

Grace Academy Solihull

Chapelhouse Lane, Chelmsey Wood, Birmingham, B37 5JS

Inspection dates 11–12 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Achievement in mathematics is too low and has shown too little improvement at Key Stage 4. Leaders and managers have not sustained the improvements in GCSE mathematics that were achieved in 2012.
- The proportion of Year 11 students who have gained a grade A* to C in mathematics, or made the progress expected nationally, has been significantly below average since 2011.
- The weaker achievement in mathematics has meant that the school's overall results remain low. Too few students gain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics.
- Teaching across the school is not always matched closely enough to the skills and abilities of all students. This particularly holds back the progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- Lessons sometimes proceed too slowly. In these instances, students often lose concentration and make slower progress.
- Governors have not kept a close enough check on the use of additional funding to support Year 7 students who join the academy with low attainment in English and mathematics. These students have not made sufficient progress.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Too many students leave before their courses are completed, and students do not consistently make good progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers understand, accurately, the academy's strengths and weaknesses. They are securing important improvements in teaching and standards in English, science and work-related subjects.
- The achievement of students who are supported by the pupil premium is improving rapidly and gaps between the attainment of these students and others are closing.
- Students are polite and courteous. Relationships in the academy are positive, and students feel safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 37 lessons, eight of which were jointly observed with senior leaders. The inspection team also made several short visits to other lessons to check on the progress and behaviour of different groups of students.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students from Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form. Other meetings were held with governors, senior leaders and staff, including those responsible for leading subjects.
- Insufficient responses were received to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View). However, inspectors analysed 250 responses that the academy has received to its own parent questionnaire. Inspectors also analysed 17 responses from a staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the work of the academy and looked at a number of documents, including those relating to the monitoring of teaching and the targets set for teachers to improve their work. They also looked at records relating to attendance, behaviour, bullying and safeguarding, the academy’s improvement plan and data on students’ progress.
- The lead inspector met with a representative from the academy group.

Inspection team

Richard Sutton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Susan Laffey	Additional Inspector
Elisabeth Stock	Additional Inspector
Bernadette Green	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- The academy is larger than the average secondary school with a sixth form.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is slightly below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Approximately one tenth of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, which is lower than average.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is much lower than average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, which is additional funding given to schools for certain groups of students, such as those in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is much higher than average.
- A very small number of students attend alternative provision in Year 11. They study full-time courses which cover a range of academic and work-related subjects at 'Evolution', which is the programme the students attend at a variety of schools and colleges in the local area.
- The academy is one of three academies which form the Grace Foundation.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and students' achievement, particularly in mathematics, in the main school and the sixth form by making sure that:
 - teachers of mathematics are fully aware of any gaps in skills and knowledge that students may have, particularly in Year 11, and use this information fully to plan lessons and activities
 - work in all lessons is accurately matched to the skills and abilities of individual students and is adapted if students are finding the work too easy or too difficult, particularly for disabled students and those who have special educational needs
 - learning activities proceed at a good pace, so students remain well focused and learn quickly
 - teachers adapt the questions they ask to suit students different levels of understanding and ability.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - planning the procedures for raising teaching quality more precisely and strategically, so that targets in the academy's improvement plan are always clear and measurable
 - ensuring that leaders and governors rigorously and frequently evaluate and monitor progress against these targets and take steps should progress be insufficient, so that teaching improves quickly and is always at least good
 - providing tailored support for staff to ensure that teaching in mathematics improves rapidly
 - ensuring that more sixth-form students continue their studies and do not leave early.

- Improve the effectiveness of governance by ensuring that governors:
 - ensure good value for money in the spending of the Year 7 catch-up funding and the impact it has on the achievement of eligible students
 - develop a full understanding of the use and impact of pupil premium funding
 - are more frequently involved in monitoring the quality of learning and achievement and challenge senior and subject leaders to secure improvements quickly, particularly in mathematics.

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 is inadequate

- For the past three years, the proportion of students who have achieved 5 or more GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, has been below average. Although achievement improved in 2012, due largely to improved results in mathematics, this was not sustained in 2013.
- The proportion of students achieving A* to C grades in mathematics has been well below average in recent years. In addition, too few students make the progress expected nationally in mathematics.
- The low achievement in mathematics is a key factor in the low overall attainment at the end of Year 11. However, achievement in mathematics is improving, particularly in Key Stage 3. These improvements have taken place over the past year and students are making better progress than in the past, though achievement is still not as good as it should be, especially for lower attainers in Year 7 classes supported by the Year 7 catch-up premium.
- The academy enters students for GCSE mathematics at the end of the autumn term of Year 11. This is not an appropriate strategy as students often have to retake the examination later in the year in order to achieve a better grade.
- Students' achievement in English has been consistently better than it has in mathematics. The proportion of students who make expected progress has been improving over the past few years, and in 2013 students achieved average standards in English.
- A high proportion of students have achieved A* to C grades in a range of work-related subjects over the past few years.
- The small number of students who speak English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic backgrounds make variable progress which at least requires improvement. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve less well in English and mathematics than they do in many other subjects, including work-related subjects.
- Some students are supported through additional Year 7 catch-up funding, which helps those who join the academy with attainment below the expected levels in English and mathematics. The academy uses this funding to provide smaller classes for some, but not all, students in English and mathematics. Students who attend the smaller classes are not making good enough progress in either subject.
- The academy spends its pupil premium funding in a variety of ways including, for example, on additional staff who provide one-to-one tuition. It is successfully closing gaps between the attainment of these students and that of other students. This year, eligible students in Year 11 achieved, on average, similar grades to other students in English but a third of a grade lower in mathematics. There are no significant differences between the progress of students of different ability who are supported by the pupil premium and other students.
- The small number of Year 11 students who attend the off-site 'Evolution' programme are making expected progress.
- Most students have positive attitudes to learning which have a positive impact on their

achievement. However, as not enough teaching is good or better, too many students become passive in lessons and this has a negative impact on their achievement.

- Typically, students in the sixth form do not make good progress because teaching is not consistently good. Too many students do not complete some courses, although this is improving. The proportion of students achieving the highest grades in 2013 was higher than in previous years.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- In recent years teaching has not been good enough to ensure that all students make good progress across year groups and subjects. Some inadequate teaching in the past has left students with ground to make up. Teaching is improving and more is now good or better, but it is not improving quickly enough in all areas. As a result, achievement is improving but, in mathematics, not as rapidly as it needs to.
- Not all teachers ensure that lessons are matched to the skills and abilities of students as well as they should be. Sometimes, teachers' expectations of what students are capable of achieving are too low. As a result, not all students are appropriately challenged. This is particularly the case in Year 11 mathematics, where teachers do not always know about the gaps in students' previous learning. Consequently they are not always able to match activities to the students' needs to help them make up the missed ground quickly.
- Some teachers do not check students' work in lessons well enough to enable them to adapt activities if students are finding the work too easy or too difficult.
- Students sometimes lose concentration in lessons because the pace is too slow.
- Teachers do not pitch their questions at different levels of difficulty as often as they should to challenge students appropriately.
- In some subjects, teachers do not match work accurately to the specific needs of disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Consequently, these students do not always achieve as well as they could.
- Teaching in mathematics is improving and this is why students in Key Stage 3, in particular, are making better progress. It is too early to see the full impact on achievement in Key Stage 4.
- Where teaching is good or better, lessons proceed at a good pace and a variety of activities is well matched to the needs of the students so that they can each demonstrate success at their own level. For example, in a Year 7 drama lesson students were highly motivated to develop new skills because activities were varied and the teachers' expectations were suitably high.
- In the best sixth-form lessons, teachers have a good subject knowledge combined with a detailed understanding of the examination requirements. This typically enables teachers to focus students precisely on what they need to do to achieve the highest marks. However, too many teachers do not ensure that sixth-form lessons proceed quickly enough and this limits achievement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- Some students do not always show good attitudes to learning, and lose concentration and motivation in some lessons. This is typically where teaching is not as good as it should be and because activities are not well matched to the students' abilities or the pace is slow.
- A small number of students behave inappropriately between lessons, while others lack the motivation to arrive at some lessons on time.
- Typically, however, most students behave appropriately both in lessons and at break and lunch times. The vast majority of students are polite, courteous and well-mannered and this ensures that relationships are predominantly positive across the whole academy.
- Students speak positively about behaviour in the academy, and say that they work well with each other.
- Students have a secure understanding of safety matters, including e-safety, and they are appropriately equipped with the skills to assess risks. Students overwhelmingly feel safe at the academy and they say that bullying is rare. When incidents do occur students have confidence that staff will deal with matters quickly.
- The academy has an appropriate focus on continuing to improve attendance, which is too low. Attendance is improving for some groups of students, but not all.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders and managers, including governors, have not secured adequate improvements in achievement in Key Stage 4 mathematics in recent years. They have been unable to sustain and build on the improvements in GCSE results in 2012. However, they are successfully improving teaching, and therefore achievement, in most aspects of Key Stage 3 mathematics. Leaders have been successful in raising achievement in English, science and work-related subjects.
- Leaders and managers check and monitor teaching and achievement regularly and this ensures that they are able to accurately evaluate how well the academy is performing. Strategies to help teachers improve their skills are appropriate. However, they have not secured more good and better teaching quickly enough in order to raise attainment and improve progress in mathematics at Key Stage 4.
- Senior leaders revised the leadership structure from the start of this academic year recognising, through variable examination results, that subject leadership in the past has not always been effective. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this new structure on teaching and achievement.
- The academy's improvement plan is focused on the main priorities. However, the plan does not always identify how improvement will be measured to establish if the actions taken have been successful. This is one reason why improvements in achievement and teaching have not been quick enough.
- The targets set to support teachers in improving their work are appropriately linked to students' achievement. Consequently, the proportion of teachers who have moved up the pay scale in the past two years matches their performance.

- Leadership in the sixth form is improving; this is evident in the improved results in 2013 and better teaching. However, teaching is not yet as good as it should be to ensure that students make better progress.
- The proportion of students who leave sixth-form courses early is too high. This is improving as a result of better advice and guidance to students before they begin their courses. However, there is more to do to secure better staying-on rates.
- The Year 7 catch-up premium has not been used by leaders and managers as well as it should have been, and students eligible for support have not made adequate progress.
- Leaders and managers have the capacity to secure the necessary improvements. They have demonstrated the ability to improve or sustain good teaching in key subjects such as English and science. In addition, they are successfully closing gaps between the achievement of students supported through the pupil premium and other students, and have begun to improve achievement in the sixth form.
- The curriculum meets the needs of students, although the way that mathematics has been taught in recent years, particularly in Key Stage 4, has not fully prepared students for their future.
- Most students find the subjects that they learn interesting and enjoyable, and when they are taught well students learn with enthusiasm and interest and show positive attitudes to learning. The curriculum is made more interesting for students through a variety of visits and activities beyond lessons.
- The academy is supported and challenged by the Executive Board of the academy group. However, the support secured for mathematics last year had little impact, and the Board has not provided sufficient support to enable the academy to improve teaching and achievement quickly enough.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has not ensured that achievement in mathematics has improved adequately. In addition, it has not provided sufficient challenge to make sure teaching improves at a rapid pace.
 - The governing body has not effectively monitored the impact of the spending of the additional Year 7 catch-up premium on students' achievement.
 - A sufficient number of governors understand how to interpret data about students' achievement. Governors understand the key strengths and weaknesses of the academy.
 - The governors have a good understanding of how targets are set for teachers, and how these relate to staff pay rises and promotion. They have good procedures to monitor this process.
 - The governing body does not have a full enough understanding of how the pupil premium is spent, or the impact it has on eligible students' achievement.
 - The governing body makes sure that the academy fulfils its responsibilities regarding safeguarding. All staff have been checked as required, and are trained appropriately to keep students safe and free from harm.

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	129342
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	427046

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	901
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	134
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Baker
Principal	Roy Baylis
Date of previous school inspection	18–19 January 2012
Telephone number	0121 329 4600
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