

Dixons City Academy

Ripley Street, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD5 7RR

Inspection dates

27–28 November 2018

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The executive principal provides exceptional leadership. Aply supported by other leaders, she inspires staff and pupils to have the highest aspirations for themselves and of others.
- The recently appointed principal shares the executive principal’s ambition to strive for excellence in every aspect of the school’s work.
- The school’s culture values diversity, harmony and independent learning. Pupils thrive in this environment and they achieve highly.
- Governors are very skilled and effective in challenging leaders. They have an incisive knowledge of the school, and the trust provides strong support for the school.
- The high quality of teaching and assessment leads pupils to make outstanding progress across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, make progress which exceeds that of other pupils nationally.
- Subject leaders are highly effective in bringing about improvements to the quality of teaching and learning.
- The curriculum is well-planned by leaders. It provides breadth, choice and challenge for pupils of all abilities to achieve their best. All pupils progress onto further education, employment or training.
- School leaders are passionate about enriching pupils’ lives. Consequently, the range of extra-curricular activities is impressive, and engagement levels are high. Performing arts is a real strength of the school.
- With very few exceptions, pupils behave impeccably in lessons. During social times, there is an excited buzz around the school. This reflects a community that is both cohesive and highly aspirational.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is higher than the average for secondary schools.
- Students in the sixth form receive outstanding teaching. Those who take academic qualifications now achieve as highly as those on vocational programmes.
- Despite the range of provision already in place, pupils with special educational needs and/ or disabilities (SEND) do not make as much progress as their peers.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the provision for pupils with SEND so that more of them make progress that at least matches other pupils with the same starting points.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Over recent years, the executive principal's outstanding leadership has inspired the school community to strive for excellence in everything they do. To parents and carers, pupils and staff, she has demonstrated her unwavering determination to ensure that the school provides extensive opportunities for pupils, from all starting points and backgrounds, to be the very best they can be.
- Leaders and staff share a common understanding that pupils are entitled to be encouraged and challenged to meet their aspirational targets. Staff morale is high, because all staff feel involved in, and accountable for, achieving the school's ambition to provide an outstanding education. The principal demonstrates the skills and passion to build on the school's success.
- Leaders at all levels have a precise and detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. Action plans are well considered and communicate leaders' high expectations. Leaders carry out regular reviews of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Over time, these reviews have led to pupils making rapid progress.
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is highly effective. As a result of high-quality professional development and coaching, teachers are keen to engage in regular conversations about their practice and to trial innovative strategies in the classroom. Subject leaders use the school's quality assurance processes to identify aspects of teaching which could be improved further. Regular training sessions enable teachers to work with each other to share good practice and to establish a consistent approach to teaching across the school.
- The trust provides excellent support and challenge, both for teachers and leaders. Staff work together regularly with their partner school Dixons Kings Academy to share good practice. When required, trust leaders have supported each other promptly to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes, for example, in Spanish.
- Leaders check pupils' progress effectively by analysing pupils' assessments thoroughly. Teachers' assessments are moderated across the trust to ensure that they are reliable. Teachers then take swift action to address any gaps in pupils' learning, for example by re-teaching particular skills or topics, and provide master classes to stretch pupils further. As a result, pupils know their strengths and weaknesses, and how to build on them.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and challenging. In each subject, the programme of study is well planned so that pupils experience a wide range of skills and topics. Pupils have access to several options at GCSE level to suit their interests and career ambitions, preparing them well for advanced-level study. A higher proportion of pupils than the national average is entered for the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects, and their progress is above average.
- Leaders are passionate about providing pupils with an extensive range of enrichment opportunities. These are designed to raise their aspirations, develop their social skills and extend their understanding of the wider community beyond their home city. All

pupils are expected to participate in extra-curricular activities, educational visits and residential experiences. For example, the Year 8 camp to Ullswater gives pupils the opportunity to experience an outdoor environment quite different to their own.

- The extra-curricular offer is extensive and includes several sporting activities, including football, trampolining, climbing and sports leadership. Clubs cater for many interests, for example chess, printing and an appreciation of literature. Several pupils take part in national debating competitions and in the local programme, 'Stand out, speak out and make a difference', thus developing their ability to communicate and articulate their opinions. Pupils' participation in the performing arts is high, because the school offers scholarships for pupils who are talented in music, dance and drama.
- The additional funding for the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up is used effectively. Leaders review the funded programmes regularly to ensure that they provide the best outcomes for pupils who need additional support. Disadvantaged pupils in all year groups make strong progress. Pupils in Year 7 who need to catch up make rapid gains in their literacy skills and good progress in their numeracy skills.
- Although the additional funding for pupils with SEND is used appropriately, this group of pupils do not make good progress in line with their peers. Also, a small number of pupils with SEND exhibit behaviour which leads to fixed-term exclusions. Leaders are committed to improving their progress and skills further.
- The parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey Parent View were extremely positive about all aspects of the school. For example, a high proportion agreed that their children are safe and that pupils behave well. The vast majority were also positive about the school's culture. For example, one parent wrote, 'I am very impressed with the positive encouragement the staff give to children to make the best of every learning opportunity.' Another wrote, 'The school is very supportive, and staff are amazing.' These comments reflect the views of many parents who responded to the survey.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school is highly effective. Governors and trustees bring a wide range of experience to their roles. They challenge school leaders appropriately to strive for excellence.
- The minutes of governors' meetings show that they evaluate the school's work thoroughly. They have a detailed understanding of the quality of teaching, the progress of pupil groups, pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Governors and trustees play a full part in setting the school's priorities and evaluating the school's monitoring information on progress towards demanding targets for improvement. They visit the school regularly to make sure they are well informed about the progress pupils make across the curriculum.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safeguarding team has a very high profile in the school. Pupils and staff know who to go to if they have any concerns. Pupils have confidence in the school staff to resolve

any concerns that they raise. Teachers are well trained to understand their responsibility for safeguarding pupils, and are vigilant in following the school's procedures for noticing and reporting concerns.

- The designated safeguarding leaders are experienced in supporting the most vulnerable pupils. Their level of care and attention is excellent. Record-keeping is detailed and shows that pupils receive high-quality and timely intervention when concerns are reported about their safety or well-being. Leaders regularly review the arrangements for safeguarding to ensure that they are robust.
- The school has appointed several staff who provide specialist support for pupils who have medical or emotional needs. Leaders access the support of other local agencies, as required. Pupils are well cared for, including those who are looked after by the local authority.
- Governors ensure that leaders carry out thorough checks to be certain that all members of staff are suitable to work with pupils. Records are detailed and meet all requirements.
- Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe in school, in the community and online. They report that there are very few incidents of bullying in the school and they have full confidence in the staff to sort out any concerns they may have. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said they feel safe in the school, because the school is a friendly community. One pupil said the school is like a 'second family'.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding across all year groups.
- Teachers have very high expectations of pupils. Classroom routines are well established so that learning can proceed without interruption. Almost all pupils concentrate exceptionally well in lessons and are highly motivated to achieve their very best.
- Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to inspire pupils to ask questions that deepen their understanding. Teachers show great passion for their subject, and their enthusiasm engages pupils to contribute well in lessons.
- Most teachers use skilful questioning to challenge pupils to articulate their ideas and opinions fully. Pupils respond enthusiastically to this questioning. This enables teachers to identify any misconceptions promptly and redirect the learning, as appropriate.
- Lessons are well planned to ensure that pupils make rapid progress from their starting points. Sequences of learning and tasks are carefully considered so that pupils can make incremental gains in their learning. Teachers demonstrate examples of the best quality work, so that pupils know what is expected of them. Pupils are given adequate time in lessons to develop their skills and understanding.
- Across all subjects, teachers develop pupils' independence extremely well. Consequently, pupils are very resilient when faced with challenging work. Pupils are confident to write independently and at length, and most pupils write accurately, paying careful attention to spelling and punctuation. They plan their writing well, routinely take notes in lessons, and use specialist language effectively.

- Pupils take great pride in their work and reflect well on their strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers provide regular feedback to pupils in lessons so that they can know how to improve. Pupils are also very skilled in using self- and peer-assessment to evaluate their work. This is because teachers show pupils how to attain the highest grades.
- The school's strategies for developing pupils' reading are highly effective because they are implemented consistently across the curriculum. For example, teachers focus very successfully on improving pupils' reading and comprehension skills. Pupils are well supported to identify important information and they are encouraged to discuss their reading with others. In all subjects, pupils are given a range of opportunities to read challenging texts.
- Homework is used well to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. It is well planned and is often tailored to the needs of individuals, so that it is suitably challenging.
- Pupils with SEND are generally well supported in lessons, by both teachers and teaching assistants. These pupils make stronger progress in English than in other subjects, due to the school's focus on improving reading. However, leaders and teachers are clear that they have more to do to accelerate the progress of this group of pupils across the curriculum.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Staff consistently provide guidance and praise, which builds pupils' resilience over time. Pupils appreciate the support they receive from staff across the school. Consequently, pupils are confident learners and believe that they can succeed. They are very willing to talk to visitors about their learning and how proud they are of their school.
- Pupils have numerous opportunities to learn about life in modern Britain. For example, they explore democracy and British laws through the personal development programme. The weekly collective worship, which values all faiths, provides an opportunity for pupils to be reflective about themselves and others. Pupils speak highly of the way in which everyone in the school community is respected and included. They talk regularly about diversity and the importance of treating everyone with understanding.
- Both staff and pupils understand the importance of the school's 'PRIDE' values (purpose, respect, integrity, determination and excellence). These values are fostered well through lessons, the personal development programme and assemblies ('line-ups'). Motivational messages are a daily feature of school life. Pupils display the school's values through the effort they put into their own studies, and the kindness they show to others.
- Pupils receive effective and impartial careers advice and guidance. This supports them in making thoughtful decisions about their future education or training, and careers.

Pupils spoke about the helpful mock interviews and careers fair which helped them to reflect on their skills and interests.

- A small number of pupils are educated off-site in alternative provision. Leaders make sure that pupils are kept safe on these placements. They communicate regularly with the providers to make sure that pupils are attending and behaving well. These pupils are following appropriate programmes and qualifications.
- Pupils are very aware of the potential risks in the local community, such as the dangers of substance abuse and child exploitation and the importance of road safety. Pupils also have a comprehensive understanding of the dangers of using social media and gaming. These topics are covered sensitively in personal development lessons.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is excellent. They listen attentively to their teachers and to each other. With very few exceptions, pupils follow instructions promptly and show very positive attitudes to their learning.
- Pupils' conduct during social times is impressive. Pupils move around the school calmly and show courtesy towards others. During breaktimes and lunchtimes, a friendly buzz of conversation is evident in social areas, reflective of the harmonious community. The climate of respect is the direct result of such positive working relationships between pupils, and between pupils and staff.
- Leaders work hard to foster the importance of good attendance. Consequently, pupils' overall attendance has been consistently above the national average for the last three years. Leaders have also had marked success with individual pupils who are regularly absent from school, and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is below average.
- Leaders have been successful in reducing the rate of fixed-term exclusions of pupils from school, so that it is now well below the national average. Nevertheless, a third of the fixed-term exclusions are still for a small number of pupils with SEND, and leaders are committed to reducing these further.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress as a result of the outstanding teaching and support they receive. This is true across all year groups and virtually all subjects. The work being produced by pupils currently in the school is of exceptionally high quality.
- Year 11 pupils who left the school in 2017 made above-average progress from their starting points. The provisional progress information for 2018 shows that overall progress has improved further, so that it was well above average, including for the most able pupils. Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics, at the higher grade of 5 and above, was also well above average.
- In 2017 and 2018, the proportion of Year 11 pupils who attained the English Baccalaureate group of qualifications was above average. The school encourages pupils to choose academic qualifications where appropriate to their career aspirations. As a

result of high-quality teaching in English, mathematics, science, history and geography, pupils make very strong progress in these subjects, across all year groups.

- Disadvantaged pupils make better progress than other pupils nationally, across a wide range of subjects and particularly in English. Leaders ensure that the additional funding is targeted judiciously to support the learning and well-being of disadvantaged pupils. Pupils thrive, because their progress is tracked rigorously, they benefit from outstanding teaching which is tailored to their needs, and they receive high-quality care which removes many barriers to learning.
- Pupils whose first language is believed not to be English also make very strong progress across the curriculum. As is the case for all pupils in the school, they benefit from the school's relentless focus on enriching pupils' experiences. Teaching is planned carefully to develop pupils' understanding of a wide range of social and cultural contexts beyond their first-hand experience.
- The school's promotion of reading and writing is highly effective across the curriculum. Teachers develop pupils' vocabulary systematically, enabling them to comprehend complex texts. Consequently, most pupils read fluently and confidently. Pupils also read widely and make good use of the school library.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education, employment or training. In 2018, all of Year 11 went on to appropriate further education, employment or training. Over 90% of students in Year 13 went on to university.
- Historically, pupils' progress in modern foreign languages has been weaker than in other subjects, but is now improving across most year groups. Teachers benefit from additional support provided by their partner school within the trust.
- From similar starting points, pupils with SEND make much weaker progress than their peers.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- Students' progress on vocational programmes has been consistently above average for the past three years, and continues to be a strong aspect of the school's sixth-form provision. This is due to outstanding teaching in applied general subjects such as finance, computer use and health studies.
- Leadership in the sixth form is highly effective. The head of sixth form was appointed in September 2016 to make rapid improvements to students' progress on academic programmes where, previously, students had made only average progress from their starting points. She has been very successful in driving up standards at A level. The school's provisional performance information shows that, in 2018, students made above-average progress in almost every subject.
- Current students continue to make very strong progress across the curriculum, including in biology, chemistry, physics and English language, where students' progress has been weaker in the past. This is due to improved teaching, and also intervention to support students who experience difficulties in making the transition from Year 11.
- Students who join the sixth form without the requisite grade in English or mathematics benefit from specialist teaching and they improve their grades.

- The head of sixth form has a detailed knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching because she checks on teaching and learning regularly, as part of the school's quality assurance processes. She ensures that teachers communicate consistently high expectations of students' conduct and learning. She also ensures that teachers have ample opportunity to engage in professional development, so that their subject knowledge is kept up to date and relevant.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form matches the high standards in the main school. Teachers communicate high expectations and provide students with challenging work. Lessons are well matched to students' needs and starting points. Teachers' careful analysis of students' progress in assessments enables them to address gaps in students' knowledge and understanding promptly. Homework is tailored to individuals to provide them with appropriate stretch.
- The head of sixth form has also introduced additional rigour into all aspects of the sixth form. Students' attendance is high in Year 12 and improving in Year 13, as a result of more rigorous tracking and intervention with students and their families. Emotional support is provided, as necessary, to assist students in managing their workload. Supervised study support ensures that students make best use of their study time.
- Leaders make sure that students' safety and well-being are paramount. Students benefit from tutorials and teaching on how to keep themselves healthy and safe. For example, talks on sexual health, mental health, drug abuse and online safety are delivered sensitively, engaging students in purposeful discussions which develop their understanding of potential risks.
- Students value their experience in the sixth form greatly. They enjoy the challenge of their studies but also the range of opportunities to engage in wider activities. Every student takes part in a community service of some kind, as part of the school's commitment to developing young people's citizenship skills. All Year 12 students take part in work experience which is relevant to their career aspirations. Sixth-form students are excellent role models for younger pupils, conducting themselves responsibly and actively taking on leadership roles. The students also support younger pupils with their reading or act as trained mentors to help resolve pupils' concerns about such aspects as friendships, conflict or health.
- The rates of student retention in the sixth form are above average, including for disadvantaged students. Students benefit from impartial careers advice and guidance. Success rates are high, and almost all students move on to higher education, many going on to study courses at Russell group universities.

School details

Unique reference number	130909
Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	10053766

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

Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1128
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	273
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	John Bowers
Principal	Shirley Watson (Executive Principal) Michael Feely (Principal)
Telephone number	01274 776 777
Website	http://www.dixonsca.com
Email address	info@dixonsca.com
Date of previous inspection	30 January 2018

Information about this school

- Dixons City Academy is part of The Dixons Academy Trust. The school shares a governing body with Dixons Kings Academy.
- The executive principal was principal at the school from 2011 to July 2018. The current principal was appointed in September 2018.
- The school is larger than average, with an increasing roll. It also has a large sixth form. The school admits some pupils on a performing arts scholarship.

- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium is average.
- The proportion of pupils whose first language is believed not to be English is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is average.
- A small number of pupils currently attend alternative education provision placements off-site, full time. The school uses the following providers: Bradford College, Prism and the local authority's pupil referral unit.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a range of lessons across year groups and subject areas. Many of the observations were carried out with senior leaders from the school.
- Meetings were held with senior and subject leaders, teachers, governors and trustees.
- Inspectors held informal and formal discussions with pupils, observed pupils in their form groups and observed pupils during social times.
- Inspectors listened to a group of pupils read.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of evidence, including the school’s self-evaluation, plans for improvement, analyses of pupil performance, attendance and behaviour records and safeguarding files.
- Examples of pupils’ work were looked at in detail. These included pupils of different abilities and year groups.
- Inspectors took account of the 102 responses from parents who completed Ofsted’s online questionnaire Parent View, and the 55 free-text responses from parents. Sixty-five members of staff completed Ofsted’s online staff questionnaire, and these responses were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Lynn Kenworthy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Erica Hiorns	Ofsted Inspector
Gill Booth	Ofsted Inspector
Natasha Greenough	Ofsted Inspector
Fiona Dixon	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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