

# Abraham Darby Academy

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135582
<b>Local Authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	364398
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 May 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mark Phillips 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>	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>	781
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	72
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Joff Hamilton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Steve Hawke (Principal)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Ironbridge Road Madeley, Telford TF7 5HX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01952 386000
<b>Fax number</b>	01952 386001
<b>Email address</b>	AD.academy@taw.org.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 33 teachers in 33 lessons, and four form tutorials; they also made three series of shorter visits to classrooms. Inspectors held discussions with senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body, and the headteacher of the Federation partner school. They also met with panels of students from Year 8, Year 10, and the sixth form. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school records such as achievement data, and systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching. In addition to the survey of parents' and carers' views, to which 414 replies were received, a sample of students completed a written questionnaire and a staff survey was also conducted.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How consistently and securely do students achieve in their examinations?
- Do inspectors agree with the academy that students' behaviour is good?
- How good is the attendance of students in each year group?
- What is the academy doing to improve the curriculum, and make it rigorous and appropriate for all students?
- How good is the progress made by the academy since it opened, and how effectively does the academy monitor and understand its own performance?

## Information about the school

Abraham Darby Academy opened in September 2008 on the site of the predecessor school. The Principal took up post on the Academy's opening. The sixth form opened a year later in September 2009. The academy has a rising roll, but remains a smaller than average secondary school. The great majority of students are of White British heritage with only a small number from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students registered with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is significantly above average, reflecting high levels of disadvantage in the academy's immediate locality. The academy has specialisms in business and enterprise, and in the performing arts.

Abraham Darby Academy is sponsored by The Worshipful Company of Haberdashers, in partnership with Telford and Wrekin Local Authority. The academy is also part of a federation with Adams' Grammar School in Newport, Shropshire.

**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

Since opening, Abraham Darby Academy has made good progress. Students enjoy good outcomes in their achievement, behaviour, the contribution that they make to the community and the extent to which they feel safe. These improvements, particularly since the monitoring inspection in May 2010, suggest a good capacity for further sustained improvement. This is also supported by self-evaluation which, while over-ambitious in some aspects, nevertheless has a clear understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. Overall, value for money is good although it has been more difficult to establish the sixth form provision. The outcomes for this group of students remain only satisfactory and the academy recognises this to be a key area for improvement.

In Key Stages 3 and 4, standards of work have risen significantly and continue to rise. They are now broadly in line with national averages, although they are not yet firmly equal to all these measures. This is because there remain a number of inconsistencies between subjects. However, attainment is no longer persistently low, which was the case when the academy opened. Considering students' significantly low prior attainment, the 2010 Year 11 results represented good progress, and this good progress is apparent throughout the academy for current students. Attitudes to learning are good, too. There is a noticeable improvement in the pride that students have in the presentation of their work. They are willing to learn and want to succeed in their studies. Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is good overall, a reflection of the high expectations set by the school staff as well as the distinctive Haberdashers' ethos.

The two areas of provision that contribute most effectively towards students' achievement are the curriculum and the quality of care, guidance and support. There is a good range of courses on offer. Vocational options and a strong emphasis on developing literacy have been helpful in enabling students of lower academic ability to achieve well in Year 11 examinations. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. Students are well cared for, and there is a strong programme of academic support. This includes a comprehensive programme of intervention and booster learning activities. There is no doubt that students are very well prepared before their public examinations.

Teaching is satisfactory. There are some notable examples of lively, imaginative and creative teaching, but this is not consistent across the school. While the great majority of teaching prepares students well to pass examinations, not enough teaching embeds their learning through the deepening of thinking and understanding. Similarly, while students make good progress in their social and moral development, their spiritual and cultural understanding is less well-developed. These are key reasons why standards are only broadly average.

The strong leadership of the Principal and good partnership arrangements with sponsors and the Federation school have been central to the effective establishment of the

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academy. Partnerships with external agencies have been developed very well to promote good outcomes for students, and arrangements for safeguarding students are good.

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

- Continue to raise overall standards so that they are firmly at or above national averages by:
  - increasing the proportion of students gaining the highest grades, including in English and mathematics
  - increasing the proportions gaining good GCSE passes in history, geography and modern languages.
- Promote consistently good teaching and assessment across the curriculum by:
  - emphasising the quality of students' subject understanding, as well as their acquisition of subject skills and knowledge
  - ensuring that lesson observations focus on subject-specific qualities, as well as generic teaching skills.
- Secure the sixth form provision by:
  - significantly increasing student numbers so that a greater range of courses can be offered in larger, more viable classes
  - raising standards in examinations, particularly by significantly increasing pass rates at AS level.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

From significantly low starting points, students made good progress in the 2010 GCSE and vocational examinations. These results marked a significant change in achievement, with standards no longer universally and stubbornly low. Students achieved very well in mathematics. A much higher than average proportion gained the equivalent of two good passes in science; for the majority this was achieved through vocational routes rather than through traditional GCSE courses. The proportion gaining the equivalent of five good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, was in line with the national average. Individual pass rates in English and mathematics were also average, although very few A\* or A grades were earned in these or any subjects. Standards in other subjects varied. While results in vocational qualifications were strong there were disappointing results in geography and history. Only a very small number gained a modern language qualification. While there is clearly more to do before examination standards are firmly and consistently in line with national averages, the academy's tracking shows that the improvement in achievement is set to continue with current Year 11 students. Scrutiny of students' work during lesson observations suggested that standards in Key Stage 3 are improving and becoming stronger still. While no groups of students underachieved, girls made better progress than boys in both 2009 and 2010. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress that is at least as good as other students.

Behaviour is good in lessons and around the academy. Exclusion rates have fallen significantly. Students' positive attitudes to learning are a key reason for their good progress. This positivity is also seen in the good contributions that many students make to

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academy life, through participation in activities and assuming student leadership roles. Attendance has continued to improve, but it remains average overall because the attendance of older students remains significantly different to those in Key Stage 3. While there are strengths in the development of students' basic numeracy and literacy skills, preparation for their future economic well-being remains satisfactory.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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?

In almost all cases, working relationships in classrooms are good. There are notable examples of exciting, creative teaching that combines academic rigour with engaging activities to enthuse students. In a mathematics lesson, for example, effective use was made of succinct teacher presentation, quick-fire questioning, focused tasks and interactive technology to secure students' understanding of indices. Equally, there are lessons which, while always conforming to the academy's template for well-structured lessons and successfully instructing students with the knowledge and skills required for examinations, have more limited success in developing their subject understanding. Too often, assessment is concerned with the completion of tasks rather than measuring the quality and security of students' understanding.

Support for students is a particularly good feature of provision. The academy staff does a great deal to provide the stability, order and additional guidance that many students need in order to achieve well in their studies. These include intervention strategies to support

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those who are falling behind in class and additional revision sessions to provide intensive preparation for examinations. A significant proportion of students are vulnerable either because of special educational needs and/or disabilities or because of circumstances outside school. Partnerships with outside agencies are well developed and help these students achieve success in their studies and in their behaviour.

The curriculum is good and continues to develop in order to best meet students' needs and abilities, including the provision of a range of vocational qualifications. For the current Year 9, a greater emphasis has been made on traditional academic GCSE subjects in science and humanities, reflecting the higher standards that these students have achieved in Key Stage 3. There are additional after-school courses available, including in GCSE Classics, for the more able. Provision in modern languages remains weak, however. There is a well-developed cross-curricular literacy strategy, but numeracy across the curriculum is less advanced. A varied programme of extra-curricular activities is much enjoyed by students. Of particular note are the Showband and the Jazz Bands, which perform to a high musical standard and which have rightly been afforded national recognition.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The Principal sets an excellent example through his passionate and determined leadership, promoting positive relationships but also demanding the highest standards of discipline. The senior team and middle managers also work hard to ensure that the academy runs smoothly and effectively on a day-to-day basis. Much has been achieved since the academy opened, but the remaining inconsistencies suggest that there are areas of management that remain less effective. These include the leadership and management of teaching and learning, the development of students' spiritual and cultural understanding, and in the sixth form.

Governance is good. There is careful attention to ensuring that all statutory responsibilities are met and that safeguarding procedures are thoroughly implemented. Arrangements for checking and vetting adults working in the school are particularly robust. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and discrimination tackled robustly. However, the academy has not planned or evaluated its work to promote community cohesion rigorously enough. This is an important reason why students' cultural development is limited.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Sixth form

The sixth form was opened in 2009. The very small, founding A-level cohort takes its final examinations this term. There were a disproportionate number of unclassified grades in the 2010 AS-level examinations but inspection evidence, including tracking data and learning seen in lessons, suggests that students are making satisfactory progress from very low starting points when they joined in Year 12. Attendance in the sixth form is also satisfactory, but students do make good contributions to the wider life of the academy, including in physical education and music.

There is some good teaching in the sixth form and working relationships are good. Within the restraints of such a small cohort, the curriculum provides a reasonable range of curriculum options and a good range of extra-curricular opportunities. There are good links with the Federation partner school to share expertise and resources. This includes supporting students with their university applications, the majority of whom now have firm offers. For many, they are the first from their families to consider a university education.

As with outcomes, the value for money provided by the sixth form is satisfactory. The academy regards the establishment of a sixth form as an investment in raising the aspirations and expectations of students as they progress through the school. Sixth form management, currently led by a Vice-Principal, has ensured students are now better guided to follow appropriate courses but the academy rightly recognises that the low numbers in teaching groups are not sustainable. As the sixth form enters its third year, more rapid expansion of the sixth form is clearly required so that it offers better value for money.



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*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
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

The high number of parents and carers who responded positively to the inspection questionnaire reflects well on the good partnerships that have been built with families. Inspectors noted that a minority of parents and carers were unhappy generally about the extent to which the academy takes account of their views and concerns. However, inspectors were satisfied that the school has appropriate systems in place that listen to individual parents' and carers' views and take action where necessary. However, inspectors did agree with views of parents and carers who said that the school could do more to promote healthy lifestyles.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Abraham Darby 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 414 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 781 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	134	32	240	58	32	8	2	0
The school keeps my child safe	183	44	207	50	12	3	7	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	216	52	174	42	16	4	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	175	42	206	50	26	6	6	1
The teaching is good at this school	141	34	240	58	22	5	2	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	135	33	237	57	31	7	8	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	105	25	250	60	51	12	2	0
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)	154	37	212	51	21	5	7	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	152	37	209	50	36	9	8	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	162	39	188	45	39	9	15	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	104	25	233	56	47	11	14	3
The school is led and managed effectively	170	41	217	52	11	3	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	191	46	185	45	29	7	7	2

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



20 May 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Abraham Darby Academy, Telford, TF7 5HX**

I am writing to let you know the results of our recent inspection visit to Abraham Darby. The academy has made good progress since it opened, and we were pleased to judge its overall effectiveness as good. This is because you are making good progress in your work, you are looked after well and, equally importantly, your behaviour is good. I would like to thank you for the part that you have played in the Academy's success, and also commend Mr Hawke and his staff team for their good leadership. In particular, good efforts are being made to provide you with an interesting curriculum and programme of extra-curricular activities. I was impressed when I heard the Junior Jazz Band rehearse, and hope that the Showband's performance at the National Festival in Birmingham later this term goes well.

To help the Academy improve further, we have made three recommendations.

Increase the number of A\* and A grades at GCSE, and increase the numbers that gain good GCSE passes in history, geography and modern languages.

Develop your understanding and thinking skills in lessons, as well as teaching the important skills and facts you need to pass examinations.

Improve the sixth form by increasing student numbers and increasing pass rates at AS level.

Thank you once again for the part that you played in this inspection. To those taking examinations over the next few weeks, I wish you good luck.

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips

Her Majesty's Inspector

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