

Wood Green Academy

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136616
Local authority	
Inspection number	395501
Inspection dates	15–16 May 2012
Lead inspector	Michael Merchant

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	1475
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joan Walker
Headteacher	Pankaj Patel
Date of previous school inspection	12 December 2006
School address	Wood Green Road Wednesbury WS10 9QU
Telephone number	0121 5564131
Fax number	0121 5064609
Email address	admin@woodgreenacademy.co.uk

Age group	11–19
Inspection date(s)	15–16 May 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Michael Merchant	Additional inspector
Elizabeth Talmadge	Additional inspector
Terence Payne	Additional inspector
Jane Gaffney	Additional inspector
Carol Worthington	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Fifty lessons or parts of lessons were observed, amounting to twenty five hours in total. Ten of the lessons were jointly observed by a member of the school's leadership team. Forty eight classroom teachers were observed teaching. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, the members of the governing body and different groups of students. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, external evaluations of the school's work, policy documents and students' work. They analysed 1000 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers, 150 questionnaires completed by a sample of students from each year group and 65 completed by staff

Information about the school

This school is much larger than most secondary schools. Most students live locally, but a considerable minority are drawn from a number of neighbouring authorities. The large majority of students are of White British heritage and most speak English as their first language. A third of all students are from a wide range of minority ethnic groups and an above-average proportion of students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to that found nationally. The proportion of students supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is also similar to that typically found. The school has specialist status in sports, mathematics and computing. The school is a National Teaching School and works in partnership with a number of other secondary schools. The school exceeds the government's current floor targets which are the minimum standards expected for attainment and progress. The school has achieved many awards including Healthy Schools Award, Sports Mark and Cultural Diversity Award

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school. It provides excellent opportunities for students to thrive, develop and achieve exceptionally well, irrespective of their different circumstances. The school has maintained its excellent outcomes seen at the last inspection due to a relentless drive for improvement which continues unabated. Leaders recognise, for example, that more can be done to ensure all marking of students' work is consistently informative and supportive.
- The sixth form is outstanding. It has improved considerably since its last inspection. Students achieve extremely well, have high expectations for the future and most progress to higher education.
- Students achieve outstandingly well, making rapid and sustained progress through Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form to secure excellent academic outcomes, regardless of ability, starting point or special educational need.
- Teaching is outstanding and makes a significant contribution to students' exceptional rates of progress. Learning moves along briskly, questions are probing and tasks are creative, imaginative and challenging. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional in all aspects and is a strong feature in many lessons and aspects of the curriculum.
- Excellent relationships at all levels have helped to establish a cohesive, purposeful and happy community where behaviour is excellent and all are able to learn and thrive in an atmosphere of respect and dignity.
- Leadership and management are outstanding, driven by a principled, enthusiastic and approachable headteacher. He is supported by a highly skilled and innovative group of school leaders and together they drive improvement resolutely and with the best interests of the students in mind. Leaders have focused on raising the quality of teaching with conspicuous success. Focused professional development, rigorous quality assurance, the impact of the school's

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specialism and the innovative work of staff are being used well to drive further improvements in teaching.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To further support students in the progress they make, teachers should increase the consistency and raise the quality of written feedback in exercise books so that all students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Inspirational leadership, consistently high quality teaching and an excellent curriculum tailored to meet individual needs enable all groups of students to flourish. The quality of learning in lessons is outstanding. Students are keen to do their best, work purposefully and collaborate willingly during lessons, readily taking on roles within teams and supporting each other's learning through sensitive feedback. They demonstrate strengths in literacy, use new technologies effectively and particularly appreciate lessons which offer them frequent opportunities to extend and explain their thinking. Inspectors saw many examples of students' ability to discuss maturely and reflect thoughtfully upon ethical dilemmas. In an outstanding Year 9 religious education lesson, for example, students spoke with feeling about 'should funerals always be sad?' listening respectfully to each other and working eagerly in groups to summarise their research on different funeral customs. The curriculum and specialisms make an outstanding contribution to students' achievement and enjoyment of school life, engaging students in learning and helping them to gain what they need to take the next steps in their education, training or employment with skill and great confidence.

Students join the academy with significantly low prior attainment and many have very low reading ages. All groups of students make outstanding progress, as evidenced by above average attainment and consistent improvement in GCSE and A Level examination results. Over two thirds of all students, as shown by module tests already banked, are on track to attain five or more grades A*-C at GCSE including English and mathematics in 2012. Higher attaining students report that the school 'stretches' them to attain the best possible grades. Achievement in the sixth form is exceptionally strong and has continued to rise over time. The students surveyed and spoken to by inspectors, including those that join the school in the sixth form, attribute their progress to the quality of teaching and exceptional care that they receive as they move through the school.

The school consistently adds significant value to the performance of all groups of students across the range of subjects. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. Teaching assistants and teachers communicate well to ensure that each student receives well-targeted

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support. There is very little difference in the progress made by students known to be eligible for free school meals, those from diverse backgrounds and the large number who are new to speaking English, because staff are very conscious of students' individual needs and work successfully to close any gaps.

Students make particularly strong gains in reading due to the systematic programme of interventions for those who find learning difficult. These carefully planned programmes of one-to-one and small group support are highly effective in raising students' attainment and self-esteem. The very large majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaires agreed that their children are making good progress at the school and that their needs are very well met.

Quality of teaching

Students and their parents rightly express great confidence in the quality of teaching. Lessons are well paced, relevant and enjoyable, providing many opportunities for achievements to be shared, celebrated and built upon. In a Year 13 English lesson, students studying 'Hamlet' were expertly supported by the teacher so that all students were able to analyse literary, linguistic and rhetorical devices. The combination of task and topic were brought alive by masterly questioning throughout. Consequently, the quality of responses and thought behind students' reflections upon right and wrong, friendship and violence was superb and reflected fully the outstanding progress that all had made.

Teaching is characterised by very high expectations, not just in terms of achievement, but in the amount, complexity and challenge of learning activities. Excellent subject knowledge and understanding is used very well to pace learning so that time for imaginative and engaging activities is used flexibly. Teaching ensures that there is an excellent integration of literacy and communication skills across the curriculum through the development of oracy and constant reference to key vocabulary to secure high quality extended writing. The marking of students' work is accurate and frequent but the quality of written comments made by teachers to help students improve their learning is variable.

Teaching for disabled students and those with special educational needs is outstanding. Learning support assistants are highly skilled and deployed well. They liaise closely with the teacher, give just the right amount of support and encourage students to be more independent. They ensure that all are fully included in lessons and help them to overcome many of their barriers to learning. Teachers encourage pupils to experiment with vocabulary and imagery so that they develop a 'feel' for words. Teachers make very effective use of opportunities to enhance students' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. In a history lesson on the Second World War, for example, students discussed the ethical issues of using atomic weapons. The frequent use of group work in lessons also encourages students to appreciate different viewpoints and to balance arguments.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

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The school has a very effective behaviour management system and teachers consistently demand high standards of conduct. As a result, behaviour in lessons is a strong factor in the students' learning. They are attentive, engage very positively with the teaching and show ambition and great enjoyment of their learning. On occasions where students make poor behaviour choices, inspection evidence shows that students respond well to the school's strategies.

Attendance is above average and students are punctual to school and lessons. Relationships are harmonious and students feel exceptionally safe. They have a good awareness of the different forms of bullying and say that bullying is rare and not tolerated. However, when bullying does occur, students have an extremely high degree of confidence that it is dealt with swiftly. The views of parents and carers, staff and students and an analysis of the school's comprehensive tracking data indicate that incidents of poor behaviour are increasingly infrequent. They also confirm the effectiveness of the school's support for, and reintegration of, the small number of students who exhibit more challenging behaviour. Inspectors observed numerous examples of how the school has linked with other agencies and families to improve the lives of children whose circumstances make them vulnerable. One student told inspectors how the attention to her individual needs and the time given to her by staff to resolve her problems had significantly improved her behaviour. She commented, 'The school has changed my life'.

Leadership and management

Inspirational leadership and a relentless pursuit of excellence are the main reasons why students' achievement is outstanding. The headteacher is widely acclaimed by staff, parents, carers and governors as having been hugely instrumental in securing high standards and sustaining them where they are already outstanding. He leads the way in driving ambition and has established a shared sense of purpose to raise the aspirations of students and teachers alike. Consequently, teamwork is strong, staff morale is high and students' progress continues to accelerate.

The senior team checks the school's performance rigorously. The impact of the training specialism and the work of the 'Innovations Unit' have been instrumental in the development of teaching. The establishment of cross-subject 'learning communities' has tangibly raised the quality of professional development and created an environment where training and discussion about learning are highly valued. Consequently, the quality of teaching is constantly improving and has risen to a consistently high level.

Considerable emphasis is placed on ensuring that all students feel equally valued while maintaining a sense of their individuality and cultural identity. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work. It manifests itself in outstanding achievement as well as the ability of the school to engage with each individual within an excellent curriculum that deepens and broadens their experience and makes a strong contribution to spiritual, moral, social

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and cultural development.

Safeguarding is afforded high priority and every care is taken to ensure that the school is safe and that policies and procedures are rigorous and meticulously maintained. The governing body provides enthusiastic and committed support. Its excellent knowledge and understanding of the school's performance is utilised well to challenge and immediately rectify any relative underperformance. Governors are well attuned to parents' views

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.



17 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Wood Green Academy, Wednesbury, WS10 9QU

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. Particular thanks go to those of you who gave up your time to speak with us and those of you who completed the questionnaire. I am delighted to inform you that we judged your school to be outstanding. Here are some of the things that make The Wood Green Academy exceptional.

- You make excellent academic progress over your time at the school and in the sixth form and enjoy your education because of the consistently good and often outstanding teaching. Your lessons are interesting and you told us how much you enjoy them.
- The school's inclusive ethos of high aspirations and success for all provide you with a great platform for learning. We were particularly impressed by your behaviour and your very positive attitudes to learning. As a result, relationships between staff and students are superb.
- You particularly appreciate the positive benefits that the new building, the curriculum and the school's specialist status have brought.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. Your amazing headteacher sets high standards in all aspects of the school's work and he is very well supported by the other staff and governors.

Although the school is already outstanding, staff are committed to continuing its improvement and are all ambitious to make it even better in the future. We have asked the school to share the very best practice that exists in marking your work so that all of you are provided with accurate advice as to how to help you do even better. You are rightly proud to belong to this outstanding school. Thank you for playing your part in making it such an exciting and caring place. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Merchant
Lead Inspector

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