

South Wolverhampton and Bilston Academy

Dudley Street, Bilston, WV14 0LN

Inspection dates 18–19 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- Students are not making rapid enough progress from their low starting points, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- Although much teaching is good or outstanding, there remains some inconsistency. Recent improvements have not yet had sufficient time to have had a full impact on accelerating rates of progress.
- Not all teachers plan sufficiently to meet the different needs and abilities of students so they find the work too easy or too difficult.
- A minority of teachers miss opportunities to involve students fully in their learning because they do not provide sufficient tasks where students can contribute their ideas or learn actively. Here the pace of learning slows.
- The sixth form requires improvement because achievement requires improvement.
- Procedures for checking on the effectiveness of additional support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs lack sufficient rigour.

The school has the following strengths

- This is a rapidly improving school. The strong leadership of the principal, well supported by her leadership team and the governing body, has been relentless in dramatically improving the quality of teaching from a very low base and eradicating inadequate teaching.
- Procedures to promote good behaviour and ensure students' safety and well-being are exemplary.
- Students behave well. They are welcoming, polite and confident. They enjoy their learning and increasingly feel that they can do well, showing pride in their achievements. They say that the school keeps them safe and that they all get on well together.
- Students are proud of the inspirational school environment, which contributes strongly to their well-being and to raising their aspirations.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 lessons, four of which were seen together with one of the academy’s senior leaders. They also made a number of further short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with students, governors and staff, including subject leaders. A telephone conversation took place with the academy’s chair of governors.
- The inspectors observed the academy’s work and looked at policies, the academy’s own assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and its development planning, minutes of governing body meetings, records of lesson monitoring, information about students’ progress, safeguarding documents, and samples of students’ work.
- The views of the 18 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, together with the academy’s own survey of the views of parents and carers. Inspectors also took account of 28 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

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Additional Inspector

Janet Bird

Additional Inspector

Keith Brown

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Jane Woodall

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Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is above average, with the largest groups being of Indian origin. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is also above average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above the national average.
- Ten students follow a variety of full- or part-time alternative courses at the Orchard Centre, Braybrook and Midpoint.
- Some students are entered for mathematics GCSE prior to Year 11; the large majority are now entered during their final year.
- The academy does not meet the current government floor standards for secondary schools, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school runs a breakfast club every morning which is free to all students.
- The academy is part of the City of Wolverhampton Academy Trust, converting to academy status in 2010.
- The academy moved from a split site school to purpose-built, state of the art accommodation in September 2012.
- Over the past two years there has been a significant turnover in staffing. Thirteen new teachers took up post at the beginning of the current academic year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Share existing outstanding practice to ensure that all teaching is consistently good or better in the main school and the sixth form, by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently plan work of the right level of difficulty to match the individual needs of students, so that all students are appropriately challenged or supported
 - lesson activities proceed at a fast pace and provide opportunities for all students to be actively involved in their learning.
- Raise achievement in English, mathematics and science and in the sixth form, by ensuring that teaching is consistently good or outstanding so that the proportion of students in all year groups making better than expected progress compares favourably to similar students nationally.
- Increase the rigour with which the individual support provided for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is monitored over time, to better evaluate its effectiveness in promoting their progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students consistently enter the school with significantly below-average levels in the basic skills of reading, writing, communication and mathematics. Over recent years the proportion of Year 11 students gaining 5 good GCSE passes including English and mathematics and science has been low and rates of progress have been slow. This is because the quality of teaching that they received during their early school career was inadequate. Leaders have taken robust action to address this, with the result that a similar proportion of students in all year groups are now making or exceeding expected rates of progress in comparison to students nationally. The small current proportion of most-able students are also making good progress. Students from all ethnic backgrounds are making similar rates of progress.
- Students enter the sixth form with below-average qualifications. Recent results show that attainment at advanced level has been below average, while in 2013 all students on vocational courses achieved a pass although few at the highest levels. Therefore achievement in the sixth form requires improvement.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are well supported and are currently making similarly good progress to that of their peers. They benefit from being taught in small groups, enabling them to achieve well. In an outstanding English lesson for a group of mostly boys in Year 11, students were able to tackle a poetry assessment with confidence and enjoyment. They could explain exactly what they needed to do to achieve as a result of building their skills over time.
- Well-focused support and expert teaching for students who speak English as an additional language has enabled them to achieve well over a sustained period.
- Well-established strategies are in place to help to accelerate reading. A variety of catch-up courses and one-to-one tuition are provided for the weakest readers, establishing a systematic approach and providing effective support throughout Key Stage 3 and beyond. This results in most of these students making good progress in reading. Students are often encouraged to read out loud, and in most subjects teachers place a strong focus on the use of technical vocabulary for the subject.
- Pupil premium funding is used appropriately to focus on promoting study skills and raising standards of literacy and numeracy across the school including the provision of support for mathematics and mentoring for Year 11 students. It has also provided funding for additional teaching assistants who provide effective in-class support throughout the school for disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- The attainment of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below that achieved by this group nationally in English and mathematics. In 2012 the average GCSE grade of these students was a year behind that of their classmates. The school's current data show that the gap is closing for all ability levels and that in some year groups, particularly in mathematics, they are exceeding the rates of progress of their peers.
- The school's tracking of progress indicates that the gap between the performance of those eligible for the pupil premium funding from the current Years 7 to 11 and that of their peers is now closing, particularly in mathematics.
- Year 7 catch-up funding supports students who enter the school with weak literacy and

numeracy skills to make the transition to secondary school by providing well directed support that includes promoting learning and life skills. This is enabling them to establish appropriate standards of behaviour, is building their self-confidence and is improving their basic skills.

- Early entry for mathematics GCSE has not been used effectively in the past to ensure that all students achieve their potential. Leaders have addressed this and currently the majority of students will be entered during their final year.
- Students following alternative courses achieve well as the result of the active and appropriate courses.
- Students enjoy their learning and are keen to do well. They receive constant encouragement from adults and through displays around the academy. This is generating increased self-confidence and resulting in students' rising aspirations and very positive attitudes to learning.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although inspection evidence shows that most teaching is effective and much is outstanding, there remains some inconsistency. Where teaching is good or outstanding, it is now beginning to result in sustaining improved rates of progress.
- A minority of teachers do not plan tasks that sufficiently match the variety of individual abilities within their class. This results in the most-able students finding the work too easy and those of lowest ability finding it too difficult because the task has not been explained or modelled sufficiently clearly.
- Where teaching is less effective, teachers are inclined to dominate the lesson rather than providing a variety of activities which enable students to contribute fully to their learning and to develop their independence. Students sit passively for too long before they are appropriately challenged.
- Sixth form students told inspectors that the teaching they receive is good and that they value the encouragement they receive. Observations confirmed this. In an outstanding sixth form performing arts lesson, the teacher skilfully built students' confidence, skills and understanding, step by step during the lesson. They made rapid progress in their reading of musical notation and developing their ensemble performance skills and showed great enjoyment.
- Leaders are establishing very effective assessment practice across the whole school. Although early in the term, students have a clear understanding of their targets and how well they are doing. They are increasingly provided with opportunities to respond to teachers' comments by correcting their work or trying another challenge.
- Teachers in all subjects promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, by providing opportunities for reflection on moral issues and for teamwork. Daily exposure to global issues via television news bulletins around the academy promote debate in effectively delivered tutorial sessions.
- In the best lessons, a key strength is the teachers' focus on promoting students' independence. Teaching assistants provide good classroom support but also know when to stand back and enable students to try themselves. In an outstanding business studies lesson in Year 12 the teacher acted as facilitator to establish an exciting task and high quality learning. One student commented, 'this lesson is exciting. We learn so much!' Likewise throughout the school, teachers

are promoting the fun of learning through enjoyable tasks and their well prepared resources, including the provision of electronic tablet devices, results in a buzz of activity and excitement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The academy has faced considerable challenges over recent years especially when two different schools and two communities merged under one roof. Students told inspectors that behaviour has dramatically improved since moving to the new building and that previous disagreement between students from the two previous school communities now no longer exists. They say that everyone gets on well together.
- Strong leadership has created a cohesive learning community where a culture of success and equal opportunity is paramount. Behaviour is very well managed across the whole school and students speak of their clear understanding of rewards and sanctions and the consistency with which they are applied. Students are keen to learn and are excited when tasks are fun and active. They concentrate well and the atmosphere around the school is one of calm. This has a real impact on their learning in lessons.
- Previously high exclusion rates have fallen and robust racial incident and behaviour logging systems show a rapidly improving picture. Attendance rates are rising as a result of well-focused actions to support those students facing challenging circumstances. The breakfast club, provided free to all, promotes punctuality to school.
- Students display courtesy and good manners to adults and their peers and live the academy mantra of 'Respect, Engage, Aspire, Achieve'. Respect for the academy environment is exemplary and students conduct themselves responsibly at lunch-time and when moving around the school.
- Students told inspectors that bullying is rare and showed a good understanding of different forms that bullying can take and how to tackle it. They were clear that adults support them well so that they feel safe.
- Those decreasing numbers of students on alternative provision are well monitored and make good progress given their complex needs and various starting points.
- Parents and carers, students and staff agree that behaviour is good and that students are well cared for and supported. This is also true in the sixth form, where students say how much they value the guidance they receive. The proportion of students not in education, employment or training (NEETS) has dramatically reduced over recent years and is now low.

The leadership and management are good

- The inspirational principal, well supported by her strong team, has been rigorous in ensuring students' well-being and establishing an atmosphere in which students can learn and achieve. She has been relentless in her drive to improve the quality of teaching and has taken robust action to eradicate inadequate teaching. Leaders at all levels share her vision and staff know that 'only good or outstanding will do' in terms of the quality of teaching and learning within their classes.
- The rigour with which teaching is monitored and wide range of support provided for any identified weakness, including training, mentoring and coaching, together with the high expectations of all senior staff, has resulted in a rapid and dramatic improvement in teaching

quality. Rigorous processes are in place to ensure that new appointments are of high quality. Most teaching seen during the inspection was good or outstanding and the impact of this can be seen in the increased rates of progress for all current year groups.

- Subject leaders are effective in promoting high quality teaching, particularly in English, mathematics and science where there have been many recent appointments. The sixth form leader is new in post and has yet to make an impact on raising achievement but has clear plans in place to tackle under achievement.
- The academy knows itself well and has correctly identified key areas for development which have improved rapidly over the past six months as a result of concerted action, including that to improve behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- The tracking and analysis of students' progress is exemplary, so that leaders can quickly identify and address underachievement and ensure equal opportunity for all. Although this also applies to the progress tracking of disabled students and those with special educational needs, the same rigour is not being applied to checking how effectively support programmes are having an impact on these students' progress over time.
- The courses that students follow meet their needs well and promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The pathways for Years 7 and 8, partly funded by the Year 7 catch-up, enables those identified as having weak literacy and numeracy skills to be taught by specialist teachers in these subjects. Vocational courses such as hairdressing and catering are popular and highly successful, being taught in purpose built areas by expert teachers.
- Leaders are working hard to build relationships with parents and have successfully increased parents and carer's involvement in their child's education through progress meetings. The academy is increasingly popular and the number on roll is rising strongly. The academy provides outstanding support for students and their families who are facing challenging circumstances.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors and leaders of the Academy Trust know the academy well and are very well informed. They use their wealth of educational experience and expertise well to provide robust challenge and support for the academy and are able to compare its performance with schools nationally. Governors take an active part in ensuring pay increases are linked to performance, in supporting the principal in her drive to raise the quality of teaching and in tackling the causes of underachievement. The governing body is fully aware of the spending of pupil premium funding and checks its impact on raising the achievement of the students it supports. It ensures that safeguarding procedures and practice are exemplary.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	135983
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	427049

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	841
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	127
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sir Geoff Hampton
Headteacher	Mrs Kerry Inscker
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2012
Telephone number	01902 493797
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