

Huntingdon Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	137550
Local Authority	N/A
Inspection number	386189
Inspection dates	21–22 November 2011
Reporting inspector	David Edwards

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	243
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Blois
Headteacher	Diana Owen
Date of previous school inspection	22 May 2007
School address	Alfred Street Central St Ann's Nottingham NG3 4AY
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Thirteen lessons were observed and seven teachers seen. Inspectors met with parents and carers, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including teacher's planning; the school improvement plan; assessment, monitoring and evaluation records; records for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities; and safeguarding procedures. Questionnaire returns from 33 parents and carers were considered, along with the views of staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effective are leaders and managers in promoting improvements in the achievement of the most able pupils in English and mathematics?
- Is the curriculum meeting the needs of all pupils and helping them to establish links between subjects for pupils of all abilities?
- Is pupil's progress accelerated at Key Stage 2 and if so, what are the reasons?

Information about the school

Huntingdon is an average size school. It became an academy in October 2011, with two other Nottingham schools under the umbrella of the L.E.A.D. (Lead, Empower, Achieve, Drive) Academy Trust, an organisation that aims to strengthen school leadership and teaching and learning. Huntingdon is the lead school within the trust.

The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language is well above other schools nationally. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is also well above the national average, but the proportion of pupils who have a statement of educational need is below. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is provided for children in a Nursery and a Reception class. More pupils join or leave the school partway through the year than is the case in other schools nationally. The headteacher of the previously named Huntingdon Primary School is the executive headteacher of the new academy trust and still has overall accountability for Huntingdon Academy. The school deputy is now the head of the school and is leading it on a day-to-day basis, working with the executive headteacher to plan the strategic direction of the school. The school is a National Support School. It has a Full International School Award, Health Promoting School status, Drug Awareness Award, Investors in People and the Actively Reducing Crime Award.

There is a children's centre on site but it is led and managed independently of the school and is inspected separately.

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: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding and highly inclusive school where pupils develop a love of learning. As one parent said, 'All my children love school. This school is getting better and better'. Overall, leadership and management are outstanding and are good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress from their very low starting points. However, there are occasions when adults do not always intervene appropriately in children's learning, and phonics teaching sometimes lacks precision. Progress then accelerates in Key Stages 1 and 2 so that they leave the school with attainment that is broadly average. Excellent support provided for the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who speak English as an additional language, or those who join the school partway through the year, enables the vast majority to make excellent progress in their learning.

Improvements in reading and writing at Key Stage 1 have supported rising standards throughout the school over the last four years. A stimulating curriculum, which fully integrates the development of literacy and numeracy skills and exceptional care, guidance and support are central to the school's work and contribute to outstanding outcomes. Exceptionally effective partnerships, especially those with local educational specialists through its academy status, and agencies who support the needs of the most vulnerable pupils, augment pupils' learning and development. Parents and carers have a high degree of confidence in the school, which is strengthened through excellent links with them.

Highly effective teaching successfully promotes the school's values and an enjoyment in learning, and leads to the good achievement of all pupils. The high quality of teaching has been recognised externally and the school is a model of excellent practice. Pupils use their targets and guides to success effectively to accelerate their progress. Although pupils did not perform quite as highly in mathematics as in English in 2011, initiatives to improve pupils' problem solving skills, are bearing fruit this year generally and particularly amongst pupils capable of higher attainment.

Pupils really enjoy school and almost all aspects of their personal development are outstanding. Pupils feel very safe in school and have an exemplary knowledge of how to keep safe in many aspects of daily life. Their exceptional behaviour in lessons contributes to outstanding learning and progress and enjoyment at break times. Pupils are polite and considerate towards each other and celebrate the cultural diversity represented within the school community. They have an exceptional knowledge of the importance of diet and how to look after their health, and enthusiastically take part in

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physical activity. They make outstanding contributions to school life and the local community. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Attendance is average, but is rising quickly as a result of the school's rigorous efforts to improve it. Reduced persistent absence has had a marked effect on the achievement of these pupils.

All those with leadership responsibility, including the governing body assiduously monitor and evaluate the school's work and have an accurate picture of its performance. Development planning focuses sharply on raising pupils' achievement and progress. This is evident in the improvements in reading and particularly boys' writing and more recently mathematics that have taken place. Governors play a key role in determining the strategic direction of the school. School self-evaluation is accurate and the improvement planning arising from it sets a very clear direction for its work. The issues raised at the previous inspection and an HMI visit in 2009, have been robustly tackled. All of this demonstrates excellent capacity for sustained improvement and excellent value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Embed the recently introduced strategies to develop mathematical problem solving skills, particularly for the most-able pupils.
- Accelerate progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that adults always intervene appropriately when children undertake tasks they have chosen for themselves
 - embedding consistency in the teaching of phonics to improve children's language and communication skills

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils participate wholeheartedly and enthusiastically in activities in lessons where they listen courteously and speak confidently. They are motivated to work hard and are keen to respond to questions and cogently offer good explanations supporting their responses. They work well collaboratively and individually, showing responsibility and engagement. Pupils take pride in the presentation of their work, writing legibly and taking care to lay out their written and mathematical work neatly and clearly.

All groups of pupils build effectively on skills and abilities that are, for many, notably lower than those typically expected for their age when they join the Nursery. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 has steadily improved in reading and writing in recent years so that it has edged closer to national average. There is no significant difference in the progress pupils make at Key Stages 1 and 2. Significantly more pupils are now attaining at or above the levels expected for their age in mathematics, reading and writing. The 2011 test results reflect the consistently rising attainment that was apparent in the previous two years. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make exceptional progress due to the highly focused support they receive in class and through withdrawal groups. Pupils who speak English as an additional

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language are helped to quickly gain sufficient English to enable them to make outstanding progress. Pupils who join the school partway through the school year are quickly inducted using effective strategies so that they make excellent progress.

Pupils take on challenge exceptionally well. In an outstanding Year 5 lesson they improved the quality of their descriptive writing using their targets and the keys to success very effectively to help them make exceptional progress and realise their full potential. This was also evident in a Year 6 writing lesson, where pupils successfully made considerable improvements to the quality of their work. They were challenged very effectively and the good pace of learning ensured that pupils of all abilities made excellent progress.

Pupils are knowledgeable on bullying and the need for the safe use of internet networking sites. They convincingly say that bullying is not an issue. Their outstanding knowledge of safety has led to the Actively Reducing Crime award. The school holds Healthy School status and a Drug Awareness Award reflecting pupils' excellent understanding of ways to look after their well-being. They demonstrate a keen understanding of the relationship between diet and exercise and are good ambassadors in promoting healthy lifestyles. The school is an extremely cohesive community where relationships are highly effective. The school council is an effective voice for pupils, who are proud of this role. Play leaders, community teams and other responsibilities have a significant effect on improving the lives of all pupils in the school. The work of pupils in the local community is highly respected, such as the work they did with the local council to improve the look of a local shopping centre and re-designing two local parks. They reflect thoughtfully on important issues; have an excellent appreciation of art and music; have very high moral values and an outstanding understanding of cultural issues.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is sharply focused on achieving high quality learning and is particularly strong in Years 5 and 6 where teaching is usually outstanding. Pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn in each lesson. The strong emphasis on learning through practical activity and first-hand experience makes learning exciting for pupils. One reason for the excellent behaviour is the fact that pupils get so involved in their work.

Teachers use a range of strategies in lessons, such as target setting and pupils’ self- and peer-assessment to deepen pupil’s understanding of the quality of their work. The latter is a real strength and by Years 5 and 6, pupils show great maturity in their evaluation of each other’s work when they ‘mark’ it by writing things they like and suggestions for improvement. The use of all forms of assessment is outstanding. It is consistently used to provide pupils with learning activities that are closely matched to their abilities and needs. Thorough checking of pupils’ progress over time, staff are quick to react to rare underachievement with a programme to address weaknesses so that pupils quickly catch up.

The outstanding curriculum caters very effectively for the wide range of learning and personal needs in school. It is enriched well by frequent educational visits and visitors to support learning. Teachers plan highly stimulating learning activities, many of which involve practical work. The wide range of themes stimulates pupils’ interest and captures their imaginations. There is an excellent range of clubs and activities outside the school day. Pupils are highly appreciative of the activities on offer to them. All activities provide a hugely popular extension of high quality learning opportunities for pupils, such as the steel band, film making and homework clubs.

The outstanding quality of care, guidance and support has considerable impact on pupils’ personal development, particularly social skills. The needs of any vulnerable pupils are fully met and there is extra help and support for these and all other pupils whenever they need it. The school works very closely with families, providing support for any parents or carers seeking help or advice. Excellent transition arrangements ensure that pupils’ learning is continuous at each stage of transfer. The good breakfast club makes a sound contribution to the excellent care, guidance and support that pupils receive.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support

1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders drive school improvement very effectively, including the monitoring of teaching. All staff work closely together to monitor the impact of improvement initiatives. The involvement of all staff reflects the school's outstanding promotion of equality of opportunity. No member of the school community experiences any form of discrimination.

The school's promotion of community cohesion is excellent. It works hard at including all pupils into the school and local communities. The school has very successfully established links with national and international communities to help pupils fully understand the similarities and differences between their lives. This led to them receiving the Full International Schools Award. The school makes the most of its close links with Nottingham University as well as its work with other schools, and other professional and community organisations. The development of excellent home-school links is another of these key partnerships that have been used to provide outstanding enhancement of the quality of pupils' learning and their well-being. The highly effective links with parents of the high proportion of pupils who face challenges in their life has a marked effect on their person, social and academic development.

Governors have highly effective strategies to make them fully informed about the day-to-day life of the school and they work closely with staff, for example through the link that governors have with each subject in the curriculum. This ensures they have thorough knowledge of pupils' attainment, learning and progress. They have highly effective monitoring of progress towards the school's achievement of priority targets in development planning through their links with subject leaders in particular. This helps them to input their decisions about next stages in school improvement. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements are extremely thorough and that staff are appropriately and regularly trained in attending to health and safety, risk assessment and child protection issues. The way school pursues the interests of the most vulnerable is exemplary.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1

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The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

On entry to the Nursery, children’s communication and language skills are very low. Staff work effectively to improve these skills to establish a strong foundation for the next stages in their education. The school provides early support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities to aid all aspects of their development. Children settle in quickly and enjoy learning. They leave nursery having made good progress during this time. Good progress is sustained in the Reception class where children develop the basic foundations in all areas of learning to get off to a secure start in Key Stage 1, though their attainment is still below the nationally expected learning goals. At this stage overall progress is good rather than outstanding because of children’s limited communication skills, despite the fact that children achieved their highest ever attainment in this area in 2011.

Children learn well from a good balance of activities directed or supported by adults and those they initiate for themselves. Themes are carefully chosen and follow the same principles to coordinate the development of skills used throughout the school. Well-organised indoor and outdoor facilities are used effectively to foster children’s enjoyment in learning and to accelerate their progress. However, there are some missed opportunities for adults to intervene appropriately in learning to accelerate children’s progress when they are undertaking their self-chosen tasks. Teaching is sharply focused on developing children’s social skills. Some staff successfully use phonics initiatives to help children develop a secure knowledge of letters and sounds, but some of the teaching in this area lacks the precision needed to raise children’s language and communication skills to the expected levels. Leadership and management are good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the leader shows a strong awareness of the areas for improvement to make the setting outstanding like the rest of the school. Challenging mathematical activities develop children’s counting and calculating skills and other areas of mathematical development, such as investigating shape in Reception.

Caring relationships prevail throughout the setting. An effective key worker team skilfully promotes children's imagination, learning and enjoyment. Assessments are used thoroughly to record children's progress and adapt plans for future learning. From the outset when children join the Nursery class, the very effective links forged with parents and carers inform them about their children’s education and progress.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The number of responses from the parent and carer questionnaire was lower than normally found, but those who responded showed a high degree of confidence in the school. Almost all were extremely supportive and there was only a small measure of disagreement over some issues. They are entirely happy that the school meets their child’s particular needs. They have a very high degree of confidence in the school’s ability to help them in supporting their children’s learning and overall were very happy with their child’s experience at the school. They also particularly praised the way that the school keeps their children safe, that children enjoy school and that the school is good at informing them of how well their children are doing. A small proportion expressed some concerns that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour and that the school does not help their children to have a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors judged both of these elements outstanding and inspection findings were supported by comments in discussion with parents during the inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Huntingdon Academy to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 33 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 243 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	58	13	39	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	20	61	12	36	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	20	61	12	36	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	45	17	52	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	15	45	17	52	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	14	42	18	55	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	39	20	61	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	15	45	17	52	0	0	1	3
The school meets my child’s particular needs	13	39	20	61	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	52	13	39	3	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	48	16	48	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	19	58	12	36	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	19	58	13	39	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



23 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Huntingdon Academy, Nottingham, NG3 4AY

Thank you for your welcome and help when we came to inspect your school recently. We were impressed by your politeness and courtesy and delighted to see how much you enjoy all the activities arranged for you. You are exceptionally well behaved in lessons and around the school. I was pleased to see how much you contribute to help others, to school life and community life in such a way that you have helped to create play areas for many children to enjoy. I know all the staff are very proud of you.

I am delighted to tell you that your school gives you an excellent education. All the adults in the school look after you really well and that is why you feel safe. Your knowledge of the things you need to do in your everyday life to stay safe impressed us greatly, as did your understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle. The outstanding teaching you get is helping you all to make excellent progress. The superb way you use your learning targets aids that process.

I have asked your teachers to continue to help you improve your problem solving skills so that the most-able among you achieve what you are capable of in mathematics. I have also asked the teachers in the Nursery and Reception classes to ensure that their teaching of letters and sounds is always consistent, to improve children's language skills. All Nursery and Reception staff are also being asked to spot when children need they help in tasks they have chosen themselves, to accelerate their progress.

You can help with these improvements by continuing to work hard and doing your best at all times. The inspection team wish you all the very best for the future

Yours sincerely,

David Edwards
Lead Inspector

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