

Macmillan Academy

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 130908 |
| Inspection number | 317908 |
| Inspection dates | 11–12 December 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Ann Talboys HMI |

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

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|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Academy |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 1478 |
| 6th form | 343 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Dr Barry Phillipou |
| Principal | Mr K U Fraser |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | PO Box 8 Stockton Road Middlesbrough TS5 4YU |
| Telephone number | 01642 800800 |
| Fax number | 01642 353000 |

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|--------------------------|---------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Macmillan Academy was previously a city technology college and opened in September 2005 following its re-designation as an academy. It is larger than the average secondary school and has a large sixth form. The proportion of students who are entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. Students attend the academy from a wide geographical area across the city and many are from areas of significant social deprivation; most are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, is well below the national average. The academy has specialisms in science, outdoor learning and vocational education; it is a training school and holds leading edge status.

Key for inspection grades

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Macmillan Academy is providing an outstanding education for its students and provides excellent value for money.

The academy's motto of 'inspiring every student to succeed' pervades all aspects of the organisation. The outstanding leadership of the principal, deputy principals, senior team and middle leaders is exemplified by a clear vision for the academy of excellence in all fields. All leaders contribute to a strategic plan for the academy's development which rejects complacency and continually strives for improvement. It is these improvements in all aspects of the academy's work that demonstrate excellent capacity to improve. Staff are valued and nurtured and respond by working very hard and engaging enthusiastically in the academy's wide range of activities. As a leading edge school with specialist status the academy is beginning to develop links with other schools and the wider community and this is a key priority for development.

Academic standards are high and students make exceptional progress through the academy. The overall trends in performance since the academy opened are steeply rising and there is a determination to continue this upward trend.

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding and is reflected in their excellent attitudes to learning and their commitment to achieve. Attendance is high and students are very well behaved. Students are proud to attend and enjoy their work and play. They believe that they have a strong voice in the academy and are keen to share examples of successful events and initiatives which have been promoted by the various student councils. Students feel safe and know where to turn to if they need help.

Teaching is consistently good across the academy and there are examples of exemplary practice. Well targeted support encourages even better teaching. Learning is enhanced by extensive intranet usage which enables students and staff to access work and communicate more effectively. The outstanding curriculum has a range of innovative features which meet the needs of all students exceptionally well. It is greatly enhanced by a tremendous range of extra-curricular activities. This includes a wide ranging enrichment programme which, together with the extensive provision for outdoor learning, is a special feature of the academy.

Relationships between staff, students and parents are strong and are reflected in positive responses to regular surveys. Parents are very supportive of the academy and regular meetings to discuss progress of students are well attended and valued by them. Over half of the parents responded to the inspection questionnaire and many took the trouble to write at length about the academy. The responses were overwhelmingly positive and many were fulsome in their praise of the way in which the academy develops their children both academically and personally.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form at Macmillan Academy is good. Performance has improved over the past two years and standards are rising. Levels of attainment are above average for both AS and A level. Students achieve well at both A level and AS level, given their starting points. Excellent performance in media studies and electronics is evident.

Outstanding care, guidance and support ensure that students are well advised in selecting appropriate courses, which are closely matched to both need and aspiration. This, together

with rigorous individual monitoring of attainment and good levels of teaching, has had a significant impact on achievement.

Students speak very positively about the academy. They regard the excellent relationships with staff and its sense of community as key strengths. Active involvement in student council, drama productions and working with younger students are cited as examples of their full participation in academy life.

Leadership of the sixth form is good. The academy is actively focused on a range of strategies to raise achievement further in identified subjects and also ensure that students are fully encouraged to complete their two year courses.

What the school should do to improve further

- Maintain the focus on teaching and learning to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in the academy.
- Strive to utilise the extensive expertise within the academy to benefit a wider community of schools.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The standards that students reach by the age of 16 are impressive. Students taking GCSEs in 2007 joined the academy with standards just above the national average and by the end of Year 11 they attained standards which were very high. The progress which they made through Key Stage 3 and 4 was impressive in equal measure. In the most recent GCSE examinations, 92% of students gained five or more good GCSE passes and when English and mathematics are included the figure is 71%. The progress made by students puts the academy in the top 5% of schools nationally and it is justifiably proud of these achievements. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are high, although the progress of Year 9 pupils taking national tests in 2007 was not as marked as in previous years. A slight dip in the proportion of students reaching the highest levels in English has been closely analysed and appropriate adaptations made to teaching.

The academy has a highly structured programme of target setting and monitoring of student progress. This effective system encourages students, parents and teachers to be aware of current performance across all subjects and to take advantage of the extensive and popular subject support programme available to help students maintain their performance. Heads of department and heads of year work well together to identify any underperformance, and a variety of interventions are available to the students who are not fulfilling their potential. The students display strong motivation to achieve and they value the support provided by staff and the systems which monitor their performance. One student said, 'I chose the academy because you know you will get excellent exam results here which will set you up for life.'

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding. Students' attitudes towards learning are extremely positive and they are very keen to do as well as they can. This helps to explain their excellent achievement and progress.

Students are proud of the academy and this is reflected in their excellent behaviour, their first rate attendance and their commitment to its values and expectations. Relationships are excellent; students get on well with each other and with staff. As a result, the academy is a friendly and well-ordered community.

Students speak with authority about the importance of healthy living and healthy eating and make sensible choices at meal times. They say they have come to prefer the healthy options available to them. Students say they feel safe and are confident that staff will help resolve any problems that may arise. They overwhelmingly enjoy the wealth of activities offered through the enrichment curriculum. Outdoor learning is a major strength of Macmillan and the students willingly engage in the exciting range of opportunities which are provided for them. They particularly appreciate the way in which teachers are always willing to give their time to help and support them.

Students feel well consulted and comment that the academy listens and responds to their views. They seize the opportunity to take responsibility, help others and are proud of their record of fund-raising and of the achievements of their academy, and of the Year and Eco Councils. They enjoy these opportunities which develop their confidence and self-esteem as well as helping them to understand their growing responsibilities as young citizens.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, though the cultural dimension is less well developed. Students are becoming mature, well balanced and responsible young people and are being prepared well for life beyond the classroom, not least because of their positive outlook and their willingness to work hard. It is also because of the comprehensive careers advice, the enterprise and work-related opportunities and the high standards in literacy, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT) skills which are developing valuable skills and knowledge which will support their economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, with examples of outstanding practice. Visits to lessons during the inspection confirmed the academy's own analysis.

There is a well-established positive climate for learning across the academy, with excellent relationships between staff and students. Most teachers have high expectations and communicate these well to all students. Students are consequently aware of what they should aspire to, respond very well and are positive about their achievements. Teachers display excellent subject knowledge. Teachers carefully plan their lessons and many take into account the

different needs and abilities of the students in their classes. Some teachers use skilled questioning to good effect to improve students' understanding.

In the best lessons, teachers engage, inspire and challenge learners. Imaginative activities sustain students' interest and encourage them to think for themselves and work independently. Students are confident, in both group and paired work, to take part in discussion activities. They also have opportunities to evaluate their own and other students' work to establish a clear understanding of how to improve. At the end of each lesson, progress is assessed and this information is shared with students. However, the academy recognises that not sufficient teaching is of this very high standard. The academy carries out careful monitoring of lessons and is constantly striving to raise the quality of teaching and learning to the highest standard. Teachers are eager to embrace new ideas and share them with colleagues. Through targeted professional development and training, staff are continually encouraged to use innovative approaches to develop classroom practice.

Systems to monitor student progress are used effectively and students are set challenging targets for improvement, which they understand. Students' written work is regularly assessed and there are many good examples of informative feedback, helping students to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and is enhanced by an excellent enrichment programme which is highly valued by students. Activities include sports, the arts, languages and study support and levels of participation are high.

The academy's specialisms underpin students' curriculum experiences through increased provision in both science and vocational education. Outdoor learning activities permeate the curriculum and are key components of the innovative and well considered Key Stage 3 'bookend' curriculum. This allows students the opportunity to develop thinking and learning skills, through links between subjects, and experience a variety of motivating activities with a focus on increasing levels of enjoyment and achievement.

Choice, both academic and vocational, in Key Stage 4 is extensive. The curriculum is broad, thoughtfully planned and appropriately reviewed. Students benefit from a high quality guidance programme which ensures a close match to their abilities and post-16 aspirations. This is subsequently reflected in their excellent levels of academic achievement and their personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Care, guidance and support throughout the academy are outstanding. The academy provides a positive place for students to learn: they say they feel valued as individuals, listened to and looked after. As a result, they are confident and outgoing both in and out of lessons.

All required procedures for safeguarding, including child protection and health and safety measures, are in place. Well considered support and guidance are given to higher attaining students, and to those who find learning difficult at times, helping them to make excellent progress.

Students and parents speak very highly of the extensive arrangements that smooth the transfer from primary to secondary school. As a result, students settle quickly to their new surroundings. The guidance programme ensures that students receive outstanding support and information when making their subject choices in Year 9 and when deciding on their subsequent career path both at age 16 and 18.

Strong links are maintained with parents who are highly satisfied with the school; both they and their children appreciate the outstanding care provided by staff. Support for vulnerable students, including looked after children, is both sensitive and effective.

The monitoring of students' academic and personal progress is excellent, resulting in early diagnosis of any problems and effective intervention to prevent students from under-achieving. Students generally know their targets and how well they are doing; those doing less well than they should are given effective support to bring them back on track. Staff know the students extremely well and the culture of support and encouragement, which underpins the academy, contributes significantly to students' excellent progress, enjoyment and well-being and helps to explain why the academy is so effective and successful.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Staff who hold responsibility at all levels within the academy display exceptional leadership qualities. They have a clear understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. The leadership of the principal, senior team and middle leaders is exemplified by a clear vision for the academy of excellence in all fields. The principal leads by example and displays tremendous commitment to the students and staff; parents, students and staff comment on his excellent leadership. Appropriate responsibility for discrete areas of the academy's work is effectively delegated to senior staff.

The governing body is committed to supporting the academy in its work; members of the board bring with them experience and expertise which is effectively utilised in their roles. The governors are focused on excellence and provide appropriate challenge for the senior staff. Leaders of the academy's specialisms drive an agenda which is having a major impact on the achievement of students. Some good practice is being shared with other schools and links with the wider educational community nationally are becoming established. Subject leaders enjoy a significant degree of autonomy in their areas including the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and the performance of the students. Heads of year liaise well with heads of department to provide an integrated approach to social and academic development which promotes greater student achievement.

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Inspection judgements

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall | 16-19 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|

Overall effectiveness

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 1 | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | NA | NA |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 1 | 1 |

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 1 | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 1 | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 1 | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 1 | |

Personal development and well-being

| | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 1 | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 | |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 | |
| The attendance of learners | 1 | |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 | |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 1 | |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 1 | |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 2 | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 1 | 1 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 | 1 |

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 1 | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1 | |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 1 | |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 1 | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 1 | |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 1 | |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 1 | |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No | |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No | |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 December 2007

Dear Students,

Inspection of Macmillan Academy, Middlesbrough, TS5 4YU

Thank you for contributing to the recent inspection of your academy. Particular thanks to those of you who met the inspectors and shared your views with us. Please would you pass on our thanks to your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires and tell them we took all their views into account. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing you at work. Macmillan Academy provides an outstanding education for you all and you can be justly proud. Here is a summary of our findings which we hope will be of interest to you.

- Standards in external examination and tests are very high and the progress which you make as you move through the academy is very impressive.
- Teaching is good overall and it is excellent in some lessons.
- You commented that the support you receive from staff to help you achieve well is highly effective and inspectors agree.
- The range of courses on offer in the academy is outstanding. 'Bookend' and 'learn to learn' courses are particularly effective in helping you to gain skills which prepare you for other work and for your future.
- Enrichment activities including trips and visits away from Middlesbrough are very varied, they are well attended and you value them highly; we have judged that these activities contribute enormously to the overall effectiveness of the academy.
- Your behaviour in and out of lessons is excellent. You are polite and friendly and show respect for each other. You are prepared well for life when you leave school.
- The care, guidance and support that you receive are of very high quality. The target setting and support programme which helps you achieve your maximum potential is outstanding.
- Your principal is strongly committed to your education and care and his work is highly valued by staff students and parents. He has a very strong team of managers and governors supporting him and they know exactly what needs to be done to make the academy even better.

We would like to thank you for contributing to the inspection and for being so polite and helpful. We would also like to congratulate you on being part of an outstanding academy and wish you well for the future.

Ann Talboys HMI

Angela Headon HMI

Michael Maddison HMI