

Droitwich Spa High School and Sixth Form College

Briar Mill, Droitwich Spa, WR9 0AA

Inspection dates 21–22 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The academy's leaders, led by the highly skilled headteacher, have a very clear view of where the academy has strengths and where it needs to improve. As a result of this, they have taken very successful action to bring about rapid improvement of all aspects of the academy's work.
- Improvements in some subjects such as mathematics and science, which were previously underperforming, have been particularly strong. This means that the academy is now exceeding national averages for many measures. Outcomes for 2012 were significantly higher than 2011.
- Governors know the academy very well and hold leaders to account for improvements very effectively and successfully.
- A large majority of teaching seen during the inspection was good or outstanding. The academy's records over time show that this is now typical of the teaching in the academy. This represents an impressive improvement from the previous inspection.
- Behaviour around the academy and in lessons is good overall and often outstanding. Students are courteous and polite to adults and each other. Students are safe and it is clear from their attitudes and improving attendance that they enjoy coming to the academy.
- The sixth form is good, as the progress that students make is good and improving. This is the result of outstanding leadership, which has raised aspirations in this key stage.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The significant improvements that are now in place in the academy need time to come to fruition, so that even more students are exceeding expected progress measures.
- Systems for improving literacy are recent and it is not possible to see impact over time.
- Some teaching is less than good, which is preventing students in some lessons from making stronger progress.
- There is not a strategic overview of where there are strengths in areas of information, advice and guidance for students.

Information about this inspection

- This was a re-inspection as the result of the academy's being given a notice to improve at its previous inspection. The academy was informed of the inspection on the afternoon before it started.
- Inspectors observed 42 lessons, of which eight were joint observations with members of the academy's leadership team. Inspectors observed lessons in a wide range of subjects and in all key stages, covering all abilities. Students were also observed around the academy and at the beginning and end of the day.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a group of four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and several groups of students. Over half of the academy's staff completed the Ofsted questionnaire.
- Inspectors took account of 48 responses to the on-line questionnaire, 'Parent View'. The lead inspector also received some e-mail communications and a letter from parents and conducted a telephone call with one.
- Various documents, including self-evaluation summaries, data and minutes from meetings of the governing body were scrutinised during the inspection.

Inspection team

David Muir, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Angela Coates	Additional Inspector
Sean Thornton	Additional Inspector
Dorothy Bond	Additional Inspector
Tracey Louise France	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- Droitwich Spa high School is a larger-than-average secondary school with a sixth form, which serves the town of Droitwich Spa and the surrounding villages. It converted to academy status in July 2011.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action and school action plus is below average. However the proportion of students with a statement of special education needs is above the national average.
- The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (extra government funding for students who need more support) is below the national average.
- The school has identified a group of students in Year 8, the Access Group, who have below average reading ages. They are taught by themes across their subjects and their progress is closely monitored.
- The school provides additional courses through the local consortium of schools which uses colleges and other providers.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- At its previous full inspection, in October 2011, the academy was given a notice to improve. The subsequent monitoring visit in May 2012 judged that good progress had been made towards being removed from this category.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the high proportion of good and outstanding teaching that is evident in the academy is used to inform and support improvements in the quality of teaching, so that a higher proportion of teachers deliver outstanding lessons on a more regular basis.
- Ensure that some areas around the academy's work are more systematic to allow students to receive even higher quality information, advice and guidance about the next stages of their lives by:
 - auditing and assessing where the academy is developing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural knowledge, in all subjects, so that there is a coherent overview of the work being done in this area
 - reviewing the guidance provided about careers so that students receive all the information they need to make appropriate decisions about their futures, especially at Key Stage 4
 - continuing to raise the quality of literacy across all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- There have been rapid improvements in some subjects, including science and mathematics. Although these subjects were underperforming at the previous inspection, staff changes and effective procedures for improving teaching have already had a significant impact on raising achievement. One example of the improvements is that the proportion of students who passed five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has risen significantly for the past two years. In 2012, 61% of students reached this level compared to 51% in 2011. This is above the national average and is more impressive when it is set alongside the data which show that the students who took their examinations in 2012 entered the academy in Year 8 with attainment which was significantly below the national average. The academy enters students early for GCSE examinations when staff are sure that this will give them the best chance of the highest grade and this is borne out by the results achieved.
- The academy's data are now extremely detailed and accurate and this was shown by its tracking of students' levels and the correct predictions of overall percentages of qualifications in 2012. All individuals and groups of students are monitored very closely for the progress they are making. Current tracking shows that, compared to the same time in previous years, students are making better progress. The academy is now tracking the number of levels of progress that students are making in a key stage and comparing this to national data. This also shows that progress is at least good across all key stages and subjects. Students who are receiving extra support through the pupil premium-funded activities are making better progress and, as a result, the gap between their performance and that of other students in the school is closing.
- New initiatives to provide extra help for students who are identified as having weaker literacy skills alongside new initiatives to support literacy and numeracy across all subjects have been introduced. However, it is too early to see the impact over time.
- Overall, disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve at the same rate as other students. Close monitoring of the Year 8 Access Group shows that they have made better progress in a short time and are narrowing the gap between themselves and other students. Although the small number of students who have challenging behaviour have underachieved in recent years, the academy has developed initiatives which now engage them more effectively in their learning so that they spend far less time out of the academy through exclusions or absenteeism.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good overall and has improved rapidly since the previous inspection. Progress across the range of subjects is consistently strong. Boys' attainment has increased since 2011 and has now almost reached national averages. In half of the lessons seen during the inspection in the sixth form, students were making outstanding progress and no lessons were seen when less than good progress was made.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved dramatically since the previous inspection. The proportion of good and outstanding lessons seen during this inspection is double that of a year ago at 80%. This agrees with the academy's own data gathered over time. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is slightly better than in the rest of the academy.
- A considerable strength of the best lessons is how well work is adapted to meet the needs of all students. In some subjects, where there is less grouping by ability, teachers are extra careful to

ensure that all students receive work appropriate to their levels and needs. The better lessons also show a good awareness of literacy, through the strong use of subject-specific vocabulary and high expectations of the use of literacy. Another impressive example of how the teaching meets the need of all students is the Year 8 'Access Group'. They are taught in a themed way and are very closely monitored for the progress they are making. The lesson observation during this inspection and the data over time show that the carefully tailored and individualised work means that these students make impressive progress.

- Where teaching is less effective, questioning is not well targeted and does not enable the teacher to monitor learning effectively. In some cases, it is not clear that students understand what they learn before they are expected to move on to more difficult work. In addition, in the less effective lessons, teachers do not always pick up on errors and correct wrong assumptions made by students, especially in their use of literacy. As a result, progress is not good in these lessons.
- Feedback to students about the quality of their work is generally a strength in the academy, although there are a few occasions when it is not used as effectively as it could be or it is minimal. However, this is another area where there have been significant improvements since the previous inspection.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Nearly all students behave well in lessons and around the academy. Misbehaviour in lessons is rare and is usually the result of less effective and engaging teaching. Students agree that poor behaviour is rare in lessons and, when it does happen, it is handled consistently and effectively by staff so that no learning time is lost. Students who are removed from lessons are also given work to do, so that they do not lose learning time.
- All groups of staff who responded to the questionnaire agree that behaviour is not an issue in the academy. The parents were less positive but inspectors found no evidence during the inspection or in the school records, to support this view.
- The clear expectations for behaviour and other areas of students' performance have also had a significant impact on attendance and punctuality. Attendance is above the national average and is still improving, especially for students whose attendance was previously a cause for concern.
- Students feel safe and well cared for, although some say that there is bullying in the academy. On further questioning, students agree that bullying is tackled well by staff and appropriate action is taken to stop it. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs socialise and study well with other students. This is a very positive aspect and emphasises the strong community that there is in and around the academy.
- Anti-bullying procedures and policies have been recently updated to include reference to cyber-bullying and the abuse of social networking. This inspection took place during Anti-Bullying Week and assemblies were due to be followed up by work in tutor groups on the emotional damage caused by bullying.
- The academy has partnerships with other agencies and professionals to provide support for students who need it. Strong systems are in place to ensure that full risk assessments and safety checks are carried out for any activities or visits.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The academy has been led outstandingly well by the headteacher and the strong leadership team. They have worked extremely effectively to create and disseminate a strong understanding across the academy community in a short time, of how the school needs to improve.
- Strong and accurate systems for the collection and analysis of evidence related to the academy's performance have been developed, including for those students for whom the academy receives the pupil premium. This extra money has been spent on providing a range of support, including staff to monitor students' attendance and on providing after-school teaching sessions to help students prepare for their examinations. The recent appointment of a 'narrowing the gap' coordinator reflects the need for more accurate monitoring over time of students who receive this additional support.
- Improvements in teaching are the result of targeted support for teachers so that they are given the skills to move their teaching to the next level. Joint observations with academy leaders during the inspection showed that they have a correct view of the quality of teaching and know how to judge it accurately. The academy's records have ample evidence of teachers who have improved from 'requires improvement' to 'good' and from 'good' to 'outstanding', since the previous inspection.
- Teachers and other staff, including the headteacher, are monitored closely through newly devised strong performance management procedures that are closely related to the Teachers' Standards. Objectives for measuring the performance of all staff and for deciding on whether they receive pay rises, or not, are closely linked to the academy's data on improvements in students' levels of achievement.
- The good and improving range of subjects on offer meets the needs of all students. Students, who need extra help, receive outstanding support and teaching in small groups which meet their needs well. The academy has links with other schools and colleges, which widens the choices of courses available. These placements are monitored very closely to ensure that they are providing what the students need. The sixth form curriculum meets students' needs and they receive high-quality guidance and support regarding the next stage of their lives. This area is less strong at Key Stage 4 and students feel that they do not receive enough guidance to help them choose their post-16 courses. A significant proportion of students who attend the sixth form go to university when they leave.
- Some incidents of racism have been recorded in the academy. When they have happened they have been dealt with effectively. The academy is active in confronting bullying, including prejudice-based bullying such as homophobia. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs have their needs met well and are fully included in all aspects of the life of the academy. The academy has established good relationships with the local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population, who are now able to benefit from some outreach literacy work by the academy.
- Parents value the work that the academy does with their children. However, some raised concerns around some areas of the academy's work. The academy was able to show that where concerns have been raised, they have been investigated fully, at times by the governing body, and appropriate changes adopted as required.
- There is a wide range of activities which contribute to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The significant improvements in behaviour in the academy are an example of the impact of this work. There are also 'super-learning days', which focus on a particular topic for a day, and fundraising activities which make a good contribution to students' spiritual and

cultural development.. The academy has a wide range of links with countries around the globe. However, the impact of these aspects is not monitored as effectively as it could be.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is very strong, as it is very active and has a very clear awareness of the strengths of the academy and knows its areas for development well. There are strong systems in place for 'link governors' to scrutinise the work of the academy in different areas, including monitoring how the pupil premium money is spent and what impact it is having on standards. Governors have the knowledge and skills to ask the necessary questions, hold the academy to account. They review policies and procedures regularly and their contribution to the academy's work has been significant in its development into a good academy in a short period of time. They have a strong awareness of performance management, what is being done to recognise and reward good teachers and to raise levels of performance, including for the headteacher, and they are involved in making decisions about salary progression and promotion issues. They have a full understanding of performance data and how the academy compares with other similar schools. They are involved in setting the budget, which has recently undergone an extensive and successful external audit. The academy meets requirements with regard to safeguarding. Staff and governors have undertaken appropriate training in child protection and safer recruitment.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136927
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	399743

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	12–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1366
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	272
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rod Rhodes
Headteacher	Natalie Waters
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2011
Telephone number	01905 774421
Fax number	01905 777070
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