

Q3 Academy

Wilderness Lane, Great Barr, Birmingham, B43 7SD

Inspection dates 14–15 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The academy Principal and the sponsor are tirelessly focused on raising aspirations and creating opportunities for students to develop their self-confidence and to enjoy success.
- Achievement is now good. By the end of Key Stage 4 in 2012, an above average proportion of students achieved five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics.
- Since the last inspection, the academy has focused on improving teaching. Teaching is now mostly good across the school and some is outstanding.
- The sixth form is good. Students are now making good progress because the quality of teaching has improved.
- The daily life of the academy is underpinned by a commonly shared set of values. This is seen in the good behaviour of students in lessons and around the school and in their above-average attendance.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Senior leaders have introduced rigorous systems to make sure that students are making good progress in all year groups and all subjects.
- The academy's specialism in design helps Q3 students to prepare very well for their futures.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding, so that students' progress is good rather than outstanding.
- Some teaching is too prescriptive and does not enable students to learn independently and find things out for themselves.
- Marking is inconsistent and does not always help students to know what to do to improve the quality of their work.
- Progress in science is not as good as in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 49 lessons taught by 48 teachers. Five of these lessons were jointly observed with school leaders. Inspectors also visited classrooms during tutor time, attended an assembly and visited nine classrooms to look specifically at the quality of teachers' marking.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students. Discussions took place with the academy sponsors and the sponsor's representative, the Principal and the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, a group of subject leaders and a group of pastoral leaders.
- Inspectors took account of the 40 responses to the on-line questionnaire for parents (Parent View) and a recent survey of staff views collected by the academy.
- Inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at progress and attainment information, the academy improvement plan and the academy's own analysis of how well it is doing. Inspectors also looked at the system for managing the performance of staff, minutes from meetings of the governing body, a range of policy documents and information provided by the sponsor.

Inspection team

Liz Talmadge, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jane Gaffney	Additional Inspector
Iain Colledge	Additional Inspector
Charlotte Evers	Additional Inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Q3 Academy is sponsored by the Grace Charitable Trust and was founded on the idea that learning is a journey during which Q3 students are encouraged to 'seek that which is good, right and true'. The Q3 Academy is the only academy in the trust. Housed in state-of-the-art buildings the academy benefits from high-quality resources.
- The academy is a little larger than average. It serves the community of Great Barr in Sandwell and teaches students aged between 11 and 19.
- Over half the students in the academy are from White British backgrounds and the remainder are from a range of minority ethnic groups. Students with Indian and Caribbean heritage form the largest of these groups. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is very low.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is lower than average. This is additional government funding for students entitled to free school meals, for children in local authority care and for students with a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is below average. The proportion of students supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- Ten students are currently educated for some or all of the week at off-site provision. Five students attend the pupil referral unit at Wodens Rise. The majority of these students also access some GCSE courses at the academy and some vocational training at Nova Training, Startright, Halfords or Impact Education. Four students attend part-time vocational training courses with the same providers and one student attends Sandwell College on a full-time basis.
- The academy meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching and learning by ensuring that all teachers:
 - plan lessons that enable all students to take more responsibility for their own learning by working more frequently in small groups and pairs in order to find things out for themselves
 - help students develop the skills required for effective independent learning
 - improve the quality of marking so that it consistently explains to students exactly what they need to do to improve the quality of their work and to achieve higher grades
 - give students time to discuss and reflect on the comments written in their books
 - ensure that activities are carefully planned to meet the learning needs of students of all abilities by providing resources, guidance and interventions that more precisely meet the needs of individuals.
- Improve progress in science so that it is as good as progress in English and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the academy with average overall standards but few of them are high-attaining students. The academy clearly knows how to secure good progress as the standards students reach have risen strongly over time. In 2012, more than three quarters of students achieved five GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics. This is well above the national average.
- GCSE results are well above average in English and above average in mathematics. Other subjects in which students perform particularly well at this level are business studies, photography, textiles, statistics, history and geography.
- GCSE results in science are much lower than those achieved in English and mathematics. The academy understands why this is the case and is addressing the problem. The academy's system to track students' attainment and progress demonstrates that science results are set to improve strongly in 2013. No teaching seen in science was less than good and about half was outstanding, supporting the view that progress in science is improving rapidly.
- Students make particularly good progress in English. In 2012, an above average proportion of students had made expected progress or better than expected progress from Year 7 to the end of Year 11. In mathematics, students make good progress. During the inspection, students made good progress in lessons.
- Pupil premium funding is used to provide additional support for students and to ensure that they receive extra help where necessary. Students known to be eligible for free school meals and those students who are looked after make good progress. The standards for these students in English and mathematics are very close to those of all other students.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make progress that is a little lower than average in Key Stage 3 improving to progress that is as good as that found nationally by the end of Key Stage 4.
- The academy enters some students early for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics. The impact of this is that students achieve fewer of the higher grades at GCSE. The system of early entry does, however, allow students to study a wider range of subjects in Year 11.
- Students enter the sixth form with lower-than-average GCSE grades and make expected progress. As a result of teaching that is now good, and sometimes outstanding, students are now beginning to make better progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching in most subjects is almost always at least good; quite a lot is outstanding, particularly in the sixth form. The academy has made teacher training a central focus since the last inspection and this has been effective.
- Positive relationships between students and their teachers are key features of most lessons and students are almost all keen to learn. Teachers plan a wide range of learning activities that often inspire students to achieve aspirational targets.

- The academy uses data well and has good monitoring system in place. Regular assessments are shared with parents and used to form the basis of lesson and subject planning.
- Learning support assistants provide good support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and help them to make progress that is as good as others in the year group.
- The school has a good literacy programme to improve the reading skills of those with low reading skills when they arrive at the school.
- In the best lessons, students are helped to engage fully in their learning and in the learning of others through group and paired activities. In these lessons, teachers equip students with the skills to work in small groups, facilitate learning and allow time for students to think deeply about what they are doing. In an English lesson in Year 9, for example, students reported that they really enjoyed an activity where they had to do sufficient research to become an 'expert' before teaching what they knew to others. Learning experiences like this were described as 'memorable'.
- Where teaching is not yet consistently good or outstanding, teachers:
 - dominate the learning conversations
 - do not give students time to engage in the activities set
 - ask questions that demand a single right answer and require little or no creative thinking
 - fail to provide suitably challenging activities for the most able.In these lessons most students respond by being passive.
- There are examples of good marking in history, geography and religious education but, in too many subjects, the marking and feedback from teachers do not help students to identify what they should do to improve their work. Marking often makes no reference to the targets set at the front of students' books.
- Teaching in the sixth form has been targeted for improvement. As a result of staff training, sixth form teaching is now good and some is outstanding. Teachers are now setting challenging tasks, have high expectations of students' participation and ask probing questioning; these factors all contribute to recent improved achievement for sixth form students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The academy prides itself on the personalised care and guidance given to students. Expectations of behaviour, attendance and school dress are high. Students respond positively to these high expectations and take pride in themselves and their school.
- Students told inspectors that they feel safe both in and outside the school buildings, and they know where to go and who to talk to get advice and help. Bullying is rare and adults act quickly to resolve any reported incidents.
- Students enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in above-average attendance and the decreasing levels of persistent absence. The academy monitors attendance well and sets increasingly higher targets for all students. Attendance in the sixth form is well above average.
- All members of the academy dress in 'business suits'. This creates a purposeful and industrious

atmosphere throughout the academy where courtesy, mutual respect and generosity of spirit characterise the attitudes of students and staff toward each other.

- The academy is a multicultural community, and students of different backgrounds say they feel completely safe in an environment where there is no discrimination.
- Behaviour in lessons is rarely less than good and, when students are given the opportunity to engage actively with their own learning, it is often outstanding.
- Some off-site provision supports a minority of students to gain the skills and qualifications that they need in a learning environment that gives them high levels of personal support and opportunities to engage with more vocational opportunities.
- The school has clear guidance on expected behaviour; both rewards and consequences are understood by students.
- For those few students who struggle to cope with academy life on a regular basis, alternative provision is available to help them to develop skills and gain qualifications. The health and safety arrangements for these students meet all statutory requirements
- Students at Q3 have 'a voice' and regular opportunities to express their views and opinions so that they can influence how things happen.

The leadership and management are good

- The vision and leadership of the Principal are inspirational. Together with her senior team and the support of the governing body, she has brought about very significant changes since the last inspection. She describes the academy as 'on a journey to outstanding' and ensures that staff and students in the academy are all clear about the direction of travel.
- Senior leaders have focused on improving the quality of teaching in order to bring about improvement to students' progress. The 'in-house' professional development and training that they provide for academy staff is outstanding and is reflected in the amount of good and outstanding teaching and in the above-average progress made by students.
- Teachers are held to account by senior leaders for the quality of their teaching and the outcomes for their students. Performance management systems are rigorous and set clear targets for improving teaching and improving results. Salary progression happens if teachers have met their targets and if approved by governors.
- The academy knows itself well. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and clearly identifies strengths and weaknesses, leading in turn to clearly focused improvement plans. The academy does not hesitate to change things that are not working in the drive to raise standards further.
- The curriculum is a strong feature of the academy. It plays a key role in creating opportunities for students to follow appropriate learning pathways and to study a wide range of interesting subjects. This in turn motivates students and engages them in their learning. The advice and guidance given to students when they make choices at the end of Year 8 are good.
- Since the last inspection, the academy has introduced new tracking systems so that the progress of every student is closely monitored. Subject leaders are held to account for the progress of

students and have been trained to observe lessons, make good judgements and ensure that tracking is done accurately. This is resulting in the good progress of students in many subjects but not yet in all.

- The values that underpin the academy and the high expectations set by leadership of the academy contribute strongly to a learning community in which spiritual, moral, social and cultural education thrive. The academy emphasises the importance of self-development and reflection through programmes such as 'Aspire' where students work together to develop skills and values. Students are actively encouraged to develop strong moral foundations to support them beyond the academy and into the world of work. The academy creates regular opportunities for students to celebrate different cultures, and the values of tolerance, kindness and generosity are evident in the attitudes of students.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors and the sponsor bring a wide range of skills to the governance of Q3. The sponsor brings strong values and a commitment to excellence and high aspirations to the academy. Governors visit the school regularly and know the staff well. They give their time generously and bring their individual professional expertise and personal skills to the school. They ensure that leaders and managers at all levels are appropriately supported and challenged and that students are given a wide range of opportunities to help them shape their futures. Governors are very in touch with all that happens in the academy and know about the impact of expenditure, including pupil premium funding. The governing body knows about the quality of teaching in the academy and understands how well students are achieving. They monitor teachers' performance and ensure that good teachers are properly rewarded. Alongside the Principal, governors make sure that underperformance is tackled. The governing body and the sponsor work hard with senior leaders to ensure that students at Q3 do not have to settle for anything less than the best during their time at the academy.

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	135449
Local authority	N/AI
Inspection number	406600

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	1112
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eric Payne
Principal	Caroline Badyal
Date of previous school inspection	16 February 2011
Telephone number	0121 3586186
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