

Ormiston Horizon Academy

St Michaels Road, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire, ST6 6JT

Inspection dates

16–17 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' achievement requires further improvement, particularly in mathematics, science and humanities.
- Not enough teaching is consistently good or better. Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across classes and subjects limits more sustained and accelerated improvement. There is too much variation in the quality of questioning by teachers to challenge and engage students. In too many classes there are limited opportunities for students to work productively by themselves.
- Variability in the quality of feedback and marking prevents students in some classes making better progress.
- Good practice is not fully and sufficiently embedded in a number of underperforming subjects where teaching is weaker. Outstanding practice is not sufficiently shared to enable improvement in weaker classes.

The school has the following strengths

- Since becoming an academy the ethos of the school has been transformed. Students have a sense of pride in the academy. Their behaviour and attitude to learning have changed; a new culture of aspiration and improvement has emerged.
- Senior leaders and governors are now in a good position to accelerate improvement. One governor neatly captured the crucial contribution of the principal in saying, 'He has uncompromising, high aspirations', and these drive staff and students alike.
- Achievement in English is above the national average and continues to improve. Teaching in English is good and often outstanding. GCSE results in 2012 demonstrated significant
- This is an improving school where staff are held to account for their performance and offered support to develop their skills and approaches to teaching and learning. Staff are highly committed to the academy and to the 'improvement and aspiration' culture.
- The academy has already achieved significant success in a relatively short period in improving students' behaviour, standards and in a change of culture. This success is testimony to the quality of leadership. Significant challenges remain. However, given its track record there is much potential capacity for further improvement.

improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 30 lessons of which two were joint observations with the academy’s senior leaders. They also attended assemblies and tutorials.
- Four groups of students met with inspectors. Discussions were held with academy staff, including senior leaders, heads of departments, teachers, representatives of the sponsor and the governing body.
- Inspectors were unable to look at responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) because there were too few responses to activate the site. They did, however, scrutinise academy evidence of communications with parents. They analysed 22 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors read a range of documents including the academy’s self-evaluation, improvement and development plans, monitoring reports, behaviour logs and records in relation to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Patrick Geraghty, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Elizabeth Haddock	Additional Inspector
John Leigh	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ormiston Horizon Academy opened in September 2011 and serves the community of Chell and Tunstall in the north of Stoke-on-Trent. The academy's sponsors are the Ormiston Trust. For several years the predecessor school had recorded very low standards at GCSE.
- This is a small secondary school. The academy is moving to new, purpose-built accommodation located on the current site in July 2013.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding) is well above average.
- A much lower than average proportion of students is of minority ethnic heritage.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is above average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The academy exceeds the government's floor targets, which set the minimum standards expected for students' attainment and progress.
- Students who completed Year 11 in 2012 entered the predecessor school with attainment below the national average. All current years in the academy have prior attainment on entry that is significantly below that found nationally.
- The current principal took up post in September 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that a greater proportion is at least good by:
 - using questioning more effectively to challenge and engage students so that they have opportunities to develop their reasoning and extend their thinking
 - making sure that tasks are challenging and engage students and that student tracking data are used in all lessons to inform lesson planning
 - providing greater opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills
 - promoting the sharing of the best practice so that all may aspire to good or better teaching.
- Continue to raise and accelerate achievement by:
 - ensuring that the momentum for improvement in mathematics, science and humanities is maintained
 - embedding high aspirations across all subjects and classes
 - improving teaching in weaker-performing classes and subjects in order to achieve better outcomes for students
 - ensuring that feedback and marking are regular and informative and support students in their next steps in learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The first set of academy results at GCSE in 2012 showed significant improvement over the predecessor school, particularly in the percentage of students gaining five A*-C grades including English and mathematics. However, there remains too much variation within and across subjects in the progress that students are making.
- While standards in mathematics have improved, progress remains below average. In too many lessons observed in mathematics students made less than expected progress. This was also the case in some lessons in science, humanities and modern foreign languages.
- In English there has been significant improvement. Students in English achieve above the national average and make good progress. Evidence of strong performance in English was confirmed during the inspection through lesson observations and the scrutiny of current work.
- Effective programmes and intervention strategies are tackling low literacy levels at entry. Reading ages in Years 7 and 8 are improving, with many students making significant progress. The vertical tutor system encourages younger students to work on developing their reading practice and skills with older students.
- Lower-attaining students, including those supported through school action and school action plus and those known to be supported by the pupil premium, are making better progress. The academy has established effective systems to target those students for additional support and activities that increase their motivation to learn.
- Gaps in attainment between different groups of students are narrowing. There are no significant gaps in gender achievement. The gaps between students known to be eligible for free school meals and their peers have narrowed significantly over the last year but still remain too wide. The academy recognises this and has appropriate strategies in place to further narrow the gap.
- The use of early entry for GCSE English and mathematics is considered carefully by the academy. Those students who take early entry but do not achieve the highest grades are given the opportunity to continue to study and resit the paper at a later date.
- The academy promotes a wide range of extra-curricular activities to support students in their academic endeavour. There is also a widening range of programmes to assist students to raise their educational and life-long aspirations.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching over time requires improvement. The academy has placed a strong focus on the drive to improve teaching and learning. While the quality of teaching has improved there continue to be too many inconsistencies in quality between and within subjects. Inspectors observed too much variation in science, mathematics and humanities lessons.
- Better-focused staff development programmes have supported improvements in the quality of teaching. However, opportunities are not fully taken to use some of the outstanding practice seen in the academy, and particularly in English, to accelerate improvement further.
- In weaker lessons teachers dominate and students are too passive. There was insufficient challenge and students rarely engaged in independent learning activities. Questioning was shallow and not enough students made expected progress. In these sessions lesson planning to inform on an appropriate range of activities was poor.
- There is too much inconsistency in the quality of marking. In too many lessons marking did not give pointers to the next steps to improvement. There was little evidence of teacher follow-up to assess improvement and chart students' progress. Mistakes in grammar and spelling were too often left uncorrected. In too many lessons marking was neither regular nor informative.
- Teaching in English is good and often outstanding. In English lessons students are challenged and encouraged to reason, evaluate and think. Activities are planned to encourage cooperative

engagement, and independence and responsibility in learning. In these lessons students made good, and sometimes outstanding, progress.

- In two excellent English lessons students were encouraged to develop good speaking and listening skills through collaborative discussion and debate. Well-focused questioning deepened their knowledge and understanding. They buzzed with enthusiasm and made outstanding progress: above all, their self-confidence was enhanced.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour and safety of students are good. Many students spoke of the academy as a 'family'. There is a real sense of renewed pride in the academy and the progress that is being made. One student noted, "It feels good to be a student here".
- Behaviour around the academy and within classes is good. Behaviour is managed well and staff relationships with students are both cooperative and affirmative. Students demonstrate respect and courtesy to each other and visitors and this sense of cooperation and respect pervades the academy.
- Attendance over the last 14 months has improved and reflects the greater pride and engagement of students in the academy. Punctuality to lessons has improved. Lessons are rarely disrupted by late arrivals.
- Bullying is not seen as an issue by students. Older students noted the significant change in how bullying is tackled and the positive impact of the vertical tutorial systems on relations between different year groups.
- Students feel safe. They have a good understanding of safety concerning their own health and well-being because these aspects are covered in the curriculum and pastoral system. Spiritual and cultural issues at both a personal and global level are increasingly well covered.
- Exclusion rates have declined. The establishing of the 'Friendship Centre' for those with behaviour issues has helped to reintegrate these students more effectively into academy life so that they can work more cooperatively with their fellow students and better focus on their studies.

The leadership and management are good

- The strong drive and commitment of the principal and senior staff to embed an improvement culture has transformed the academy. Middle leaders and staff have subscribed to their vision. The academy has improved and students are making better progress. Academy leaders understand that this now has to be taken to another level, where all students are making good progress and high-quality teaching is embedded across all classes and all subjects.
- Over the last 14 months efficient systems to analyse, track and monitor students' progress have been introduced. However, in some classes data and tracking information are not sufficiently well used to plan learning activities so that all students make good progress.
- Self-evaluation, though occasionally overgenerous, is based on a sound understanding of the academy's achievements and its continuing challenges. Students play a strong role in self-evaluation because their views are sought and considered in such matters as teaching and learning and curriculum development.
- Performance management is generally robust with clear targets established for staff. There is a range of professional development opportunities, although more could be made of sharing some of the outstanding teaching practice that exists within the academy.
- The pupil premium is being used well and targeted effectively to impact on student attendance, behaviour and outcomes. The impact of such intervention can be seen in improving examination results and literacy levels. Achievement gaps are closing. The provision of additional cultural and academic opportunities and experiences for students is seen as central to promoting and energizing their educational and life-long aspirations.
- The curriculum is balanced and combines opportunities to engage in academic and vocational

courses. Alternative provision is provided for more disaffected students, although this is less well reported on to governors than other aspects of academy life.

- Since the inception of the academy there has been a strong focus on improving relationships with parents. Parents are encouraged to play a greater role in the academy. Much effort has been made in developing good links with the local community. There are good transition arrangements with primary schools.
- The academy places a strong focus on equality of opportunity. Gaps between groups of students have significantly narrowed. The curriculum supports a range of student needs. A strong emphasis on an improvement trend in literacy is emerging, especially in the lower school.
- The sponsors offer strong and effective support for the academy. They are well aware of its strengths and the direction of its continued journey to become a good and outstanding school.
- Significant success has already been achieved to move the academy forward. This success and transformation of culture is testimony to the quality of leadership and reflects a strong capacity for further improvement. There has been insufficient time to embed good and better practice in some weaker areas.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors recognise the journey that the academy is on; they justly celebrate recent successes but are aware of the challenges that remain. They have an accurate view of the academy's strengths and areas for further improvement. Governors are increasingly able to both support and challenge leadership in improving provision, the quality of teaching and learning, and in enabling better student achievement. They have a strong recognition of the importance of performance management and the need to reward and promote the best teaching and practice. The performance of the principal and senior leaders is increasingly scrutinised. Governors have strong connections with the local community and act as an important bridge between that community and the academy. Statutory duties are undertaken effectively and safeguarding requirements are fully met.

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	136680
Local authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	399861

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	547
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Mansell
Headteacher	Rod Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	Not Applicable
Telephone number	01782 235785
Fax number	Not Applicable
Email address	info@ormistonhorizonacademy.co.uk

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