

Grace Academy Coventry

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135335
Local Authority	Coventry
Inspection number	361308
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Andrew Cook 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	815
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Edmiston
Headteacher	Steve Allen
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wigston Road Coventry CV2 2RH
Telephone number	02476 589000
Fax number	02476 589001
Email address	steveallen@graceacademy.org

Age group	11–19
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2010
Inspection number	361308

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 1234 234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 38 lessons and 37 teachers were seen. Inspectors held meetings with parents, groups of students, governors, leaders and staff. On the second day of the inspection inspectors met with some of the Academy Student Ambassadors who led a presentation on their work. Inspectors also observed the academy's work, and scrutinised a range of documentation including improvement plans, minutes of meetings and safeguarding records. Student, staff and 261 parental questionnaires were also evaluated.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- Why did English results in 2010 remain static and has the academy taken effective action to improve attainment since?
- How effectively is the academy raising the quality of teaching from satisfactory to good and better through improvement strategies such as 'The Glass Classroom' and the work of the Learning and Teaching Team (LATTe)?
- What is the impact of care and guidance on those pupils who are most vulnerable?
- How well have newly appointed leaders and managers contributed to the ongoing work to improve provision and pupil outcomes?

Information about the school

Grace Academy Coventry is the second of three Grace Academies to be opened in the West Midlands. The academy opened in September 2008 moving into new premises in February 2010. The Academy has a Business and Enterprise Specialism and has a strong Christian ethos.

The academy is smaller than average but numbers of students are rising rapidly. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much higher than the national average. Most pupils are White British and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities fell in 2010, but was still higher than the national average.

The academy has achieved a number of recent awards including Specialist Schools and Academies Trust Recognition for improvements in attainment, Go4it Award for its approach to enterprise and business, Brit Writers nominees at the O2 Arena London, Anti Bullying Award and won a place in the Guinness Book of World Records for the number of on-line 'Life Wishes'.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good academy. From the time Grace Academy first opened its doors there has been a continual, and successful, focus on its core vision which is to develop well educated, considerate and caring citizens with a strong sense of values who will succeed and contribute to the society they live in. The success of Grace has come about because strong and determined leadership has ensured that expectations have remained high. The key achievements and strengths of the academy are:

- the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades has risen to 92%, which is well above the national average
- there is overwhelming evidence that the work of the academy is helping groups of students from vulnerable circumstances to make outstanding progress
- the care guidance and support given to students is outstanding which combined with teaching that is improving has resulted in students making good, and for some, outstanding progress
- the emphasis on business and enterprise has an impact across the whole of the curriculum through the promotion of what the academy calls 'Skills for Success', for example, decision making and team working
- in 2010 every student that finished their time at Grace went on to further education, training or employment
- the Academy Student Ambassadors are a credit to the academy and successfully role model and promote the academy values
- the systems in place to keep students safe are outstanding.

As outcomes and provision continue to improve, areas where work is still to be done become increasingly more obvious. Leaders recognise the need to improve teaching further, have a greater impact on the success of the sixth form and develop the work of the middle leaders. Some of the middle leaders are relatively new to their post and have been drawn into the way of working that has been so successful. There is a high level of support and direction for some middle leaders as they are at an early stage of developing their role.

The Principal and vice-principals are sharply focused in their evaluation of the academy's work. Their judgements about the quality of education are robust and honest. They have confidently led improvements and have seen the work of the academy flourish. Therefore, the capacity to improve further is good.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by:
 - promoting and sharing the best practice within and across the three Grace academies
 - developing teachers' questioning skills and the way in which teaching is matched to students' different abilities
 - developing teaching styles so that students are encouraged to adopt independent learning skills.
- Develop the work of middle leaders so that they drive improvement work and can be held to account by
 - promoting and sharing the best practice within and across the three Grace academies
 - making use of the role of the Director of Education to coordinate any initiatives to improve their work.
- Improve the overall effectiveness of the sixth form so that it is good or better by:
 - improving the quality of teaching and learning
 - raising attainment
 - improving leadership so that it has a greater impact on the work of the sixth form.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Many of the student exam results in 2010 showed that attainment is rising. Most striking was the 92% of students who achieved five or more GCSE A* to C grades which was a significantly higher proportion when compared to the national picture. Looking more closely at groups of students, the academy can point to significant improvements in attainment, for example, for students eligible for free school meals. There was also an impressive increase in the proportion of students who achieved five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, which rose from 29% to 45%. However despite this strong upward trend, attainment in English and mathematics remains below average. Evidence collated in lessons demonstrates that attainment in English and mathematics is rising and moving towards an average similar to the national picture.

Overall students make good progress, as do those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The 2010 examination results showed that many students from the most vulnerable circumstances made outstanding progress as a result of the excellent support they have for their learning. In some lessons, students made good progress. What was very evident to inspectors was the fact that orderly, calm lessons allowed some students to make the most of the learning opportunities they were given. Although students were keen to complete tasks they did not always have the skills to tackle work independently. As a result, students often needed a high level of direction to complete tasks.

The number of fixed term exclusions halved in the last academic year and this trend continues. Student behaviour in lessons and around the academy is good.

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

The Academy Student Ambassadors (ASA) are highly effective in representing the student voice. They are increasingly becoming involved in the work to improve the academy. The chair and vice-chair of the ASA joined the final team meeting of inspectors and senior leaders from the academy, where they made valuable and intuitive contributions, which were influential to the discussions. Other opportunities exist for students to 'give back' including the community service visits to Zambia and South Africa supporting the work of the charity Christian Vision.

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	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Students' good and sometimes outstanding progress has come about because the academy has provided exceptional support through targeted teaching programmes. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory but over the last two years the proportion of good and outstanding teaching has increased. Inspectors observed a number of lessons where teaching was outstanding. In these lessons, teachers were very clear as to what they wanted students to learn and used exciting and challenging activities. When teaching was good or outstanding, students responded well and were much more active in their learning. In the lessons where teaching was satisfactory, teachers missed opportunities to accelerate student's learning by expecting too little. Teaching also failed to provide activities that effectively promoted the key business and enterprise skills by which the academy wants teaching and learning to be distinguished.

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

The curriculum on offer is effectively channelling students into courses where they achieve well, which is evident in the improving exam results. There is an increasing emphasis on matching the curriculum to the abilities of students, which has led to entering students early into examinations if they are ready. The business and enterprise specialism is making the curriculum distinctive. Activities such as Enterprise Days, Global Enterprise week and an increase in students taking business and enterprise courses are helping students to develop skills such as communication, creativity and planning and organisation. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities that are well attended and enjoyed by students.

The outstanding care, guidance and support the academy offers is a distinguishing feature of its work. This is especially so for those students who for any reason are vulnerable or find they are in need of extra support. There is a concerted effort to quickly identify these students and then tailor support to meet their needs. Academy staff work exceptionally well with a range of other agencies to ensure that student's well-being is nurtured. Inspectors met with students and parents who all confirmed the emphasis the academy puts on care and guidance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Over the previous year there have been a number of new appointments to key leadership posts which led the academy to be cautious in its evaluation of the effectiveness of leadership. However, inspectors found that because a determined drive to improve standards has become the mindset in leadership, new leaders have responded quickly to meet the challenge of high expectation. The rigorously focused leadership of the Principal and vice-principals acts as a good role model for other leaders. Where leadership is still developing, systems are in place to ensure support and challenge is provided to ensure the momentum of improvement is not being lost. Typical of the work of leaders is a focus on how well different groups of students achieve and, when necessary, action to address any concerns. As a result the academy's work to promote equal opportunities is good.

Leaders measure their success robustly by evaluating the impact of their work. They recognise that the impact of leadership and management has not brought about a high enough proportion of good and outstanding teaching to judge that teaching is good. The success of improvements so far has led to a belief that teaching can improve further. Leaders are confidently developing and promoting good and outstanding teaching through a number of very effective strategies. The glass classroom, for example, encourages the best teaching to be promoted. The LATTe bring together a group of teachers that are

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

increasingly exploring ways that will mould teaching styles so that teaching engages students more in their learning.

Governors, the executive leadership team, and more directly the local governing body, is fully supportive of the work of the academy and have held the academy to account as it has established its reputation. The governors see the academy as an integral part of the community and student involvement, for example, in local rest homes, churches and businesses contribute to the work to promote cohesion in the local area. As the work of the academy now builds on its success governors appreciate the need for closer scrutiny of the work to improve student's attainment and the quality of teaching and learning.

The effectiveness of safeguarding is outstanding because systems in place are thorough, always followed and seen as highly important in every aspect of the school's work.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Students are keen to attend the academy sixth form. Since the previous monitoring visit by Ofsted, the sixth form has improved and there are clear plans in place to continue this work.

The results achieved by students in the sixth form show that standards are low but given students' low starting points their progress is satisfactory. The proportion of students staying on from Year 12 to Year 13 has improved. It is a considerable achievement that all students go onto further education, training or employment and points to the outstanding work the academy does in its guidance for students from the most vulnerable circumstances..

Students' behaviour is good and they are keen to make the most of the opportunities they are given. Students in the sixth form play an influential role in leadership of charitable

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

events, international links and the academy's community programmes which ensure its positive influence 'beyond the school gates', for example their important contribution to the Coventry City Mission.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some which is outstanding. Stronger teaching takes into account the prior performance and studies of students and uses this to inform how a course should be taught. The same lessons also ensure opportunities are created for students to think and speak freely about key questions and ideas so their learning is more developed. The pace of lessons is brisk and effective. These opportunities, assessment practices and consideration of past performance are less evident in satisfactory lessons and pace is often slower. Teachers tend to lead such lessons and this limits students' contribution, especially when questioning is less effective.

Students are able to follow a suitable range of academic and vocational pathways. Supplementary programmes for improving numeracy and literacy are being established to provide further curricular support. The quality of care, guidance and support in the sixth form is clearly improving. Numbers of students entering the sixth form are rising significantly and the entry criteria and advice for courses have become more demanding. Students are now more likely to complete their courses and achieve an appropriate qualification level, thanks to this guidance.

Senior leaders' improvement planning is more effective than in the past and the monitoring and evaluation of performance have improved. Senior and middle leaders are involved in regular scrutiny of student performance and new intervention systems are in place but as yet this work has not been rigorously followed through to bring about significant improvements in student outcomes.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents agreed that their child enjoyed being at the academy and that they were making good progress. There were a few concerns raised over communication and behaviour. Inspectors found that the academy made every effort to communicate effectively with parents. Behaviour was judged to be good and there was compelling evidence that the academy had raised expectations for behaviour which has created a calm and purposeful working environment.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Grace Academy Coventry 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 261 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 815 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	71	27	161	62	20	8	7	3
The school keeps my child safe	98	38	145	56	11	4	5	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	84	32	138	53	32	12	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	82	31	143	55	22	8	8	3
The teaching is good at this school	79	30	142	54	27	10	7	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	65	25	150	57	34	13	5	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	59	23	157	60	36	14	4	2
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)	74	28	142	54	20	8	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	74	28	149	57	32	12	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	87	33	111	43	34	13	15	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	55	21	138	53	44	17	6	2
The school is led and managed effectively	82	31	141	54	22	8	7	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	94	36	131	50	25	10	7	3

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



3 December 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Grace Academy Coventry, Coventry, CV2 2RH

I am writing to thank you for your warm welcome and to inform you that inspectors agreed with the senior leaders of your academy that overall Grace Academy is a good academy. Inspectors were most impressed by:

- the number of students that achieved five or more A* to C GCSE in 2010
- the care guidance and support given to you as students especially those of you who for any reason have specific difficulties or challenges in life
- the way the academy is promoting business and enterprise which is helping you to develop key skills, for example, decision making and team working
- the fact that in 2010 every student that finished their time at Grace went on to further education, training or employment
- the work of the Academy Student Ambassadors
- the outstanding systems the academy has in place to keep students safe.

We were also impressed by the work of the senior leaders headed up by the Principal and vice-Principal. Their work and the work of other staff prove that the academy has the capacity to improve further. To do so we agreed that the academy should look especially to improving the following:

- the quality of teaching so that more is good and outstanding
- the work of the middle leaders (e.g. heads of faculties) so that they can replicate the good work of senior leaders
- the opportunities, quality of teaching and results you achieve in the sixth form.

Grace Academy has been opened for two years and the journey it has been on has already seen significant improvements. We wish you well as you help make Grace Academy a better place to be.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Cook

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.