

Ormiston Sandwell Community Academy

Inspection report

Unique reference number	135979
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	381997
Inspection dates	24–25 January 2012
Lead inspector	Elaine Taylor HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
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	789
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Preston
Headteacher	Janice Farrell (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
School address	Lower City Road Oldbury B69 2HE
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

Inspection team

Elaine Taylor	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michelle Parker	Her Majesty's Inspector
Richard Sutton	Additional inspector
Carol Evatt	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Inspectors observed 27 teachers and 29 lessons, of which six were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. Meetings were held with groups of students; the Chair of the Governing Body; academy staff, including senior and middle managers; and conversations and a meeting were held with a group of parents and carers. The inspectors observed the academy's work, and looked at documentation including that relating to safeguarding; the development plan; monitoring procedures and outcomes of recent evaluations and teaching records. Inspectors analysed 29 parental questionnaires in addition to those completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

The academy opened on 1 September 2009 in the buildings of the predecessor school, Tividale Community Arts College. The sponsors are the Ormiston Trust. The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. A consortium has been established with two local partner schools with sixth-form provision - George Salter Academy and Bristnall Hall Technology College. An above-average proportion of the students are from minority ethnic groups and more than an average proportion of all students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above average. The number of disabled students and those with special educational needs is slightly below average in Key Stage 4, but above in Key Stage 3. In 2011, the academy met the current floor standard, the minimum expected with regard to students' attainment and progress.

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	4
Achievement of pupils	4
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The academy is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the progress made by some groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Although improvements to the academy are evident, achievement is inadequate because some groups of students make much less progress than others and progress for all students in English and mathematics has not been securely satisfactory.
- Teaching is satisfactory but more consistent than at the time of the academy's monitoring visit in February 2011. Common strengths in planning are evident leading to better engagement. In some lessons, especially where there are greater numbers of students from underachieving groups, teachers provide too limited a range of activities and fail to match the work to students' levels of ability. In some of these lessons, poor behaviour is inconsistently managed and occasionally disrupts learning.
- Students' attitudes to learning have improved, resulting in higher attendance and fewer exclusions. Behaviour around the school is orderly and students feel safe. Students are clear that disruptive behaviour is uncommon.
- The very small sixth form is satisfactory. The curriculum has been improved through partnerships with other providers and students make a good contribution to the academy.
- The Principal and senior team have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy's work. They have been effective in improving the curriculum, the quality of teaching, behaviour and attendance. The analysis of progress data is improving and effectively informs intervention strategies for individual students. However, leaders do not analyse closely enough the progress of groups to inform strategies for improvement.

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What does the academy need to do to improve further?

- Close the gaps in the progress made by different groups of students, and raise attainment further for all students by:
 - ensuring teachers plan a range of activities that consistently meet the differing needs of individuals and groups of students
 - extending the range of strategies teachers use in their lessons to increase students' active involvement and to promote positive behaviour.

- Accelerate the rate of improvement and strengthen the impact of leadership by making greater use of the analysis of data on students' progress, especially that of different groups of students, to inform and evaluate development work.

Main report**Achievement of pupils**

The progress of students from their broadly average starting points is generally satisfactory, but uneven across subjects and groups. Progress in English and mathematics was below the government's expectations in 2011. In Year 7, students are making more progress this year as a result of changes to the curriculum which enable low levels of literacy to be addressed sooner. The data on progress for the current Year 11 cohort show that attainment has risen, especially in English but also in mathematics.

Inspectors observed mainly satisfactory and occasionally good progress in lessons. Students' learning was good where they were given opportunities to work independently and in groups, with a clear understanding of how well they were doing and the criteria for success. Personalised programmes for some disabled students and those with special educational needs are supporting them to succeed in greater numbers. However, these improvements are not securely embedded across the academy and the quality of support they receive in lessons is inconsistent. In addition, evidence indicates that the gap in achievement is starting to close for other groups of students, such as those who speak English as an additional language, or known to be eligible for free school meals. However, unlike some other groups of students, where progress has been improving more rapidly, the gap for disabled students and those with special educational needs and those known to be eligible for free school meals is not closing rapidly enough.

When they leave at the end of Key Stage 4, the vast majority of students have gained appropriate qualifications and a small but growing number are entering the sixth form, where attainment is rising from a low base. All students in the sixth form passed their examinations at AS-level in 2011 and the retention of students has improved.

Quality of teaching

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The quality of teaching is satisfactory with several common strengths across subject areas. The parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are satisfied that their children are taught well and making progress. Most students confirmed that their lessons are more interesting and that they are being given more opportunities to be actively involved in their learning. This is not always the case for disabled students and those with special educational needs, who often have little variety of task and few opportunities to be creative.

The impact of the teachers who form the 'Teaching4learning' group is starting to be seen. Inspectors observed the positive impact on learning and enjoyment of techniques which had featured in the group-led workshops. Lessons have clear learning objectives and explicit criteria for success which are carefully checked as the lesson proceeds. In order to inject additional stretch for more-able students, teachers use a 'challenge' question, which is intellectually demanding as an extension task. Relevant learning activities often build on an enrichment activity, for example in Year 7 history lessons where work on castle development followed a visit to Tamworth Castle. Other strengths in teaching include making learning relevant, as in a mathematics lesson introducing percentages where students calculated how many more chocolate biscuits they would receive if the packet showed it contained 100% extra. A group of students is observing teaching and offering suggestions for further improvements. However, there are still too many lessons that are only satisfactory, especially for students in lower sets. Teachers do not provide a variety of activities for these students. Students often work alone from texts in books or on worksheets and there are few opportunities for creativity. In a trail of lessons for one group, inspectors observed a noticeable drop in engagement as the morning proceeded because of this uninspiring diet.

Marking is variable in quality, ranging from some excellent examples where comments were extremely helpful on how to improve, to cursory ticks and tolerance of poor presentation and inaccurate spelling. Teachers do not always employ a wide enough range of questioning techniques to keep all students engaged or to manage behaviour in a way that emphasises what is required and praises those who behave well.

Good opportunities are taken in many lessons to contribute to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A mathematics lesson explored ecological issues; good use was made of cultural references in a Year 12 art lesson; and a tutorial session allowed students to reflect on moral and spiritual issues when discussing the holocaust. Occasionally opportunities are missed to encourage students to empathise with others because teachers control discussions.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students, staff and most parents and carers are clear that behaviour has improved. Around the academy, students are sometimes noisy, but their behaviour is orderly. Students told inspectors that the academy deals effectively with bullying, including

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cyber-bullying, should it occur. A small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about this matter. The academy's leaders agree that they must ensure they communicate promptly with parents and carers so they are clear how incidents have been tackled.

Strategies to reintegrate students following exclusion are successfully reducing the need for this sanction. A group of students who had been excluded in the past confirmed the success of the personalised programmes to help them improve their behaviour and manage their anger.

Attendance is just above the national average for secondary schools and persistent absence has reduced significantly. Students are punctual to the academy and to lessons.

Leadership and management

Leaders have successfully communicated a vision for the improved achievement of all students to all members of the academy. Teachers readily take part in professional development opportunities. The sponsors provide generous additional support in the form of consultants and by sharing expertise from other academies in the group. The success of improvement work can be seen in many areas, but the pace of improvement is rather slow. Recent adjustments to the leadership structure and additional systems to hold subject leaders to account are starting to demonstrate positive impact.

Leaders can point to examples where a close analysis of the data on students' progress has led to improvement. For example, the thematic curriculum in Year 7, designed to aid transition from primary school, was reviewed after a year by looking at the progress made in the subjects taught in the home base. This showed increased progress, except for more-able students. Further adjustments were made for this year to include additional challenging activities. The close monitoring of the data tracking the progress of individual students leads to the establishment of personalised intervention programmes that are improving their achievement. The curriculum has been expanded and includes good additional opportunities to support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These include 'Learning4success' days that involve a mixed programme of activities to address the needs of different year groups. The daily sessions are monitored regularly, resulting in at least satisfactory delivery.

Leaders in the sixth form have taken a strategic approach to curriculum development based on students' needs. This has led to a curriculum with clear pathways and an expanding range of subject choices. At the same time information, advice and guidance have been improved to ensure students are on the correct courses. It is too early to assess the full impact of these improvements, but more students are applying for places and fewer leaving mid-course.

Communication with the parental body is not fully effective. Satisfactory systems are

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in place for reporting students' progress, but the few responses to the questionnaire indicate that parents and carers would like more help to support their child's learning.

The improvements already made demonstrate satisfactory capacity to improve. Development planning is adequate to maintain the current rate of progress in improvements, but is insufficiently precise in some aspects to accelerate that progress. An area for development is in the presentation of data on the progress made by all groups of students to strengthen analysis and identify priorities more clearly.

The Governing Body takes an active role in supporting and challenging the academy. Governors use their expertise to hold the academy to account. Consequently, the academy actively promotes equality, tackles any form of discrimination effectively and ensures the gap in the performance of different groups is narrowing. Relationships between different groups within the academy are harmonious. The academy ensures all health and safety processes and policies, including safeguarding, are applied rigorously and monitored. Safeguarding requirements are met.

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).

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.



26 January 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Ormiston Sandwell Community Academy, Oldbury, B69 2HE

Thank you for the welcome and courtesy you showed us during the inspection. Your comments and questionnaires were helpful in giving us an accurate picture of your learning. We are pleased that you feel safe in the academy and that bullying is dealt with effectively when it occurs.

The academy needs to improve the way it helps different groups of students to make progress since some of you do not make the progress you could. Although we have judged achievement to be inadequate overall, we do recognise that individually, many of you are making satisfactory or good progress. You are doing much better than in previous years, especially in English and mathematics.

You told us you like lessons where you are actively involved and we want all teachers to make sure the tasks they provide meet your individual needs. You deserve congratulation on improving your attendance which is now slightly better than in other secondary schools. You are very positive about the improvements in behaviour, although some of you still distract others because you do not manage your behaviour well enough. We have asked teachers to help you to stop this and to give those of you who do behave well more praise for doing so.

We have asked the academy's leaders to look more closely at the progress different groups of students are making so they can be more precise when deciding the next steps for the improvement of the academy.

I hope some of you, particularly those of you in the sixth form, will read the full report which contains more detailed findings. We are pleased numbers are growing in Years 12 and 13 and that the curriculum and teaching there are improving. You can be proud of the positive role models you provide for younger students and your contribution to academy life.

Yours sincerely

Elaine Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector

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