now challenge leaders very well. They are fully involved in checking teaching and behaviour and look carefully at how well students are doing. Members know what is working well and what still needs improving. They stringently hold leaders to account. They have an excellent range of skills and

understand the special educational needs of students. They use these skills to the benefit of the school. Governors receive regular reports about students' progress; they understand the school's data and compare them with other similar schools. Frequent checks and headteacher reports enable them to have an accurate view about the school's effectiveness. Excellent management of finances means that additional funding is used very well to improve the learning of those students who are eligible to receive it, so that they achieve at least as well as their classmates, and sometimes better. Members ensure that teachers and staff who perform well are rewarded. They fully understand the process of setting targets for teachers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. They are polite and helpful and work together in groups or partnerships very successfully. School documentation is exceptionally thorough. Incidents are carefully recorded, with high levels of detail, and there is clear information about any actions taken.
- Students' attitudes to learning are excellent because of the way the students are supported and the very consistent approach to behaviour management across the school. Manual handling procedures are clear and staff are well trained to meet the challenging needs of a few students with behaviour needs and those with challenging autism.
- Students, staff and parents are very positive about students' excellent behaviour. This is promoted through strong relationships with staff and between students. There is evidence of some excellent improvements in behaviour over time for individual students. Students say that they really enjoy school. There have been no permanent exclusions since the school became an academy, and short term exclusions are very rare.
- Students understand the different forms of bullying. They told the inspectors that there is no real bullying or teasing at the school. Staff and parents agree. Inspection findings concur with the students' view of outstanding behaviour across the school.
- Students' personal development is promoted extremely well through the high quality support and the exciting choice of activities. For example, during the inspection, students were following a six-week course in badminton. They worked hard, enjoyed the game and several showed that they had learned the skills to play against staff. Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is highly effective. Excellent links with other local schools widen their understanding of right and wrong. There is a balanced approach to students' broadly Christian religious education which encompasses world faiths. This was very clear in an assembly on Hanukkah which provided an opportunity for students to learn about how Jewish people celebrate their faith.
- Students' attendance is outstanding. It has risen steadily in the past two years and is now well above other special schools and mainstream secondary schools nationally.
- Students are prepared exceptionally well for their lives after leaving school through their outstanding progress and the range of qualifications that they achieve. They told inspectors that they were looking forward to their futures.
- Students in the sixth form behave outstandingly well in lessons and in their free time and model excellence for all other students.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. The school has rigorous policies, strategies and procedures to ensure the welfare and safeguarding of students. These ensure that all students are kept very safe.
- Understanding of safety is given a high priority across the academy, ensuring that each student has full understanding of risk. Students were seen learning about making safe decisions in their work and free time, preparing students extremely well for their futures. Students are very aware of personal risk and understand the importance of staying safe on the internet.
- Those in the sixth form are exceptionally safe and secure in their accommodation and at their alternative accommodation. They know how to stay safe and have an excellent understanding of their own personal needs.
- Detailed risk assessments ensure that all students' individual needs are fully taken into account for any activity in the school or on any visits.

The quality of teaching**is outstanding**

- The overall quality of teaching across the academy is outstanding. As a result, students make outstanding progress in most subjects, including English and mathematics. School records show that leaders have been rigorous in checking teaching and learning and in providing high quality training for staff. This has led to considerable improvements over the past two years.
- Outstanding teaching results in all groups of students making excellent progress. Expectations in lessons are very high, ensuring that students widen their understanding and deepen their knowledge. As a result, there are no differences in the quality of learning for different groups. All groups make excellent gains in their key skills, such as in literacy and numeracy as well as in their personal development.
- In Years 6 to 9, for example, students benefited from the high level of focus placed on the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make). Students learnt how to blend sounds together so that they could write previously unknown words accurately to complete their sentences.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are taught extremely well across all age groups. Additional support is readily available for any student who would benefit from it. Staff's high level of skill in the teaching and support of literacy and numeracy have a strong impact on the achievement of students.
- Staff check students' work thoroughly and carefully. Marking in students' books is regular and helpful. This is particularly a strength in English and mathematics lessons. However, homework is not regularly planned for. Too few students take their reading or symbols books home. The school lacks a clear strategy to promote learning at home.
- Students with additional needs benefit from very high quality, regular support from teaching assistants who ensure that students know how to complete their tasks and are aware of what is expected. As a result, these students make the same excellent progress as their classmates.

The achievement of pupils**is outstanding**

- Students' attainment on entry is well below the level expected for their age. This is because of their special educational needs. However, students make excellent progress once at the school and their achievement improves rapidly in a wide range of subjects.
- Evidence from school records, including students' books, shows that the vast majority of students make rapid and sustained progress, achieving outstandingly well at the school. This is because learning across Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, in all subjects, is linked very closely to their needs and abilities. As a result, a very high proportion of students make better than expected progress in English and mathematics.
- Students' achievements in their entry level examinations show their outstanding progress from their very low starting points. Early entry to English and mathematics examinations for a few students in Year 9, and a few more in Year 10, shows how well these students achieve whilst at the school.
- All groups of students achieve equally well. This includes those with behaviour, social and emotional difficulties, those with additional sensory or physical difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders, and the few from different ethnic backgrounds.
- Students' achievement in art and design is exceptional because of inspirational teaching and highly creative resources. Pupils were seen preparing their portfolios for their entry level 3 examinations. They were highly concentrated on the tasks in hand and benefited from exceptional support and guidance that helped them to produce their very best work.
- Disadvantaged students in receipt of additional funding achieve equally as well as their classmates in English and mathematics, and sometimes better. This is because of some high quality resources, additional therapies, and support provided by the additional government funding.
- Students who benefit from additional catch-up or sport funding make very good progress in the use of specific sports resources or technological aids which support their work very well.
- Each student with additional special educational needs receives very effective support to enable them to work alongside their classmates. They make outstanding progress because they have excellent opportunities to work individually with staff. As a result, they improve their reading, writing and mathematics skills.
- The most able students achieve their potential because of very high expectations and the excellent skills of staff. This means they are constantly challenged to improve further and make outstanding progress.
- Students' communication skills are very well developed because of the way the students are encouraged to talk aloud in class and respond to challenges. The vast majority have clear opinions about their own futures and about the school.

The sixth form provision**is outstanding**

- The sixth form is outstanding. Excellent leadership ensures that the curriculum is very well planned, enabling students to reach the highest levels possible.
- School leaders have an accurate view of the sixth form and ensure that progress is excellent through regular monitoring. Outstanding teaching, together with excellent use of assessment, ensures that each student knows what their next steps of learning are.
- In discussion with inspectors, three sixth form students said that they really enjoy their time in the sixth form. They said that they felt really well supported.
- Students all have the opportunity to follow work-related qualifications at Abingdon and Witney College each week. Students know that the training they receive will help them in their futures. They also benefit from opportunities to develop interview skills through enrichment days.
- Students are very well prepared for their futures through visits into the local community and also further afield. Residential visits to places such as Newquay, Edinburgh and Wales ensure that they are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Students agree that bullying is extremely rare and dealt with straight away.
- All students speak strongly about the school's approach to e-safety, racism and homophobia. Older students give advice to younger ones about cyber bullying, showing high levels of maturity in their views.
- Students are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education and employment because their courses and entry level qualifications match their needs and abilities exceptionally well.
- Relationships between students and staff are excellent. Students are extremely well supported in lessons and in their free time. They know that there is always someone who will listen to them.
- Achievement in English and mathematics is outstanding because of the very high focus placed on these areas. As a result, all students leave the sixth form with qualifications that will support them in the future. They also make excellent progress in art. All go on to college courses or into employment when they leave. No students have left the academy in the past two years without future placements.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding and the students thoroughly enjoy their sixth form experience. They say that they feel very safe when they are out and about in the community and on their various work placements.
- Leadership of the sixth form is outstanding because the curriculum is extremely well matched to students' specialist needs and provides an exciting range of courses for students. Opportunities to learn about the wider world are very good, preparing students exceptionally well for the future.
- Vocational studies, including enterprise opportunities, help to improve students' social and moral skills.

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	139312
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	448047

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	10–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	122
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	20
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sian Rodway
Headteacher	Kay Willett
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01865747606
Fax number	01865711134
Email address	head@theisisacademy.co.uk

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