

Harborne Academy

Harborne Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 3JL

Inspection dates

6–7 February 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

- The proportion of good teaching is not high enough to enable all students to make or exceed the expected amount of progress.
- Students' achievement requires improvement. The progress made by some students is not rapid enough to bring standards up to average levels, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The sixth form requires improvement. While students reach expected standards, given their starting points, performance across subjects is variable.
- In some lessons, all students undertake the same tasks because teachers do not take account of the range of abilities in each class. On some occasions, the pace of learning is too slow. These key factors limit the progress students make.

The school has the following strengths

- All students are equally valued and involved in the life of the academy. There is a clear determination that outcomes will improve due to the concerted action of all staff to do their very best for every student.
- The academy's current data show that achievement is improving across the academy, particularly in the lower years.
- The 'Skills School' is highly effective in developing students' basic skills in literacy and numeracy at an early age.
- Students' behaviour is good in lessons and around the academy. Relationships between students and adults in the academy are very positive.
- The academy has set up good systems to monitor and improve levels of teaching, behaviour and achievement. Leaders, teachers and governors monitor these closely and work very hard to ensure that they can be realised for all students.
- Leaders and managers at all levels, supported by governors, form a strong team. They make accurate assessments of strengths and weaknesses and have a clear plan for making the improvements that are needed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered and evaluated a wide range of evidence of the academy’s work. They observed 24 teachers in 26 lessons, of which eight were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons and to year group assemblies.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including the academy’s checks on its performance, plans for improvement, day-to-day health and safety arrangements, safeguarding measures and policy documents. Inspectors analysed the academy’s records of students’ rates of progress across the academy. They also looked at the academy’s use of the pupil premium funding. Inspectors heard students read and looked closely at their workbooks.
- Meetings were held with the academy director, the senior leadership team and other staff in leadership roles. Inspectors met with groups of students to discuss their experiences of school. Meetings were also held with representatives from the sponsor and members of the governing body.
- As insufficient responses were made to the online questionnaire (Parent View) by the end of the inspection to form a clear view of the academy, the inspection team took account of the academy’s recent survey of parental views.

Inspection team

Trevor Riddiough, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Linda Killman

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Carol Worthington

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Harborne Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school and has a small sixth form.
- The academy opened in September 2010. When its predecessor school, the Harborne Hill School, was last inspected by Ofsted in 2010 it was judged to be satisfactory overall. The academy is sponsored by Birmingham Metropolitan College. It is due to move into its new, purpose-built accommodation in October 2013.
- The director was appointed to the academy in September 2011.
- Nearly all students are of minority ethnic heritage and many speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported through pupil premium funding, at 72%, is almost three times that of the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding based on the number of students in local authority care, from service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported by school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than most schools.
- There is high student mobility as a large number of students join and leave the academy throughout the year.
- The academy is an integral part of the South West Area Network of schools in Birmingham. This group of over 20 secondary schools provides teachers with training opportunities. Membership of the Oaks Collegiate gives students access to a range of courses and learning pathways at 14 and after 16 years of age.
- The academy is involved in the Creative Partnership programme with one professional theatre company.
- A small number of students in Key Stage 4 access alternative courses at Birmingham Metropolitan College.
- The academy's recent unvalidated GCSE results did not meet the current government floor standard, which is the minimum level expected for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is typically good in all subjects and more is outstanding, by:
 - planning and teaching activities for students with different starting points, so that they can all move to the next step in their learning within a lesson
 - encouraging students to take more responsibility for their own learning so that they develop their own ideas and learn more independently
 - increasing the effectiveness of marking on students' progress by giving them time to think about and respond to advice so that their work improves
 - ensuring that all lessons inspire and engage students fully in their learning so that they progress at a fast pace.
- Make sure that students make consistently good progress in all year groups in all subjects, especially in English and mathematics, and in the sixth form.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- When students join the academy, most are working significantly below the nationally expected standards for their ages in most subjects. In 2012, the attainment on entry for Year 11 students was even lower than usual. Students' literacy levels are particularly low on entry.
- Students' overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 remains well below the national average. For most students, this represents expected progress, given their very low starting points.
- In the academy's first year in 2011, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grade C or higher, including English and mathematics, was 38%. This exceeded the government floor target for attainment of 35%. In its second year in 2012, this proportion remained the same, and narrowly missed the new government floor target for attainment of 40%. While overall attainment did not show any significant improvement over last year, progress levels have been broadly maintained from a much lower starting point.
- The most recent GCSE examination results show that some groups, particularly girls and students who have special educational needs supported at the school action plus level, did not achieve their full potential. They made less progress than would be expected, taking account of their starting points and abilities. The academy has addressed this issue and current students are making better progress.
- There is a clear commitment to developing students' literacy skills, as a high proportion enter with reading ages that are well below their chronological age and this reduces their ability to contribute fully in all subjects. All Year 7 students are taught in the academy's 'Skills School' and they benefit particularly from the drive to improve their basic skills quickly. Although it is too soon to see the full impact of this on improving standards, there are early signs of success in the rapidly accelerating progress being made by the vast majority of students.
- Students perform strongly in vocational subjects with a majority making expected and some making better than expected progress in BTEC subjects such as sport, business studies and information and communication technology.
- Students eligible for support through the pupil premium achieved an average points score of 291.3, lower than other students at the academy. However, the progress of this group is improving and the attainment gap is closing. The academy monitors the progress of all students closely, including those entitled to this additional funding. It is taking effective steps to support their learning, particularly in relation to improving literacy and reading. The pupil premium funding is spent well on additional tuition in English and mathematics, intensive revision sessions, academic mentoring and literacy interventions through the 'Skills School', which aims to accelerate students' literacy and numeracy levels throughout Year 7.
- Some students are entered early for some GCSE examinations. Those who are successful in gaining the higher grades then concentrate on subjects in which they have been less successful. This has a beneficial impact on the overall students' performance.
- The few students attending alternative provision achieve well in their chosen courses. Reliable systems are in place by which the academy quality assures this provision to ensure that it remains the most suitable placement for those students.

- Achievement in the sixth form is mixed. There is considerable variation in outcomes across the different courses with better progress made by students on AS-level and vocational courses than on GCSE re-sits where few students achieve grade C or above.
- The academy has strong links with the two large local providers of post-16 education. These have helped to ensure that the proportion of recent leavers not in education, employment, or training is very low.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is improving. However, it has not been good enough for long enough to make up for lost ground and previous low levels of attainment and to enable students to achieve well. Evidence from joint observations with senior leaders confirms that managers have an accurate view of teaching and learning and how it can be improved.
- In lessons that require improvement, teaching is more prescriptive and does not allow for choice, experimentation or independent thinking. Teachers take insufficient account of the range of abilities in the class and set all students off on the same tasks, which for some are too easy while for others, they are too hard. The pace of learning is too slow and, as a result, students do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Good relationships between adults and students contribute to the positive atmosphere in all lessons and around the academy. Teachers plan their lessons well, and explain carefully to students what they are expected to learn and how they can measure their success. They ensure that teaching assistants understand what is expected of students and that they provide appropriate support.
- In the best lessons, a wide variety of approaches, methods and resources are used that capture students' interest and retain a fresh edge to learning throughout the lesson. Students are expected to self-regulate their behaviour, judge how good their work is and make sensible choices.
- The quality of marking is variable, although with some good practice. In the best examples, the system of marking books using 'what went well' (WWW) and 'how to develop' (HTD) and 'my response is' (MRI) has generated a helpful learning dialogue between teacher and student. Elsewhere, marking is regular, but students do not take the opportunity to respond to it and so improve their next piece of work.
- The academy promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson, students undertook a sensitive discussion of post-natal depression and the impact of this on mental health. As a result, students could confidently empathise with others and explain their views and ideas.
- Teachers are aware of the need to promote students' communication, numeracy and literacy skills in subject teaching. Speaking and handwriting, and general literacy skills are given good attention throughout most lessons with further opportunities given to developing extended writing tasks wherever possible.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Leaders and managers have been successful in improving students' behaviour. Students have benefited from a new 'behaviour for learning' policy and a new process of rewards and

sanctions. The scheme has been designed together with students and it celebrates the achievement of those who go beyond the norm. The system is closely monitored; its impact is shared with parents and is visible through displays to students around the academy.

- Students interviewed explained that the rules are very clear and that they really appreciate the zero tolerance approach that has been adopted. They say that behaviour has improved noticeably since the academy opened, that disruptions are now rare and incidents of bullying happen only occasionally. The academy's own records and inspection evidence support this view.
- Most students are developing good personal qualities. They get on well with each other, and with their teachers and form a cohesive community. Inspectors noted the smart appearance of the students, their pride in their academy and their mature attitudes in dealing with the day-to-day constraints while the new academy is being built on the same school site.
- Students feel safe in the academy. They have a good understanding of bullying and how to stay safe. They have been well prepared to deal with all types of bullying, including those associated with e-safety, sexuality or racism, and they know that the academy responds quickly and effectively to any incidents that occur.
- Attendance has improved and is now broadly average. Students clearly like coming to the academy and particularly enjoy being part of the school community. All students feel included, valued and well cared for. This is exemplified by one student who commented 'Harborne's catch phrase: aspire, believe and achieve helps you to believe in your dreams'.

The leadership and management are good

- Sponsors, governors, the academy director and senior leaders have set a clear vision for the academy and its role within the local community. Equal opportunities, fostering good relations and tackling discrimination are at the heart of the academy's values.
- The director and senior leaders have accurately evaluated the academy's performance as requiring further improvement. They acknowledge that achievement is not yet good enough and have taken decisive steps to improve teaching and to make sure that students are making better progress.
- The sponsors have been keen to ensure that these improvements are not quick fixes, but are enduring. Consequently, there has been heavy investment in time and money in getting the right systems set up to ensure that the academy develops and improves in ways that can be sustained over time.
- The academy uses its accurate self-evaluation to identify what needs doing next. It has identified clear priorities for improvement and has devised a clear plan of action to see these through. Managers are suitably self-critical in their drive to raise standards. They are using data increasingly well to set challenging targets and monitor students' progress over time.
- Through its approach of tracking individual students' personal and academic development and the tailoring of academic and personal support, the academy effectively promotes equality of opportunity for all students.
- Performance management ensures that leaders at all levels and governors scrutinise teaching particularly and check the extent to which this leads to improvements in the standards that students reach. All teachers have performance targets that are linked to the academy's

improvement priorities.

- An overhaul of the curriculum has resulted in an intensive programme to accelerate students' basic skills in Year 7. A balance of academic and vocational courses in Key Stage 4 caters well for all abilities and interests. The sixth form enables students to strengthen their qualifications at GCSE level while working towards more advanced qualifications.
- The academy sponsor, through Birmingham Metropolitan College, extends all its services and systems directly to the academy. This means that it is able to supply help and additional finances to set up management systems and provide direct support for estate management, subject leadership, and specific help in developing teaching in individual subjects. Regular contact between the director and the sponsor helps leaders and managers to keep a focus on long-term aims while dealing with day-to-day management.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body and the sponsor bring significant experience and expertise to the academy. The governing body both enables and challenges the leadership team through close scrutiny of in-year data relating to the quality of teaching and achievement through a series of 'Programme Monitoring Boards'. Governors hold leaders to account for the academy's financial situation, including the allocation of pupil premium funding. They understand the academy's process for managing performance and recognise the link between additional pay for teachers and students' achievement. All statutory duties, including those relating to safeguarding, are 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	136213
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	399800

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	477
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	27
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Minett
Principal	Wendy Stevens (Director)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0121 4642737
Fax number	0121 4642737
Email address	enquiries@harborneacademy.co.uk

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