

Dixons McMillan Academy

Trinity Road, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD5 0JD

Inspection dates

20–21 June 2017

| Overall effectiveness | Outstanding |
|--|--------------------------|
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Outstanding |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Outstanding |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Outstanding |
| Outcomes for pupils | Outstanding |
| 16 to 19 study programmes | Outstanding |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Leaders and governors have established a clear vision centred on the key values of 'excellence', 'positivity' and 'respect'. This vision for excellence, and aspiration for success, pervades every aspect of the school.
- Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge. They are ambitious for their pupils and plan lessons that engage, motivate and inspire them. As a result, pupils make outstanding progress from their different starting points.
- Governors provide an excellent balance of challenge and support. They ensure the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils, and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is used exceptionally well.
- Most pupils show impeccable attitudes towards their learning. They are confident, polite and proud to be a Dixons McMillan pupil.
- The curriculum is inclusive and meets the needs of all pupils. Through 'electives' and 'stretch' projects, pupils are provided with additional opportunities to engage in independent research and deepen their knowledge and understanding of the world around them.
- Pupils demonstrate a passion for reading and this is encouraged and expected. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills and because of this they are confident communicators.
- Sixth form leaders are highly effective. As a result of strong teaching and robust intervention, students in the sixth form are making accelerated progress in their A level courses.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are vigilant and proactive in their care of pupils. Pupils know that there is always someone available to support them when needed.
- Pupils' progress across the curriculum is very strong. However, leaders recognise that further work is required in Year 9 music, art and design and technology to ensure that progress matches the outstanding progress in other subjects.
- Leaders recognise that sixth form students could be given further independence to develop their learning skills before the next stage in their education.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils' progress in art, music and design and technology matches the outstanding progress seen in other subjects.
- Develop the independence of students in the sixth form further in preparation for higher education or employment.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The principal is passionate about achieving the best for all pupils. He has created an atmosphere where both students and staff feel appreciated and cared for. He provides exceptionally strong leadership. As a result, all staff who responded to the online questionnaire said that they feel proud to be a member of the school, and staff morale is extremely high.
- Leaders at every level are resolute and strive for excellence every day. Both staff and the vast majority of pupils subscribe to the expectation that Dixons McMillan is a '100% school where everyone should give 100%'.
- Leaders have implemented robust monitoring systems to ensure that no pupil is left behind. The regular cycles of checking pupils' progress result in the implementation of very specific and personalised plans to support pupils' learning. Consequently, pupils make exceptional progress from their different starting points.
- Senior and middle leaders rigorously evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. This has led to remarkably high levels of consistency of experience for pupils across subjects.
- Bespoke and well-targeted professional development ensures all teachers regularly observe one another and share ideas. The bar is set high and the expectation is that every teacher continues to improve. Teachers are encouraged to try out new techniques. This has led to outstanding teaching and learning.
- The rationale for the curriculum has been well considered and it is designed around the needs of the pupils. The curriculum provides pupils with the opportunity to access a multitude of extra-curricular, catch-up and enrichment activities to expand their interests and experiences. 'Electives' enable pupils to develop their creative talents in sport, art, dance, drama, film and music. 'Stretch' projects allow pupils to select an area of study that they would like to develop further, with final projects presented to their peers. These experiences contribute to the development of pupils as well-rounded individuals effectively prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Developing a love of reading is a key aim of leaders. There are a number of opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to develop their reading skills. Pupils talk passionately and with interest about the books they are reading, their favourite authors and how their reading has progressed since becoming a Dixons McMillan pupil.
- Parents and carers are provided with regular updates on the progress of their child through written reports, phone calls from pupil 'advisers' and two parents' evenings per year. Attendance at parents' evenings is markedly high.
- Arrangements for the management of the performance of teachers are clear, exacting and demanding, reflecting the aspirational culture of the school.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils, and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is used creatively to support pupils' individual needs. For example, by using the funding to increase the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

- The Dixons Academies Trust provides excellent support and guidance to Dixons McMillan Academy. Many senior leaders have been recruited from other schools within the trust, and teachers meet regularly to share ideas about teaching, learning and assessment. This has contributed to the outstanding teaching and leadership in the school.
- The school works closely with other local outstanding schools to check and test out the accuracy of pupil assessment information. As a result, leaders are confident that progress information is accurate.

Governance of the school

- Governors provide outstanding leadership. They know the school well and have a clear, objective and insightful overview of the school. This enables them to work in a genuine partnership with school leaders in order to drive improvement.
- Many governors worked closely with the principal to shape the vision and values of the school before it opened in September 2014. Governors are not complacent and have high aspirations for the whole school community as the school expands and grows.
- Governors provide excellent challenge and because of this they have a thoroughly accurate and deep understanding of the quality of provision and the progress of different groups of pupils.
- Governors visit the school regularly and are fully conversant with all aspects of the school. They work with senior and middle leaders to ensure that there is a culture of equality of opportunity which enables all pupils to develop the attributes and skills to prepare them for employment and 'lead happy and successful lives'.
- Governors ensure Year 7 catch-up funding, to support pupils in reading and mathematics, is appropriately spent, resulting in pupils making considerable progress in reading in their first year at the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- A strong culture of care for pupils permeates the school. All staff are aware of the important role they play in ensuring that pupils are safe. Staff know what to look for because of the regular training and updates they receive about child protection, including radicalisation and extremism, child sexual exploitation, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Staff are adept at recording concerns, and because of this pupils have access to early help and support when needed.
- Governor 'challenge days' are regularly focused on aspects of the school's safeguarding work. The safeguarding link governor meets with leaders to ensure the implementation of statutory duties.
- The school has excellent partnerships with a wide range of agencies, including the police, health professionals and local authority safeguarding officers. Therefore, when necessary, referrals are made to children's social care in a timely fashion.
- Appropriate and detailed risk assessments are carried out for trips and visits.
- The school follows all statutory requirements for the recruitment of staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- The leader responsible for teaching and learning is highly effective. She ensures that teachers fully understand the school's teaching and learning policy so that it is consistently applied. Middle leaders regularly check that high standards and expectations are the norm. This means that there are no marked variations in the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment across different subjects and year groups. However, leaders recognise that progress in Year 9 music, art and design and technology does not meet the highest aspirations.
- Through comprehensive questioning, teachers check pupils' understanding. As a result, teachers are quick to identify any misconceptions in pupils' learning. Teachers explore pupils' understanding and always encourage them to think more deeply.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. Through well-planned learning, high expectations and well-established routines, teachers create a positive and safe learning environment, where pupils feel challenged and engaged.
- Pupils come well prepared to lessons and are ready to learn. They take pride in the presentation of their work. The vast majority of pupils make the most of every minute of their lessons, with no time wasted.
- The development of pupils' oral communication skills is a whole-school aim. Pupils are encouraged to speak in full sentences, at all times, in order to articulate and develop their ideas. Good use of the school's 'no hands up' policy means there is an expectation that all pupils contribute regularly in lessons.
- Relationships between pupils and their teachers are strong. Teachers want the very best for their pupils. Any pupil at risk of underachieving receives high-quality support. Pupils speak highly of these interventions and the additional support and guidance that they receive from their teachers. Pupils also work well with their peers, developing strong skills in social interaction.
- Pupils respond well to the feedback they are given. Pupils are encouraged to improve and refine their work in order to close any gaps in their knowledge, understanding or skills. The most able pupils use these opportunities to deepen their understanding further and develop their extended writing skills. Pupils show resilience and learn from their mistakes. They seize the opportunity to persevere with problem-solving rather than giving up.
- Pupils take regular and timetabled homework seriously. The majority of pupils relish the opportunity to carry out additional independent learning at home. They use their '100% books' to become more proficient, practising and expanding on what they have learned in school.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are encouraged to express their views with confidence because of the exceptionally strong focus on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. As a result, they are inquisitive in their learning.
- Pupils rise to the challenge of high expectations. They work hard in lessons and are proud of their work and successes. One parent commented, 'our son is a proud ambassador of the school and is thriving in more than just academic skills'.
- Pupils are thoughtful and kind to each other. Relationships between pupils and adults are encouraged by the daily 'family dining' experience and the work with 'advisers' during form time. As a result, the academy is harmonious.
- There is a strong programme of high-quality, independent advice and careers guidance which starts in Year 6, before pupils join the school. Pupils and parents are encouraged to understand the value of university. Consequently, pupils have very high aspirations and understand the next steps in their education well.
- Spiritual, moral, cultural and social opportunities are extensive. As a result of the school's extended opening hours, pupils attend a wide range of enrichment activities and all pupils participate in a residential once per year.
- Pupils are encouraged to be caring citizens through the strong focus on respect and tolerance. They congratulate and celebrate others. This is evident in lessons and is a particularly strong feature of daily 'family dining', where there is always thanks and celebration for a member of the school community.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding because leaders and staff expect, and set a very high bar for, good behaviour.
- There is a calm and safe atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils respond well to staff requests as they move around the school in silence during lesson changeover.
- Pupils understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality. Attendance is above the national average and any absence is rigorously followed up. Pupils are almost always punctual to lessons.
- Pupils feel safe and say that there is little or no bullying. Parents agree that their children feel safe. Through the effective personal development programme, pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe online.
- In lessons, behaviour is mostly exceptional because pupils value the importance of their education and are eager to be the best they can be. However, leaders have recognised that the behaviour of a very small number of pupils does not meet the school's high standards. Leaders have been proactive in taking action to re-engage these pupils

through imaginative 'electives', including golf, boxing and outdoor education. As a result, behaviour of this group is improving.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- From broadly average starting points, all groups of pupils make rapid progress across Years 7, 8 and 9. The work that inspectors viewed in pupils' books shows that pupils make excellent progress over time and in a wide range of subjects.
- Leaders at Dixons McMillan have found that at the start of Year 7, boys' progress in English falls behind that of girls. As a result of successful interventions, sharp improvement plans and high-quality teaching, by Year 9, boys make excellent progress. Year 9 boys' written responses to GCSE style questions show the rapid progress they make.
- As a result of regular assessment, and detailed analysis of pupils' progress, leaders quickly spot if any pupils are likely to underachieve. Personalised 'prevention plans' ensure that identified pupils rapidly catch up with their peers.
- The progress that pupils make in reading is notable due to the strong reading culture across the school. For example, Year 7 pupils, on average, make 24 months progress in reading in one academic year.
- Most-able pupils optimise their progress by making the most of the opportunities to improve their work. As a result, the most able, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make impressive progress over time.
- There are no notable differences in the progress made by low, middle or high prior attaining pupils.
- Leaders make sensible use of the additional funding that the school receives to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils so that they make considerable progress. In some cases, disadvantaged pupils outperform the achievement of their peers.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress similar to that of all other pupils in the school because of a combination of highly effective whole-class teaching and additional support.
- The progress that pupils make in Year 9 art, music and design and technology is good, but not as strong as the outstanding progress pupils make in other subjects.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- As a result of excellent teaching and highly effective leadership, students in the sixth form make outstanding progress from their different starting points.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards their learning and they appreciate the importance of good attendance. They behave well and are smart, always adhering to the dress code.

- Teachers set very high expectations for their students. As a result, students take pride in their work and their folders are exceptionally well organised. Students work hard to refine and improve their work in response to the challenging feedback they receive from their teachers. Students produce high-quality notes. The work in students' books, and folders, confirms that they are making excellent progress.
- Teachers use assessment information well to plan and adapt their teaching to meet the needs of their students. Students speak very highly of the individualised intervention and support that they receive from their teachers.
- Careers advice and guidance is highly effective. A 'personal coach' helps to guide students in taking their next steps. Students undertake planned work experience in Year 12 and there are considerable opportunities for students to visit universities. As a result, all students are ambitious for their futures. They have clear goals and aspire to study demanding degree courses at Russell Group universities.
- Students support younger pupils in lessons, and contribute to the other work in the school community as part of their work called 'service'. This enables students to further develop and enhance their leadership skills. Sixth form students are excellent role models for younger pupils.
- Students have access to extensive enrichment opportunities, which enhance their sixth form experience. Through daily 'DEAR' (Drop Everything and Read), students study a wide range of literary figures, scientific developments and key events in history. Through weekly 'electives', students broaden their wider skills with workshops in music, debate and participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award.
- Students in the sixth form enter with a grade C or above in English language and/or English literature and mathematics. Despite this, the school still provides additional literacy and numeracy support to ensure that students can write well and manage the mathematical aspects of their A-level courses.
- The school meets the 16 to 19 programmes of study requirements. Leaders have ensured that students study appropriate courses. Consequently, retention is high. The very small number of leavers have gone on to appropriate courses.
- As a result of a comprehensive personal development programme, students know how to keep themselves safe. Students learn about a range of issues, including the dangers of drugs and alcohol and how to look after their own mental health and well-being. Students have learned less about radicalisation and extremism and leaders are addressing this.
- Students enjoy the safe environment provided by the school, but would like more opportunities to develop independence in their learning.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 141002 |
| Local authority | Bradford |
| Inspection number | 10031009 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary Comprehensive |
| School category | Academy free school |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 378 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 42 |
| Appropriate authority | Local governing body |
| Chair | Bryan Collins |
| Principal | Wesley Davies |
| Telephone number | 01274424350 |
| Website | www.dixonsma.com |
| Email address | Wdavies@dixonsma.com |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Dixons McMillan Academy opened in September 2014 as a free school, with its first intake of pupils in Year 7. Currently, the school has pupils in Years 7, 8, 9 and 12.

- The school receives support from the Dixons Academy Trust and other local outstanding schools.
- The sixth form opened in September 2016 and is due to close in 2019, when a new Dixons Academy Trust sixth form school will open.
- The proportion of pupils at this school who are disadvantaged is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils at this school who are from minority ethnic backgrounds, or who speak English as an additional language, is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- As there are currently no pupils in Year 11, the school has no national assessment results to compare against the current government floor standards (minimum performance expectations for secondary schools) and the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a wide range of information during this inspection, including through observations in lessons, many of which were undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also visited a range of other activities, including 'DEAR' (Drop Everything and Read) and 'stretch' presentations.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of pupils' work.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors held meetings with school staff, including the principal, members of the local governing body, the chief executive officer, members of the senior leadership team and staff new to the school.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils both formally in meetings and informally during breaks and 'family dining'.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation relating to the school's work, including the self-evaluation document, improvement plans, minutes of the governing body and documents relating to behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of the 46 responses to the online parent questionnaire, Parent View, one letter received from a parent, 23 responses to the staff online questionnaire and 88 responses to the pupil online questionnaire.

Inspection team

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