

Q3 Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number135449Local AuthorityN/AInspection number364391

Inspection dates16–17 February 2011Reporting inspectorAlan Taylor-Bennett 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 pupils11–19Gender of pupilsMixedGender of pupils in the sixth formMixedNu mber of pupils on the school roll1077Of which, number on roll in the sixth form157

Appropriate authority The governing body

Chair Eric Payne

Principal Caroline Badyal

Date of previous school inspectionNot previously inspected

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| Age group | 11–19 | |
|-------------------|---------------------|--|
| Inspection dates | 16-17 February 2011 | |
| Inspection number | 364391 | |

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. They observed 42 lessons and the work of 41 teachers. In addition, meetings were held with groups of students, members of the governing body, and staff. A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the academy's development plans, its self-review, analyses of the attainment and progress of its students, records of lesson observations, and policies. Inspectors took account of the responses to staff and student questionnaires and the 335 questionnaires received from parents and carers.

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

- Several students underperformed significantly at the end of Key Stage 4 over the last two years. How effective is the academy's response to minimise the likelihood of this continuing to happen?
- To what extent does teaching consistently challenge and stimulate students, and engage them in their learning?
- How well does marking support the progress students make?
- How effective is the contribution that self-evaluation makes to the academy's capacity to evaluate the impact of developments and therefore plan for the future?

Information about the school

Q3 Academy opened in September 2008 in the accommodation of its predecessor school. Students and staff moved into new buildings in April 2010. The academy's sponsor is the Grace Charitable Trust. The academy emphasises through its mission statement 'to seek that which is good, right and true' and, although it does not have a faith designation, bases its ethos on broadly Christian values. It has specialisms in design and enterprise. Students come from a range of backgrounds. The majority of students are White British but the proportion from minority ethnic groups is higher than the national average. The proportion who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average. The academy holds several national awards, including the Artsmark silver, the Healthy School Award and a quality award in careers education.

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Q3 Academy is providing an education for its students that is no less than satisfactory in any respect. Aspects of its work are good.

The principal and her senior staff and governors aspire to achieve the highest quality provision and outcomes for all students. In the words of one student, 'staff evoke the right mindset for success'. All key aspects of the work of the academy are improving, some rapidly.

These improvements are driven by good leadership and management at all levels, good development planning, and continual and thorough monitoring and evaluation against appropriately challenging targets. This gives the academy a good capacity to sustain further improvement.

Students' achievement is improving. Attainment is now broadly in line with that seen nationally. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress similar to that of their peers due to the good quality support they receive.

Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and many expressed how glad they were to have 'stayed on'. The progress they make is satisfactory, and other outcomes for students in the sixth form are good. They are well supported and are prepared very well for future higher education, further training and employment. Students have the capacity to become independent and confident learners but only the best teaching requires them to reflect deeply on the ways in which they acquire new knowledge and understanding.

Students feel very safe in the academy and show a mature understanding of the nature of risks to their health and welfare. Behaviour is good: students show consideration and respect for each other and they are welcoming to visitors.

Teaching is satisfactory overall and some is good or outstanding. The satisfactory teaching has emerging strengths, and better teaching uses the agreed strategies fluently and effectively. Not enough of the teaching addresses the tendency for students to be very passive learners, or encourages them to probe and question their understanding. Too much questioning invites brief factual responses that do not disclose sufficient information about students' confidence in their grasp of the work. Little of the marking provides clear messages about how students can improve their work, although there is some good practice.

The curriculum provides a range of good opportunities for students at Key Stages 3 and 4, and in the sixth form, some in coordination with other local providers. The accent on the development of enterprise skills is an exciting stimulus to students' personal development and their preparation for their future economic well-being, but its impact across the academy is still developing with just under half of subjects having established effective links with local businesses.

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

A small number of students who have become disconnected from learning are now well provided for through adjustments to their curriculum that give more opportunities for them to be successful, either in the academy, in a work placement or at the local college. This is reducing the extent of the significant underachievement seen over recent years.

Students are cared for, supported and guided very well. Communication across the academy is good and this enables appropriately rapid and effective responses to the needs of individual students. This is a caring community, and good links with outside agencies support its work well. The academy has a wealth of information about which students take part in each activity on offer, and who participates in various sports and cultural activities, but it does not currently analyse this data and make adjustments to provision in response, to ensure that outcomes for all groups of students can become outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of teaching that is good or outstanding, by:
 - refining teachers' use of questioning in lessons so that feedback about the quality of learning checks and develops students' understanding
 - using marking to ensure that students know exactly how to improve their work
 - giving more opportunities for students, especially those in the sixth form, to explore and question their understanding more deeply, tackle misapprehensions for themselves and learn from making mistakes.
 - Harness the wide range of data about students' progress and participation to refine the academy's planning to improve outcomes for all students.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Behaviour around the site is good and students respond very positively to the high expectations of them. Students are appreciative of the excellent facilities and show respect for their environment. One said 'the new buildings inspire everyone'. Students arrive in classrooms ready and willing to learn. Too often, however, this can translate into a willingness to sit quietly and listen attentively to the teacher guide them, rather than take an active and more energetic role themselves in the lesson. When teaching deliberately stimulates reflection and probes understanding students respond with enthusiasm. For example, in one science lesson, the teacher relentlessly questioned students' grasp of the reasons behind the temperature dependence of the action of an enzyme. They rose to the challenge and, in the process, enjoyed developing a rich understanding of the work.

As a result of improvements in teaching and a wider range of intervention strategies based on close monitoring, the quality of students' learning is improving and attainment is rising quickly. Attainment and progress in English and mathematics are better than in many other subjects. Some subjects tend to focus on achieving grade Cs at GCSE rather than enabling all students to reach their potential, limiting achievement for them. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because their needs are identified accurately and they are supported well.

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Students and parents feel strongly that the academy is a safe place. Relationships are positive and many students express confidence in the willingness and capacity of staff to respond to any worries they had. The diary/reflection room is a safe haven. There are few incidents of racism or bullying. Many students enjoy taking part in the wide range of opportunities presented to them to play sports, enjoy trips and visits and broaden their social and cultural horizons. Many also contribute to the development of the academy through being mentors and student councillors, and there was student involvement in the planning of the new buildings. Links with the local community are good and many students contribute to efforts to raise money for local and national charities, the academy's work with older residents and the Ukieri project. There was no shortage of willing volunteers to move snow for their elderly neighbours.

Students show a good understanding of the likely demands of the next stages of their education, and for the world beyond the academy. They demonstrate a range of skills that enable them to be enterprising, and a capacity to respond well to new situations. Skills such as group work and the ability to analyse a problem are developed in a coordinated way as a result of the academy's specialist work. Attendance is good, but punctuality to lessons is not prioritised sufficiently.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | | |
|--|---|--|
| Taking into account: | | |
| Pupils' attainment ¹ | | |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 3 | |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | | |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 1 | |
| 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: | 2 | |
| Pupils' attendance ¹ | | |
| 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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory overall and has some good features. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons thoroughly, structuring activities well. They use a range of resources, including modern technology, to interest students. In the best lessons, teachers engage students through practical and active tasks which challenge them to think and solve problems. In these lessons, students work well independently, and can explain what they have learnt and justify their opinions. Too often, teachers do not match work closely enough to students' differing abilities. The academy has prioritised the use of assessment in lessons to aid students' learning. This is satisfactory and improving, with many teachers growing in confidence in encouraging students to assess their own work and that of their peers. However, this is not the case in all lessons and sometimes teachers direct the learning too much and do not use frequent and probing questioning to determine the impact of their teaching, and respond appropriately. Teachers' marking remains too variable, especially in giving clear guidance to students on how they should improve their work.

The curriculum provides good opportunities for students to enjoy learning and capitalise on their talents and interests. The three pathways for learning provide for everyone's needs well, especially in the capacity they give for early accreditation in vocational and business related courses. Skills of numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) are coordinated effectively across subjects and the delivery of enterprise related skills such as teamwork and learning and thinking skills is being developed. Aspects of the curriculum have an adverse impact on achievement at the very highest levels by allowing students to discontinue some subjects early, for example mathematics and business studies, having achieved a grade C before the end of Key Stage 4.

The academy supports the needs of all students diligently and caringly. Support is well targeted. For example, there are very well organised arrangements for meeting the specific needs of vulnerable children. Strategies to secure and maintain higher levels of attendance have been successful. The innovations introduced to care structures, such as the role of the companies and the mixed-age tutor groups within them, have steadily reduced the number of behavioural incidents and the number of exclusions over the last two years. Arrangements for the transition from primary schools are extensive and exciting and many parents indicated their appreciation of the enthusiasm engendered in their child to join Year 7 as a result.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| The quality of teaching | | |
|---|---|--|
| 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 | | |

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership of the academy is strongly focused on improvement and developing the capacity of all staff to achieve the best outcomes for students. Middle leaders are held to account for achievement in their subject areas, but they feel that the senior leadership is supportive and responsive to their needs.

The quality of teaching and learning is prioritised and the impact of this work is good. Rigorous evaluation of the quality of teaching by senior and middle leaders is used to identify key areas for improvement and to inform training for teachers. Staff identify best practice and ensure that it is shared. Active teaching and assessment groups promote revised policies and develop good practice.

Governors are very supportive of the work of the academy. They have used their considerable collective expertise in concentrating on the many key strategic challenges over the last few years. Systems to bring all governors closer to the experience of students and to the work of the academy on a week-by-week basis are being developed.

There are well developed and effective partnerships with other local schools and colleges to deliver the curriculum conjointly, and with local and national businesses to bring in specific expertise, for example, beauty, hairdressing, and design work. Links with external care agencies are well developed and very effective, and are used to complement the work of care staff in the academy very well. The academy also knows and understands the needs of its local community and took the opportunity in its planning development stages a few years ago to broaden and deepen links with other groups locally. These links are maintained and nurtured.

The academy's engagement with parents and carers to support improvements in the quality of outcomes for students is good. There are regular questionnaires to seek their views and the academy sends home regular updates on each student's progress. There are very effective links with parents when students experience difficulties with learning or have other specific needs. Increasingly, the academy promotes communication through the parent ambassadors and aims for its new PACT group to have an effect on increasing the extent and the impact of parental involvement.

The academy's promotion of equality and the effectiveness of its actions to tackle discrimination are good. It is committed to the success of all students and tracks their progress closely, ensuring that any areas of underachievement are identified and strategies for improvement agreed. For example, students on alternative programmes in Key Stage 4 now attend the academy for one day each week to ensure they achieve in a range of subjects. The academy is a harmonious community in which all groups are equally valued. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and are monitored regularly.

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for leadership and management

| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | | |
|---|---|--|
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 2 | |
| 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 | | |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | | |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | | |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | | |

Sixth form

The progress made by students in relation to their starting points is satisfactory across many courses, and good in some. Students have a business-like approach to their studies and to their role in the academy. They clearly enjoy their time in the sixth form, and respond very positively to the trust shown in them. Attendance is good. There are many opportunities for them to contribute to their academy, including being appointed to JET (the junior executive team) and helping to elicit the views and opinions of other students to contribute to the development of provision. There are well developed plans to enable five students to remain at the academy in remunerated posts under the new inQubate scheme, to support the development of enterprise skills at this level.

Provision is good because there is a broad curriculum which meets the current needs and future aspirations of students well, which includes memorable experiences such as the Auschwitz study trip. The development of enterprise and learning skills is effective. The quality of advice and guidance offered about university applications and other next steps is good and well organised. Students are prepared well for the challenges in the next stages of their lives. The move to gauge attainment and progress more frequently is appropriate and has the capacity to support efforts to drive up achievement. There is new leadership of the sixth form but it is already making an impact, and the ambition for the continued development of the sixth form is evident.

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the sixth form

| Overall effectiveness of the sixth form | | |
|---|---|--|
| Taking into account: Outcomes for students in the sixth form | 3 | |
| The quality of provision in the sixth form | 2 | |
| Leadership and management of the sixth form | 3 | |

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers expressed positive views of the work of the academy in their responses to the questionnaire. A convincing 91% expressed satisfaction with their children's education; one parent summed this up in saying 'my child has a happy and productive time here'. Responses concerning the extent to which parents and carers are well informed about their children's progress, the safety of their children, and the quality of the leadership of the academy elicited very large positive responses. Expressions of concern from parents and carers were infrequent and tended to focus on specific issues associated with their children; there were no trends or patterns in any problems raised.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Q3 Academy 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 335 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1077 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|-------------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|----------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 77 | 23 | 233 | 70 | 12 | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 123 | 37 | 200 | 60 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| My school informs me about my child's progress | 122 | 36 | 196 | 59 | 12 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 104 | 31 | 201 | 60 | 18 | 5 | 4 | 1 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 75 | 22 | 228 | 68 | 20 | 6 | 4 | 1 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 70 | 21 | 209 | 62 | 44 | 13 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 53 | 16 | 213 | 64 | 53 | 16 | 2 | 1 |
| 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) | 79 | 24 | 195 | 58 | 27 | 8 | 1 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 82 | 24 | 215 | 64 | 23 | 7 | 3 | 1 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 97 | 29 | 183 | 55 | 31 | 9 | 12 | 4 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 56 | 17 | 208 | 62 | 40 | 12 | 5 | 1 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 100 | 30 | 202 | 60 | 19 | 6 | 4 | 1 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 121 | 36 | 184 | 55 | 20 | 6 | 2 | 1 |

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

| | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| Type of school | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 59 | 35 | 3 | 3 |
| Primary schools | 9 | 44 | 39 | 7 |
| Secondary schools | 13 | 36 | 41 | 11 |
| Sixth forms | 15 | 39 | 43 | 3 |
| Special schools | 35 | 43 | 17 | 5 |
| Pupil referral units | 21 | 42 | 29 | 9 |
| All schools | 13 | 43 | 37 | 8 |

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| Achievement: | the progress and suc | ccess 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: 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.

■ 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.



18 February 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Q3 Academy, Birmingham, B43 7SD

Thank you for the welcome you showed to the inspection team when we visited your academy recently. Your willingness to share your opinions and take part in the inspection process, and your cooperation, really helped the process. You may wish to read the full report on the Ofsted website, but I have provided a short summary of our judgements below.

Your academy is providing you with a quality of education which is at least satisfactory in all respects, and is good in some. Achievement is improving strongly and you are now making securely satisfactory progress. Your behaviour is good: you are respectful to each other and to staff, and you show an impressive willingness to learn. However, you could be more critical of your understanding of the work more often, and play a more active role in lessons. You feel very safe in the academy and you make good contributions to its development and to the local community. Sixth form students are professional, reliable and generous with their time and energy on behalf of the academy, and obviously happy that they stayed on.

The quality of teaching supports your progress satisfactorily and some teaching is good. It's at its best when it challenges you and requires you to think hard and communicate how well you understand the work. You are cared for very well and those of you with problems or complications in your lives are supported effectively. The curriculum is rich and offers you a wide range of opportunities to succeed.

Your principal obviously wants the very best for you, and she is able to drive the academy forward strongly. I have agreed two main issues to support her to do so.

Improve teaching, by using questioning to test your understanding more often, improving marking so that it offers you clearer advice about how to improve, and encouraging you to be more reflective learners.

Use the information the academy holds about how successful you are in various ways, and to what extent you take up the opportunities presented to you, so that staff can continually adjust what is offered to meet your needs even better.

I know that you will be interested to play your part in supporting the continued development of Q3 Academy, and that you already have many ways of making your ideas and opinions heard. I wish you all every success and happiness in the future.

Yours sincerely

Alan Taylor-Bennett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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