

Oldknow Academy

Oldknow Road, Small Heath, Birmingham, B10 0HU

Inspection dates

16–17 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils leave school at the end of Year 6 with standards that are above average.
- Pupils make outstanding progress and a large proportion exceed the expected standards in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress in writing, but few exceed the expected level because they do not have enough opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing.
- Pupils of all abilities and from all different backgrounds achieve extremely well.
- The overall quality of teaching over time is outstanding.
- The marking of pupils' work is thorough and helps pupils to know how well they are doing and what they need to improve.
- The academy sets highly ambitious targets for each class teacher and has high expectations of what pupils should achieve.
- Pupils have a very high opinion of their school and show very positive attitudes to their work.
- Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is exemplary.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in academy.
- The level of attendance is extremely high.
- Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, but there is not enough opportunity for pupils to use their initiative or develop independence.
- The school's leaders are highly ambitious and set challenging targets for teachers and pupils to achieve.
- The academy has excellent systems for keeping a check on the quality of teaching and for improving any teaching which is not at least good.
- The range of subjects taught is enhanced through specialist teaching in Arabic, physical education, music and science and through the many additional opportunities which are offered to pupils.
- The academy uses its additional funding well to ensure that every pupil has equal opportunity to succeed.
- The governing body is rigorous in holding the headteacher and staff to account for the quality of teaching and the standards pupils achieve.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 38 lessons, some briefly, others for longer periods of up to half an hour. The majority of the academy's 35 teachers were observed. Almost all of the observations were carried out jointly with the Principal or one of the two acting deputy principals.
- Inspectors held discussions with the Principal, the acting deputy principals, the senior learning mentor, most of the teaching staff, groups of pupils and one of the academy's external consultants. The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentary evidence, including the academy's self-evaluation and improvement plans, data regarding pupils' progress, and documents relating to safeguarding and special educational needs.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' written work in a range of subjects and listened to pupils reading.
- Inspectors took into account the views of six parents recorded on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. They also took into consideration the analysis of the academy's own survey of parents' views and the views of 30 members of staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Graham Sims, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Andrew Morrish	Additional Inspector
Brenda Jones	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than average. There are six classes in each year group.
- Oldknow Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 April 2012. It is not part of an academy chain or linked to any other schools or partnerships. When its predecessor school, Oldknow Junior School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above the national average.
- Almost all pupils (99%) are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups are Pakistani (44%), Bangladeshi (30%) and Black African (15%). The great majority of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the academy receives the pupil premium (additional government funding) is well above the national average.
- The academy meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress for pupils at the end of Year 6.
- Twelve teachers left the academy at the end of the summer term 2012. At the time of the inspection, the deputy principal's role was being undertaken by two acting deputy principals. Of the new teachers who joined the academy in September, eight are newly qualified teachers.
- Pupils are educated onsite. There is no regular alternative provision offsite.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils who achieve higher-than-expected levels in writing by providing pupils with more opportunities to produce pieces of extended writing in which they can express themselves more freely without having every aspect of their writing tightly controlled.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and independence, both within their day-to-day work in the classroom and in the wider activities of the academy.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The academy's first group of pupils to take their national tests at the end of Year 6 made outstanding progress. They entered the academy with below-average standards and left with standards that were well above the national average in English and mathematics. Almost every pupil reached the nationally expected Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics, and almost half reached Level 5 in reading and mathematics.
- Although pupils' progress was most rapid in Year 6 last year, the academy's own data on pupils' progress and attainment and the work in pupils' books show that pupils are making excellent progress in all year groups.
- Progress has been particularly strong in mathematics. Almost every pupil made the expected two levels of progress from Year 3 to Year 6, and almost half made three levels of progress. A handful of pupils achieved Level 6, thanks to some highly focused teaching for the most-able.
- A strong emphasis on the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) in Year 3, the excellent and much used academy library, and visits by a variety of authors have all contributed to the rapid development of pupils' reading skills. Pupils say that they particularly like going to the library and that they enjoy reading a wide range of books.
- Pupils' progress in developing their writing skills is good, but not as strong as in reading and mathematics. Because the teaching is highly structured and teachers are meticulous in telling pupils what aspects they want to see in their writing, almost all pupils reach the level expected for their age. However, a relatively small proportion reach the higher Level 5. Basic skills are taught and reinforced well, but pupils do not have enough opportunity to develop as independent writers by producing extended pieces of writing without close supervision or highly structured guidance.
- Pupils' outstanding progress is all the more remarkable given the very high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The academy provides additional language support when necessary but, overall, these pupils achieve higher standards than the small proportion of pupils who speak English as their native language.
- Pupils' progress is tracked carefully and reviewed formally twice a term. This enables the academy to identify specific support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs which, in turn, ensures that they, too, make rapid progress.
- The attainment of the large proportion of pupils for whom the academy receives pupil premium funding – more than half the academy population – is well above that of similar pupils nationally and is very close to the national average for all pupils.
- The key contributory factors to pupils' outstanding achievement are the leaders' continual drive to improve academic standards, the teachers' high-quality teaching and the pupils' highly positive attitudes to work.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Pupils' rapid progress in each year group, the large proportion of pupils who exceed the level expected for their age, and the quality of work in pupils' books indicate that the quality of

teaching over time is outstanding.

- The academy lost a large number of teachers at the end of last year, many of them moving on to promoted posts or new challenges. Although many of these posts have been filled by newly qualified teachers, the academy's exceptionally strong systems for checking on the quality of teaching and supporting teachers have led to rapid improvements where teaching has not lived up to the academy's highest standards. Even though a little of the teaching observed during the inspection required improvement, other factors indicate that, over time, most of the teaching is at least good and much is outstanding. The teaching of reading and mathematics is never less than consistently good.
- Leaders are particularly good at implementing systems which ensure consistency of practice in teaching and learning throughout the academy. For example, teachers always let pupils know what they are expected to learn in each lesson and what characteristics they are looking for in pupils' work. Pupils have a very clear understanding, therefore, of what is expected of them.
- The system for marking pupils' work is thorough; it is understood by all staff and implemented effectively throughout the academy. Green highlighting gives pupils a very clear indication of where they have succeeded and pink highlighting shows them what they need to improve. However, pupils are not always given enough time to go back over their work independently to make improvements before moving on to a new piece of work.
- Occasionally, the academy's systems are a little too rigid and do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to use their initiative or become truly independent learners. At times, the constant feedback and analysis of pupils' writing do not give them enough time to write more freely or to experiment with or develop their ideas in writing for themselves.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully. The planning takes into account what pupils already know and is adjusted if pupils are struggling or whenever pupils are ready to move on to something new. Good account is taken of pupils' differing levels of ability. As a result, pupils of all abilities, including those who are disabled or who have special educational needs and those for whom the academy receives additional funding, make excellent progress.
- Teachers are very clear about the progress pupils should be making in their class and have high expectations of what they can achieve. Improvement targets for all pupils, regardless of ability or background, are highly ambitious. Pupils' target levels, which are reviewed frequently, are stated clearly on the front of their exercise books and act as a constant reminder of the level they are aiming at.
- The academy's arrangements for providing time for teachers for planning, preparation and assessment are excellent. Teachers really appreciate the arrangements while pupils benefit from high-quality specialist teaching in Arabic, physical education and music. The academy is about to introduce specialist teaching in science.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils have a very high opinion of their academy. During the inspection, a group of pupils in Years 5 and 6 were asked to provide an adjective to describe their academy. They came up with: 'Fabulous, amazing, creative, fantastic, brilliant, outstanding, phenomenal.' There was not one word of criticism.
- The very wide range of additional activities and extra-curricular opportunities motivates the

pupils and results in extremely positive attitudes towards school. For example, pupils love the academy's farm and the opportunity to look after and interact with a range of animals from goats and rabbits to snakes and geckos. They feel they are fortunate to be in an academy which offers them opportunities such as the week-long visit for 40 pupils to participate in a trip to Saudi Arabia. For pupils who spoke to the inspectors, last year's trip had clearly been a life-changing experience.

- Pupils' behaviour in class and their attitudes to learning are excellent. Pupils are attentive, follow instructions carefully and well, and are eager to please their teachers. They work well together when learning in pairs or small groups. They take turns and make sure everybody in the group is included and has an opportunity to contribute.
- Pupils' behaviour around the academy is excellent. They know what is expected of them. They are polite and courteous. They show consideration to each other and to adults. They are friendly towards each other. The academy's records and behaviour logs show that exclusions, poor behaviour, racist incidents, and bullying of any kind are extremely rare.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in the academy. They say that the staff care for them and that, if there is any poor behaviour, the staff are fair and will give the right punishment. Anti-bullying week gave them opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of the issues around bullying as they listened and became involved in role plays. Pupils on the academy council also consider ways in which to make the academy as safe and friendly as possible, for example, through the instigation of a friendship bench.
- Pupils' enthusiasm for the academy is reflected in an outstanding attendance record. For the first 10 weeks of the autumn term 2012, it was running at 98%, and for the whole of the previous year it was well above 97%. These figures are exceedingly high when compared to the national average.
- Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as helping at lunchtimes, working as a library monitor or acting as an academy councillor. However, the opportunities for pupils to take on a wider range of responsibilities in which they can use their initiative and exercise their independence are limited.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Excellent leadership has enabled the academy to have an outstandingly successful first year. There is a determined ambition at every level, from the Principal, senior leaders and, indeed, all staff, to make the academy as successful as it can possibly be. The Principal has built on her experiences and achievements as headteacher of the predecessor school, Oldknow Junior School, which saw the school improve year by year from one of poor achievement to become an academy in which pupils' achievement is now outstanding.
- The academy's ambitious and wide-ranging development plan has raising the achievement of all pupils and the quality of teaching at its core. Pupils' progress is tracked rigorously and all staff are held to account for the progress of pupils in their class. Targets for pupils to achieve are highly ambitious and reflect the governing body's desire to see every pupil achieve at least Level 4 in English and mathematics and the large majority reach Level 5 or higher by the end of Year 6.
- The academy has rigorous but highly supportive systems for managing the performance of teachers. Senior staff observe lessons regularly. Wherever teaching is seen to require improvement, a comprehensive action plan is drawn up and additional support is provided until

the teaching improves to become at least good. Teachers say that senior staff responsible for improving the quality of teaching and learning are helpful.

- The academy is constantly seeking ways to improve the range and quality of the subjects and topics taught. All pupils are taught Arabic by specialist teachers. A new, exceptionally well-equipped science laboratory has been installed so that all pupils can have the right facilities in which to conduct science investigations. Literacy and numeracy skills are reinforced through the teaching of other subjects, such as history and geography. Displays around the academy provide evidence of a wide range of additional learning opportunities, such as visits to places of interest and regular visits from authors to stimulate interest in reading and writing.
- The academy's contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally good. The very wide range of different cultures is celebrated, opportunities are provided for prayer at appropriate times, and assemblies reflect the different faiths groups in the academy. The way in which the academy respects different faiths and cultures, for example, by ensuring there are separate changing rooms and single-sex physical education lessons, is greatly appreciated by parents and the wider community. The academy is a friendly and racially harmonious place, where discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The academy does all it can to remove any barriers to learning and to ensure that every pupil has equal opportunities to succeed. The large amount of pupil premium funding is used to ensure this happens. Funding has been used to reduce the number of pupils in each class, so that those who need it can have more individual attention. Funding is also used to subsidise uniforms, trips and even large-scale trips, such as the ones to Saudi Arabia, to ensure that any pupil is able to participate. Funds are also used to employ a team of learning mentors who have a major impact on improving the lives of those who are most vulnerable. Governors hold leaders accountable for the effective use of this funding.
- The academy is no longer under the jurisdiction of the local authority, but opts in to services which it perceives will be beneficial. The governing body secures the services of consultants when necessary, either to give additional support or to provide an external view on the academy's own evaluation of its performance.
- The academy has rigorous procedures to ensure that pupils are kept safe and that all newly appointed staff are suitable to work with children.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is influential in setting highly ambitious targets for the academy and holding the Principal and staff accountable for the quality of education which pupils receive. Governors are very well aware of the standards achieved by pupils and how these compare with those of other schools. They keep a very careful check on the quality of teaching and demand that action is taken whenever teaching is seen to require improvement. They are unequivocal that staff should merit any increase in salary and that those with positions of responsibility should be setting the highest possible examples to other staff. They are fully supportive of new initiatives which are designed to improve pupils' achievement and enhance the academy's position within the local community.

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	138052
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	403727

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	600
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Achmad Da Costa
Principal	Bhupinder Kondal
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0121 464 8771
Fax number	0121 753 3162
Email address	oldknowacademy@oldknowj.bham.sch.uk

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