

Oldbury Academy

Pound Road, Oldbury, B68 8NE

Inspection dates

24–25 September 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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Some groups of students, particularly the most able and those supported through the pupil premium, do not make good enough progress.
- There is too much variation in students' achievement across different subjects.
- The overall quality of teaching requires improvement. The pace of learning is often too slow, particularly at the beginning of lessons. At times teachers talk for too long, preventing students becoming actively involved in learning.
- Students, especially the most able, are not always given work at the right level of difficulty. This often prevents them from making good progress.
- Leaders, managers and governors do not have a clear enough understanding of the academy's strengths and main priorities for improvement.
- Governors do not hold leaders to account rigorously enough, particularly in relation to the achievement of particular groups of students.
- Systems for producing clear and accurate information on students' progress are not fully established. This reduces the ability of leaders and staff to identify and tackle any potential underachievement quickly.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Achievement rose in 2013 following a dip in 2012, but is not yet good for all students.

The school has the following strengths

- Students behave well in lessons and around the school building. They have a very thorough awareness of how to stay safe, and treat each other and adults with respect.
- The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a major strength of the academy's work. A wide range of events supports every aspect of students' personal development.
- The quality of pastoral care is high. Students feel safe and supported, confident that they can turn to staff for help if needed.
- Most of the students who follow courses at the academy's off-site provision make good progress, particularly in their personal development.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 42 lessons. Five of these observations were carried out jointly with members of the academy’s leadership team. One inspector also carried out a series of shorter visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with staff, students and two members of the governing body.
- One inspector visited the academy’s off-site provision, ‘ALTOA’.
- Inspectors took account of the 28 responses to the Ofsted online Parent View questionnaire, as well as the 95 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including national published assessment data and the academy’s own data, the academy’s self-evaluation, improvement plans, safeguarding policies, behaviour policies and records and documents relating to teachers’ performance management.

Inspection team

Julie Price-Grimshaw, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Shahnaz Maqsood	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Macfarlane	Additional Inspector
Kevin Harrison	Additional Inspector
John Taylor	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Oldbury Academy is a much larger-than-average secondary school.
- The school converted to become an academy school on 1 December 2011. When its predecessor school, Oldbury College of Sport, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. This is additional support for students in the care of the local authority or those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Up to 20 students from Years 10 and 11 attend 'ALTOA', the academy's off-site alternative provision, where they follow a number of vocational programmes including construction and horticulture.
- The academy meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the overall quality of teaching to at least good, so that students achieve consistently well across subjects, by making sure that:
 - teachers maintain a brisk pace of learning by making the best possible use of time, particularly at the start of lessons
 - work is always set at the right level of difficulty for students, particularly the most able
 - teachers do not talk for too long during lessons and students are given more opportunities to be actively involved in their own learning
 - the quality of all marking and feedback is as good as the best in the academy, so that all students have a clear understanding of exactly what they need to do to improve.
- Improve leadership and management by making sure that:
 - all leaders and governors share a clear and accurate understanding of the academy's current strengths and priorities for improvement
 - developing systems for tracking and analysing the progress of different groups of students, particularly the most able and those supported by the pupil premium, so that swift action can be taken to tackle potential underachievement
 - the governing body rigorously holds leaders to account, especially in relation to the progress made by different groups of students.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Not all groups of students achieve well. The proportion of students making typically expected progress in English is above national figures and, in mathematics, is broadly in line with national figures. However, the proportion of students making more rapid progress is below national figures in both subjects. In particular, too many of the most able students do not make the progress that they are capable of.
- Students' attainment when they join the academy is generally below average. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is broadly average. However, there is too much variation in students' achievement across different subjects. In 2013, the proportion of students gaining A* to C grades fell in a range of subjects, including mathematics and science. Attainment is well below national figures in a number of subjects, including science, design and technology, French and music.
- In 2013 there was an overall decline in the proportion of students attaining A* or A grades at GCSE. In both English and mathematics there was a slight increase in the number of students gaining these grades, but figures remain well below average. In some subjects, very few or no students gained an A* or A grade.
- The achievement of students from different ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language is similar to that of other students. The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is variable, with some individuals making rapid progress. Overall, the progress of this group requires improvement in order to be good.
- In spite of a slight improvement in the achievement of those supported by the pupil premium in 2013, the gap between these students and their peers is not closing rapidly enough. The attainment of students supported by the pupil premium is approximately one GCSE grade lower than that of other students. Year 7 catch-up funding is being used for a variety of initiatives, including the academy's approach to improving literacy through encouraging wider reading, but it is too early to see the full impact of this work.
- The academy has an early entry policy for GCSE examinations. The impact of this is variable. For example, some mathematics students who gain high grades when they take the examination in Year 10 benefit from the opportunity to study additional mathematics or statistics. However, there is limited advantage to other students who do not improve their grades in spite of sitting the GCSE mathematics examination several times during Years 10 and 11.
- Those who follow courses at the academy's off-site alternative provision achieve well and make good progress. They are equipped well for the next stage of their training or employment.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement. Although examination results improved in 2013 following a dip in 2012, students have the capacity to do better.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- At times, the pace of learning is too slow. This is because some teachers spend too long talking to students rather than actively involving them in their own learning. Consequently, some become distracted and, although disruption to learning is very rare, the pace of progress is not rapid enough.

- Teachers do not always make the best use of the available time, particularly at the beginning of lessons when students are usually asked to copy from the board. Some do this very slowly and as a result there is often a delay before students are set tasks that promote their learning and progress.
- The academy has recently directed teachers in all subjects to set numeracy starter tasks at the beginning of lessons. Although this can work well in some subjects, notably mathematics and science, in other subjects students are sometimes given tasks that are much too easy and provide no challenge, such as very basic simple addition and multiplication. This can take up a good deal of time, with no obvious benefit to students' learning. In several lessons observed during the inspection, students had still not begun their main subject work 15 or even 20 minutes after the start of the lesson.
- Where teaching is best, teachers take care to set work at precisely the right level of difficulty for individual students. Questioning is used well to check understanding and develop students' thinking skills, and a range of interesting activities leads to high levels of engagement and rapid progress. This good practice is not yet widespread, with some teachers setting tasks that are often too easy, particularly for the most able students. This slows students' progress.
- There is some very good practice in marking and feedback across a range of subjects. Students are given good quality guidance on exactly what they must do to improve. Some teachers encourage students to respond directly to comments in the marking and this supports their learning well. Feedback from other staff is not as helpful, sometimes being too brief, and as a result some students repeat mistakes in their work.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is improving and much of it is good, but it is too early to see the impact of this on outcomes for sixth form students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students have positive attitudes to learning. They say that they enjoy learning, particularly when given the opportunity to work practically in groups. Even when they are not as actively involved in lessons, disruption is very rare. Behaviour and safety are not outstanding because students' attitudes to learning, although good, are not yet exemplary across all subjects.
- Students are well-mannered and courteous, due largely to the staff's high expectations in terms of behaviour. They are respectful when speaking to adults and are often supportive of each other, showing sensitivity.
- Behaviour around the building, including at breaktimes and lunchtimes, is also very good. Students understand the importance of moving around the building in a sensible and safe manner. They feel safe in school and have a very good understanding of how to stay safe outside school. Evidence shows that behaviour over time is consistently good, partly due to the academy's strong emphasis on the importance of this aspect.
- Bullying is not common, but students are confident that any such incidents will be tackled swiftly and effectively by staff. They have a very thorough awareness of the different forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying and racism, and show mature attitudes to dealing with such attitudes.
- Attendance has improved over recent years and is now broadly average.

- The school is now working very successfully to reduce last year's high number of fixed-term exclusions involving a small minority of students.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders, managers and governors do not have a clear enough view of the quality of the academy's work and how this links with outcomes for students. The academy's self-evaluation is over-generous and does not lead to the identification of clearly defined key priorities. As a result, improvement planning is too lengthy and lacking in focus, making it difficult for the highly committed team of senior leaders to tackle swiftly the most important issues to take the academy forward.
- This is due, in part, to weaknesses in the academy's systems for tracking students' achievement. There is a great deal of information on the progress and attainment of different groups but it is not always readily available in a concise and uncomplicated form that allows staff, leaders and governors to gain an accurate picture of students' current achievement. This limits their ability to plan swift and effective action to tackle potential underachievement.
- The academy places a great deal of emphasis on providing support and training for its staff. Teachers and support staff alike are appreciative of this. Nevertheless, when checking the quality of teaching, senior leaders do not always focus enough on the impact of centrally directed strategies, such as the numeracy starter, on students' learning.
- There are well-established systems for managing the performance of teachers, linked to pay awards. Last year, the targets set for teachers to help improve their performance were often too vague. Leaders have recognised this and there is clear evidence that the new systems, introduced this year, will focus much more sharply on the link between teachers' performance and students' outcomes.
- Students benefit from the opportunity to study a wide range of subjects at Key Stages 3 and 4 and also in the sixth form. The curriculum is revised on an ongoing basis, with new introductions this year such as biology, chemistry and law at GCSE. The academy is committed to meeting the needs of all of its students, partly through strategies such as the 'accelerated programme' which is aimed at promoting rapid progress for particular students. However, the impact of this on the achievement of the most able is limited.
- The academy provides a very high standard of care and support for its students. Although there are discrepancies in the academic performance of different groups, a great deal of importance is placed on supporting students, no matter what barriers to learning they may face, so that all have an equal opportunity to succeed. Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is very well promoted and the impact of this is seen in the significant gains made by some students in terms of their personal development. Students are provided with good quality advice and guidance on careers and future training opportunities.
- A number of external advisers have been employed by the academy and have provided useful guidance to leaders.
- All safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body does not always challenge leaders and hold them to account, particularly in relation to students' achievement. Some governors have a good understanding of data and

how, in broad terms, the performance of the academy compares to that of other schools. However, there is not enough emphasis on using up-to-date information on the progress of students to discuss, regularly and in detail, the current picture and the academy's progress towards meeting its targets. The governing body is not sufficiently involved in helping leaders to judge, regularly and rigorously, the quality of the academy's work, or to check on the impact of action planning.

- Governors discuss the quality of teaching across the academy but there is not enough focus on the impact of teaching on students' achievement. As a result, their judgements on the overall quality of teaching are over-generous. The governing body has been involved in overseeing the new arrangements for the performance management of staff and they understand the links between performance and pay.
- Governors are dedicated to their work and are proud of the academy's successes, particularly in promoting the personal development of its students. They have an acute awareness of the social context and the barriers to learning faced by many students. Governors are aware of how the academy is spending the pupil premium but they pay less attention to checking the ongoing impact of this spending on the academic progress of eligible students.

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	137701
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	429480

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1600
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sally Harvey
Headteacher	John Martin
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
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