

# Heartlands Academy

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	135907
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	381959
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Paul Brooker HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	755
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	48
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Fair
<b>Headteacher</b>	Glynis Jones (Principal)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	N/A
<b>School address</b>	Great Francis Street Nechells Birmingham B7 4QR
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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	25–26 January 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	381959



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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Paul Brooker	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lynn Cox	Additional inspector
Steve McKenna	Additional inspector
Stephen Walker	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. In total, the inspection team made 39 lesson observations of 39 different teachers, a significant number of which were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including students' work; the school's self-evaluation, assessment and tracking data and evaluated the arrangements made for safeguarding. Meetings were held with nominated staff, groups of students and with representatives of the governing body. No returns were available from the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), but inspectors analysed 500 inspection questionnaire responses from parents and carers, 98 students and 48 staff and scrutinised the academy's independently commissioned survey reports of parental views.

## Information about the school

The academy opened in September 2009 in the accommodation of its predecessor, the Heartlands High School. Most staff, including the school's senior leaders, transferred to the academy. Work on the new academy, adjacent to the existing building, is due for completion in September 2012. The academy is one of 16 currently sponsored by E-ACT and has specialisms in mathematics and sport. The academy has a range of accreditations and awards including Healthy Schools status, International School Award and Business in the Community, and is a lead school for the Youth Sports Trust.

The academy is a smaller than average secondary school. A very small sixth form opened in September 2010, and is expanding year-on-year. Most students come from the immediate locality, an area that experiences high levels of social and economic disadvantage. There is a high level of student mobility each year, with a significant proportion of students joining at times other than at the start of the year. Most students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with the largest proportions from Pakistani or Black African heritages. A large majority of students speak English as an additional language. Two thirds of students are known to be eligible for free school meals, a proportion that is far higher than the national figure. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is above average. Attainment exceeds the government's current floor standard.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>1</b>

## Key findings

- Heartlands Academy is an outstanding school because, regardless of their background or starting points, students achieve exceptionally well.
- Standards are rising strongly and are broadly in line with those found nationally. In its first two years the academy has successfully closed the attainment gap so that all groups perform at least as well as students nationally.
- Students make rapid and sustained progress across all areas of the curriculum. Outstanding provision is underpinned by the rigorous use of assessment information to set challenging targets and ensure that no student falls behind.
- The academy is led and managed exceptionally well. Procedures for monitoring performance are exemplary, and are effectively used to steer the academy's further development.
- The Principal leads by example and inspires staff in the tireless pursuit of continuous improvement and the achievement of excellence. The academy's high expectations are shared by governors, staff and students and create a strongly cohesive school community.
- Teaching is of a consistently high quality with much that is outstanding. Assessment is a notable strength, although the impact of some teachers' efforts is not maximised, particularly with regard to marking and the promotion of high quality writing.
- Students say that they feel completely safe and respond to teachers' high expectations with excellent behaviour and by developing very positive attitudes to learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Parental responses convey overwhelming support for the academy and the quality of its provision.
- Although too early to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the embryonic sixth form, the new post-16 provision mirrors the high quality of the main school.
- The academy is developing its wider impact through its work with local primary schools and its positive engagement with families. The community's rising aspirations are reflected in the academy's increasing popularity and the over-subscription for Year 7 places.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Although the academy has no specific weaknesses, it recognises that its efforts will only impact fully when its exemplary best practice permeates all aspects of its work, including the developing sixth-form provision, for example by:
  - applying more consistently the whole-school strategies for promoting students' literacy
  - ensuring that students routinely respond to the guidance provided through marking.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

On entry to the academy, student attainment is low. Nonetheless, students sustain rapid progress in their work across all areas of the curriculum and achieve exceptionally well. Since the academy opened there has been a steady rise in standards and a sharp acceleration in achievement. A significantly higher proportion of students make the expected levels of progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4, in English and mathematics than nationally, and students who join school mid-term make equally impressive gains. Any gaps in attainment have consequently closed or are narrowing. The progress and performance of students entitled to free school meals is exceptional, but only reflects the gains made by all groups across the academy, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, those from minority ethnic backgrounds and students with different abilities.

Although Key Stage 4 results in 2011 did not exceed the academy's impressive results in 2010, achievement rose notably and attainment was broadly average. Results in English increased significantly, as did the proportion of A\* and A grades in GCSE subjects. The national attainment gap has closed dramatically, particularly for those groups whose circumstances make them vulnerable to underachievement. Attainment in 2011 was well above the floor standard and significantly higher than the national average in several respects. Published data places the academy in the top one per cent of schools nationally for progress, and its rigorous tracking information indicates that this strong trajectory of improvement is set to continue with further increases in 2012.

Students, including those in the sixth form, make excellent progress in lessons and over time, and parental responses back this up. Students acquire knowledge quickly and are developing a depth of understanding and a wide range of skills, including personal qualities and attributes, which prepare them well for the next stage of their education and later life. This is primarily because teaching is consistently good, and often outstanding, but also because the academy uses its assessment information so effectively to set ambitious targets for every student and encourages them to rise to the challenge.

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## Quality of teaching

Teaching is outstanding because all staff share high expectations of students' behaviour, attitudes and participation. Students respond positively to these expectations by sustaining their concentration and working hard. They are able to learn exceptionally well because there is a positive climate for learning across the whole academy and lessons are skilfully planned and expertly delivered, often with imaginative activities and interesting resources. Time is used very well because work is sharply focused and proceeds without disruption. Teachers share learning objectives so that students understand what must be achieved by the end of the lesson. The most skilful teachers enrich learning by seamlessly developing wider skills, such as reading and writing, both through their marking and in lessons. Although not applied consistently well, the weekly literacy objective is helpful in focusing attention on key aspects of writing that need strengthening. Appropriate and regular homework contributes very well to students' learning.

Teachers secure a positive commitment by working remarkably hard for their students and encouraging them to do the same. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers agree that their children are well taught, and students support this view. The very best lessons successfully engage all students even when they lack confidence, and pay close attention to strengthening students' wider skills, such as their writing. In these lessons careful preparation of pair and group activities nurtures students' independence and builds their confidence to tackle challenging tasks; skilful questioning engages the whole group and addresses the natural reticence of some students.

Assessment is a notable strength of teaching. Teachers use detailed assessment information, including about students' particular learning needs, to plan work that is both demanding and interesting. Any students that are in danger of falling behind are quickly identified so that timely support and intervention can put them back on track. Lessons are guided by suitably challenging objectives designed to stretch different groups of students, and routine plenary sessions effectively check their understanding and progress throughout lessons. Students are seamlessly engaged in this process through routine peer- and self-assessment; they constructively review one another's work with impressive impunity. Marking is detailed and thorough, but students often ignore the guidance given.

The measured and mature way that Year 9 students discussed the causes, impact and implications of the 'intifada' in their religious education lesson was most impressive. However, the promotion of positive spiritual, moral, social and cultural attitudes is not solely the preserve of religious education. All staff are conscious of the need to model and reinforce positive values so that students develop the personal qualities and attitudes that prepare them well for life in a multicultural and multi-faith society.

All sixth-form lessons observed were either good or outstanding. Although the sixth form is too small to provide students with a breadth of options or enrichment

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opportunities, students make impressive progress in their chosen subjects and greatly appreciate the opportunity to continue their studies at the academy.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Staff, students, parents and carers are very positive about behaviour and safety. Students' behaviour is typically outstanding both in lessons and around the site during break and lunch times and over time. Despite some parents and carers disagreeing that lessons are not disrupted, students are adamant that they enjoy a highly positive climate for learning across all their lessons. Their thoughtful attitudes make a strong contribution to learning. They sustain their concentration well and show remarkable consideration when working collaboratively in pairs or small groups or when reviewing one another's work. Although their natural passivity sometimes masks their enthusiasm, students work hard, including on their homework, and develop excellent attitudes to learning.

Students are punctual and attend well. Attendance levels have risen to well above the national figure and levels of persistent absenteeism have plummeted. Students take responsibility for their own conduct and behaviour in the classroom. They are very calm, orderly and considerate when moving around the academy.

Students say that they feel safe at school at all times, that instances of bullying are very rare, and that they have confidence that the academy will deal effectively with any concerns that arise. They understand very clearly what constitutes unsafe situations and are highly aware of how to keep themselves and others safe.

### **Leadership and management**

The Principal leads by example and is forensic in her analysis of school and student performance. Academy leaders inspire a collective energy and positivity that is shared by staff, students and increasingly by the wider community. Self-evaluation is based securely on a raft of rigorous but supportive monitoring activities that underpin development planning. Improving and sustaining the highest quality teaching is rightly seen as a key priority. The academy has a number of new staff, some of whom are already exceptional teachers. New staff are very well supported so that even if they lack the experience to teach consistently good lessons, they quickly develop the skills in planning and lesson management to promote good learning.

Senior and middle leaders are highly supportive but also uncompromising in their determination that individual students should excel, regardless of any particular difficulty or disadvantage that they might face. The focus on each individual student ensures that gaps in the progress and performance of particular groups are subsequently narrowed. Strategic leadership and day-to-day management are outstanding. When, for example, the new building programme took essential space and facilities, the academy made the judicious decision to timetable physical education lessons off site for each year group on a daily basis. The academy made a

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virtue out of this necessity by minimising the disruption and enhancing its specialist provision.

Every effort is made to develop a curriculum that provides memorable experiences and meets the needs and rising aspirations of the students. Excellent guidance and support ensure that students make suitable choices when deciding their options, and that all can benefit from the rich and varied programme of extra-curricular opportunities. In addition to the well-attended academic support provided outside lesson time, there is a wide range of clubs and activities, including sport, drama and enterprise, that contributes positively to students' enjoyment and personal development. As with all aspects of the academy's work, close attention is paid to ensuring that all students can access wider provision and that no one is disadvantaged.

Students' safety, behaviour and personal development remain a key focus because the academy recognises the significant importance of strengthening students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, in order to improve their life chances. The academy's rigorous arrangements for safeguarding meet all current requirements and ensure that students feel completely safe. The academy has highly successful strategies for engaging with parents and carers, including those who find working with the academy difficult.

The governing body shares the academy's ambition and underpins its strategic development exceptionally well by using its detailed knowledge to balance the need for support and challenge. The academy's ever-improving provision, rising standards and accelerating achievement amply demonstrate its outstanding capacity to improve.



## 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



27 January 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Heartlands Academy, Birmingham, B7 4QR**

Thank you for making such a positive contribution to our recent inspection. We were most impressed by your warm welcome and courtesy, and your exemplary behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Your views, alongside the survey responses from your parents and carers, confirmed our first-hand observations and the academy's own evaluation. As an outstanding academy, Heartlands has many strengths, including:

- the remarkable progress that you make across all areas of the curriculum
- your teachers' commitment to produce excellent lessons and secure outstanding achievement, often providing extra support for your learning
- the relentless drive, energy and determination of the Principal and her senior leaders to sustain improvement and achieve even better outcomes.

The academy has high expectations, but is always looking to improve. Senior leaders know its strengths and future priorities. We agree that, apart from continuing its excellent work, the academy needs to strive for higher standards by:

- ensuring that the exemplary best practice in teaching and use of assessment permeates all areas of its work, including the sixth form as it develops.

The academy's success is rooted in high aspiration and rigorous self-evaluation. By setting ambitious targets and ensuring that all staff and students are properly supported, everyone shares the same expectations and can be successful. You share this success and can all be proud of the contribution that you make to it.

We wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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