

North Birmingham Academy

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136032
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	382008
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2012
Lead inspector	Martin Cragg HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	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	941
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	128
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tom McCook
Headteacher	Kim Popratnjak
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
School address	395 College Road Birmingham B44 0HF
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Introduction

Inspection team

Martin Cragg	Her Majesty's Inspector
Bob Lawrence	Additional Inspector
Nigel Boyd	Additional Inspector
Susan Thomas	Additional Inspector
Peter Lawley	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with one day's notice. Inspectors observed 40 lessons involving 40 teachers and made ten shorter visits to other lessons. They met with groups of students, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the academy's work, and looked at the academy's assessment information, improvement plan, evidence from the monitoring of provision, and the governing body's minutes. They reviewed questionnaire responses from 14 parents and carers, 148 students and 44 staff.

Information about the school

The academy is similar in size to the average secondary school. The sixth form is smaller than average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is high. More students than average are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs. The academy caters for a small number of deaf students. Over two thirds of students come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Nearly a third speak English as an additional language.

The academy opened in January 2010. It has specialisms in English and the arts. The academy has recently achieved the Artsmark Gold award and Investors in People Gold status. It provides a breakfast club for students.

The academy meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for 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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- The academy provides a good education for its students. It has improved very rapidly since it opened, under the inspirational leadership of the principal and senior staff. Students respect each other and feel very safe in the academy. The outstanding curriculum and extensive range of activities have accelerated students' achievement. The academy is not outstanding overall because achievement in English and mathematics, though improving, does not match that in other subjects, and students are not always independent enough in their learning.
- Students' achievement is good and improving. Their attainment is above average. They make good progress from their starting points, especially in arts subjects. Students concentrate well, respond enthusiastically to challenges and collaborate productively.
- Teaching is good because of the very clear expectations and effective training provided by the academy. Teachers match work very well to students' differing needs and assess their progress rigorously. However, they do not always engage all students in discussions and, in some lessons, do not provide enough opportunity for students to learn independently.
- Students behave well in lessons and around the school. The academy is a harmonious community and students mix very well. They take leadership roles willingly and contribute to the academy's development. However a few students are not punctual.
- Senior leaders set very high expectations and a clear vision for the academy. They manage performance extremely well. Very effective planning, supported by rigorous sharing of best practice, has rapidly improved the quality of teaching and assessment, the curriculum, students' behaviour and achievement. The academy has outstanding capacity to improve further.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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- The sixth form is good. Students benefit from a broad curriculum and good teaching to make good progress from their starting points. They develop confidence and many move on to higher education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further by ensuring that teachers enable all students to:
 - engage in discussions and articulate their ideas fluently and in detail
 - work independently and take responsibility for their learning
 - develop their literacy and numeracy skills effectively across all subjects.
- Improve students' punctuality by working constructively with parents and carers, and local transport providers.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students enter Year 7 with attainment that is well below average. In 2011, by the end of Year 11, their attainment was above average overall, with 94% achieving five higher GCSE grades. In English and mathematics, attainment improved considerably to be just below the national average; current Year 11 students are on track to match the average. These results all exceed the challenging targets set by the academy. Students' attainment in the sixth form was below average but has already improved for 2012.

Students make at least good progress from their starting points, including those in the sixth form. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, including deaf students, make good progress. Students from a range of different backgrounds also make good progress, especially those from larger groups such as Black Caribbean, Black African and Pakistani communities. White British students make better progress than similar students nationally. Students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority make very good progress. Teachers match work closely to students' abilities and assess their work regularly in lessons, using peer and self-assessment, and this ensures that all groups match or exceed the progress of students nationally.

In lessons, students make mostly good progress. They concentrate well and settle to work promptly. They rise to challenges, enjoy learning through practical tasks and most try hard. Students work effectively in pairs and small groups. In the best lessons, they take on leadership roles, organise their peers and ensure all participate equally. They are often keen to discuss and share ideas. However, in a minority of lessons, some students struggle to explain their ideas clearly or do not readily contribute to discussion. Although literacy is a major focus across the academy, students do not always use their reading, writing or calculation skills sufficiently well

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in other subjects and are not challenged often enough to do so.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good overall. An increasing proportion is outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers set very high expectations of students, and plan thoroughly, ensuring that objectives match students' differing abilities. They use a full a range of activities and maintain the pace of learning in the double and treble lessons so that students consolidate and apply what they have learnt. For example, students gave everything in their performances in an outstanding drama lesson, sharing participation and assessing each other's contribution. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They engage students' interest well, using group work and modern technology.

Teachers use questions well to check students' understanding and develop their ideas. However, their ability to involve a wide range of students varies, with some only using volunteers to answer questions or not providing students with time to think or discuss before answering. In the best lessons, teachers expect students to manage their own learning, for example in business studies where they are expected to check in their folders, on line or with other students before asking the teacher for help. However, in other lessons teachers did not give all students enough opportunity to learn actively and take responsibility for this.

Teachers respond well to the needs of disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Deaf students are helped in lessons by adults who sign or interpret for them. Teachers use visual materials, key vocabulary and practical activities well to help students whose English is developing. Teachers ensure that students develop social and cultural awareness through well-chosen topics, for example studying prejudice in English by analysing a text which reversed the experiences of white and black characters, and exploring how social hierarchy is portrayed in drama.

Teachers' use of assessment is a strength of the academy. They mark students' work regularly and use the academy's policy consistently to provide helpful comments on how to improve further. Teachers link learning objectives closely to levels or target grades. They use criteria for students to assess their work and progress so that most are familiar with this process and use it effectively. Students know their targets and the level they are working at. Parents and carers receive regular information on progress. Staff analyse students' progress rigorously and plan carefully to intervene and support those students who may be at risk of underachieving.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour is good in lessons and around the academy. Students say that it has improved significantly since the academy opened because they understand clearly what is expected of them and teachers use the behaviour policy consistently. Students mix well and move around the academy sensibly. They are polite and

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confident in welcoming visitors and talking to adults. In lessons, they settle to work promptly and concentrate well. In discussions, and in a recent academy survey, students confirm that good behaviour enables them to learn in lessons. Parents and carers endorse this view. Students' attendance is above average and the rate of persistent absenteeism is below that nationally. Students and their families receive effective support at an early stage when the academy identifies a concern. Most students are punctual and there are clear systems for dealing with lateness. However, the wide area from which students attend the academy and the reliance on public transport leads to a minority arriving after registration has started. The academy uses its well-attended breakfast club to encourage students to arrive early.

Students understand different forms of bullying and say they have received information on how to avoid difficulties, for example on social networking sites. They say that they feel very safe at the academy and that incidents of bullying or racism are rare. They understand who to contact if they have a problem and are confident that any issues will be dealt with promptly. The academy places a high priority on the safety and welfare of students and has very efficient procedures to follow up any issues. Staff work very effectively with families and local agencies to ensure that students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are able to succeed.

Leadership and management

The academy has made significant improvements in the short time since its opening because of the highly effective and inspirational leadership of the principal and senior staff. This has narrowed the gap in the achievement of students, which was low, to the point where attainment is now above average overall and their progress is at least good. Senior staff have a very clear vision for the academy which they translate into highly focused action plans, supported by specific training for staff. One year ago, a monitoring inspection identified areas for development in teaching. The academy prioritised these, provided effective guidance and shared best practice. As a result, teachers' matching of work to students' abilities and use of comments on work to help them improve are now strong. The constant trend of improvement in students' achievement, behaviour, the curriculum and leadership skills of other staff demonstrates that the academy has transformed students' experience and has outstanding capacity to improve further.

The academy has a very rigorous process for monitoring performance and evaluating progress, including the monitoring of teaching and achievement. Key indicators are reviewed against challenging targets by the governing body and sponsors. Senior staff use this very effective scrutiny to identify important areas for development. In the last year, the exceptional skills of key staff have contributed strongly to improved teaching and learning. Safeguarding has a high priority in the academy and senior staff advise other academies on best practice.

The curriculum is extremely flexible and meets students' needs very well. Students benefit from the opportunity to choose options in Key Stage 3 and to enter for some qualifications early. These choices are based on students' readiness and likelihood of

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success. As a result, students accumulate qualifications over three years and know exactly which ones they have to improve. Year 9 students spoke proudly of their achievements in mathematics and other subjects. The arts specialism is particularly strong, setting a high standard for teaching and achievement, and contributing strongly to students' confidence and cultural awareness through multicultural theme days, arts festivals and a project where sixth formers tutor local Year 5 pupils. Students benefit from a very wide range of activities, events and trips. In conjunction with leadership roles, as ambassadors, 'learning detectives' or on appeal panels against detentions, students develop highly effective social and moral awareness. The academy includes students from a wide range of backgrounds very effectively and prevents any discrimination. All groups make good progress and some with the greatest need make most progress because of the high expectations for them and the highly effective support they receive.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



11 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of North Birmingham Academy, Birmingham, B44 0HF.

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your academy. We enjoyed talking with you in lessons, meetings and at breaks. Thanks also to those of you who filled in a questionnaire. Your views helped us find out about the academy.

Your academy provides you with a good education. It has improved rapidly since it opened in 2010. Your achievement is above average overall and close to average in English and mathematics. You make good progress from your starting points because of good teaching. Some teaching is outstanding. You behave well and your attendance is above average. You told us that you feel safe and that bullying is rare. You benefit from a broad and flexible curriculum which helps you to acquire qualifications over three years from Year 9. The sixth form is growing and achievement is good. Your teachers assess your work regularly and give you the skills to evaluate your own progress. You benefit from a wide range of activities, events and responsibilities which broaden your experience and build your confidence. The principal and senior staff set very high expectations for you and drive improvements in the academy's work very effectively. They know exactly what its strengths are and what still needs to improve.

We asked the academy to improve some areas of its work. These were to:

- raise your achievement further by developing your independence in learning and ability to apply your communication, literacy and numeracy skills
- work with your parents and carers, and transport providers, to improve punctuality in the mornings.

You can help by taking opportunities to manage your own learning, applying your basic skills effectively to improve your work, and by getting to the academy on time.

We enjoyed our visit to your academy and wish you success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg
Her Majesty's Inspector

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