

# Willenhall E-ACT Academy

Furzebank Way, Willenhall, Walsall, WV12 4BD

**Inspection dates** 19–20 September 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Require improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires special measures.

- Students' achievement is inadequate because their rate of progress is too slow. Although improvements were seen in the 2013 examination results, they were not as good as the academy expected in the light of its own assessment information.
- The progress different groups of students make varies because teaching is not planned well enough. Gaps in achievement between disadvantaged students and others, although narrowing, remain too wide.
- Teaching is inadequate. Teachers often miss opportunities to check on how well individuals and groups of students are learning and fail to move them on to more challenging work when they are ready.
- In too many lessons tasks are not tailored well enough to meet students' needs. Support staff are not always deployed effectively.
- Checks on the quality of teaching have not always focused on its impact on the progress students make.
- Senior and middle leaders lack a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility.
- Leaders and managers have not made the improvements to teaching and learning that are essential to ensure that students' achievement improves swiftly.
- Academy policies are not always followed by all staff. The quality of teachers' marking and feedback, for example, is too variable.
- The sixth form is inadequate. Although students achieve well in some subjects, they do not do so in others.
- Governors lack a detailed understanding of the school's most important weaknesses and have therefore not challenged academy leaders effectively.

### The school has the following strengths:

- This is a caring academy; staff provide strong personal support to students.
- The newly appointed principal has an accurate view of the academy's performance and he recognises the urgent need to make improvements.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 43 lessons, of which six were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made a number of shorter visits to lessons to look at specific aspects of students' work and their attitudes to learning.
- Meetings were held with academy staff, including subject leaders and senior leaders, five groups of students, representatives from the academy chain, and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the 54 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors considered the 40 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the work of the academy, spoke informally with students and studied a number of academy documents, including the policy for managing and improving teaching and making decisions on pay, as well as the academy's self-evaluation and its development plan. Records relating to attendance and behaviour, minutes of governing body meetings and documents relating to safeguarding were also examined.

## Inspection team

Kevin Harrison, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Teresa Hill	Additional Inspector
Roisin Chambers	Additional Inspector
Noureddin Khassal	Additional Inspector
Robert Ridout	Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.*

## Information about this school

- Willenhall E-ACT Academy is one of a group of academies sponsored by the E-ACT group.
- The school became an academy in January 2012.
- The academy is a larger-than-average school, with a sixth form. There is a higher proportion of boys than girls.
- Almost three quarters of the students are from White British backgrounds. Students of Indian heritage make up about a fifth of the academy. A small proportion of students are from other minority ethnic backgrounds. Few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and children of service families.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs and are supported through school action is in line with the national average. The proportion of students supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is just below the national average
- Small numbers of students in Years 10 and 11 attend off-site provision at Walsall College.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum levels expected for students' attainment and progress.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to at least good in order to raise achievement for students by ensuring that all teachers:
  - use the available information about students to plan and teach lessons that provide suitable challenge for all the students across the academy, including the sixth form
  - frequently evaluate the rate of progress being made by individuals and groups of students during each lesson, so that students move on to more challenging work when they are ready or receive support if they need it
  - use questioning more effectively to probe, challenge and deepen students' knowledge and understanding
  - give clear direction to teaching assistants and other adults in the class to ensure they provide support to those students who need it the most
  - consistently give students written feedback that clearly shows them what they need to do to reach higher levels and corrects errors in understanding, spelling, punctuation and grammar
  - give students opportunities to reflect on, and respond to, comments about their work and check that the improvements have been made.
- Improve leadership, management and governance at all levels by:
  - ensuring that the checks made on teaching, including in the sixth form, focus on the quality of learning and students' progress, and that leaders are suitably trained to support teachers to improve their practice

- providing opportunities for teachers to see and learn from the best teaching, in order that they can improve their own practice
- ensuring that the assessment information to support teaching and learning is easily accessible, clear and well-used to plan activities which promote good progress for all students
- checking on the implementation and impact of whole-academy policies, especially the quality of marking and lesson planning
- ensuring that the pupil premium funding is used effectively to close the gaps between disadvantaged pupils with others
- ensuring that governors hold leaders fully to account for the rates of improvement in teaching and students' achievement.

An external review of governance should be undertaken, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

---

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- Students' achievement is inadequate because their attainment is not high enough and their progress is too slow.
- Too many very able students do not do as well as they should.
- Students join the academy with below-average attainment for their ages. Attainment in GCSE improved in 2013, but it was below the academy's expectations from its own predictions. The Year 11 students who took their GCSE examinations in 2012 and 2013 made much less progress than similar students nationally. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades at A\* to C, including in English and mathematics, was below the national average in both years.
- Too many students across the academy are content to do just enough work to get by and are not striving to reach their maximum potential. Too often this is not challenged by staff.
- The progress of students who are disabled or those who have special educational needs varies too much. Students who are supported at school action do not make as much progress as those students with a statement of special educational need or those who are supported at school action plus. However most of these students make better progress in English than in mathematics.
- Students from an Indian heritage performed better than other students in their GCSE examinations.
- The Year 7 catch-up premium funding has been used to provide reading support, with the result that some lower-attaining students' reading ages have improved. These students are making better progress than previously. Students are sometimes encouraged to read aloud in lessons, although these opportunities are not provided in all subjects. The students' writing is variable across the academy. It is better where clear advice on how to structure and present written tasks is given, but this does not happen enough.
- The achievement of students eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is inadequate. Fewer than half of this group made the progress they should in mathematics while just over a half made the progress they should in English. There was a gap of almost a grade on average in GCSE examinations in 2013 in both English and mathematics between this group and other students. However, girls eligible for this funding achieved much better than boys.
- The academy enters students early for mathematics GCSE. Those who are successful in gaining at least a C grade are then expected to continue to work towards achieving the highest grade of which they are capable. This leads to higher attainment for some students and so does not restrict the potential of the more able.
- The academy also enters some students early for other subjects, including history, geography and design and technology. Those who are successful in gaining at least a C grade are then able to study for other qualifications, rather than striving for the highest grade of which they are capable. This limits the achievement of the students concerned.
- The academy's sports specialism enables all students to complete a sports-related qualification successfully and students achieve well in this area.
- The small numbers of students who attend courses at the local college make better progress than in the subjects they study in the academy. The academy can point to examples of students who have succeeded as a result of the opportunities these courses offer, including securing apprenticeships when they finish school.
- Sixth form students start their courses with below average attainment at GCSE level. Overall there are significant weaknesses in achievement, with only half the students on A-level and AS-level programmes making the progress expected of them. Progress is better in vocational courses and in the sciences at A-level.

**The quality of teaching****is inadequate**

- Too much teaching, including in the sixth form, is not effective enough to enable students to make good progress from their below average starting points. A significant proportion of teaching is inadequate as it focuses just on the completion of the set tasks rather than on developing learning. However, there are some examples of high-quality teaching across a range of subjects.
- Although teachers' plans often identify different expectations for the varying levels of ability within their classes, they do not plan tasks that will appropriately challenge or support students of different abilities. The same task is frequently set for all students. This fails to challenge the more able to achieve well and leaves some less able students behind.
- Too many teachers show a lack of understanding of how good learning can be built progressively, step by step, and fail to provide enough support to enable students to achieve well. As a result, lower attaining students find the work too hard and lose interest, and the most able are not sufficiently challenged.
- Where teaching is weaker, teachers often spend too long explaining what to do, but do not provide students with clear enough guidance on how to make progress.
- The quality of questioning used by teachers varies and does not always probe students' understanding sufficiently. Too often questions are not planned well enough to stretch students' thinking or deepen their knowledge and understanding. However, in the best practice, where teachers skilfully question and challenge students to provide thorough explanations, their learning and understanding improve. For example, in a Year 8 design and technology lesson the teacher broke questions down into small steps, enabling students to build on their earlier answers and show good progress.
- Not all teachers follow the academy's assessment policy. Some fail to mark students' work in the detail needed to enable students to know exactly what to do to improve their work and make good progress.
- Teachers do not always ask students to correct basic errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar and, when they do, the corrections are not always followed up so that the same errors reappear in students' work.
- Teaching assistants and support staff work in partnership with teachers, but they are not always directed clearly enough to ensure those students with the greatest need do not fall behind.
- In the sixth form, teaching is strong in some subjects and engages students fully in their learning, but this is not consistently so. Too often students are not challenged enough to strive for the highest grades possible and achieve their full potential.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils****require improvement**

- The behaviour and safety of students require improvement because in some lessons pupils become disengaged and are content only to do the bare minimum when teaching does not capture their interest. When teaching is stimulating, however, they respond with enthusiasm.
- Students usually behave in a calm, mature manner both in lessons and around the academy. They treat each other with respect, demonstrating good manners to adults and visitors.
- Students say they feel safe in all parts of the academy. They trust staff and value the support and positive relationships that exist. They say that someone is always there to help them.
- Attendance continues to improve but remains just below the national average. The academy maintains detailed records and analysis of the attendance of different groups of students, ensuring that it is quick to identify and support students who are in danger of missing time from their learning. There has been a particularly strong improvement among those students who have previously struggled to attend regularly.
- The academy has developed alternatives to excluding students who struggle to manage their own behaviour. This has significantly reduced the numbers of students missing time from their

education.

- There are well-established systems to ensure students remain safe when carrying out practical activities in lessons.
- In both formal and informal discussions with students, inspectors found that they understand the different forms of bullying, including homophobic and cyber bullying, and know how to keep themselves safe from them. Students say that bullying is rare and the academy deals with it promptly when it does occur. They value the 'SHARP' system on the academy website which makes reporting bullying easy.
- Parents and carers who expressed a view through the Parent View website are generally positive about behaviour at the academy.
- Leaders have established effective systems with feeder primary schools to ensure a smooth transition, and they encourage new students to attend regularly and behave in an appropriate way when they join the academy.

### **The leadership and management are inadequate**

- Leadership and management are inadequate because leaders have not improved teaching and achievement rapidly enough since the academy opened. As a result, students' progress in too many subjects continues to be slow.
- Not all senior and middle leaders have demonstrated a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility, and this has restricted the rate of progress made by the academy.
- However, the newly appointed Principal has an accurate view of the academy's performance. In the few weeks he has been in post he has made plans and already begun to take the urgent action needed.
- Senior leaders who jointly observed lessons with inspectors made accurate judgements. However, the academy's records of the quality of teaching have not until recently focused well enough on the progress students make and have paid too much attention to the activities teachers ask them to undertake. This has resulted in judgements about teaching being too generous and has presented an inaccurate picture of the quality of teaching in the academy. This weakness has now been recognised and plans are in place to address it.
- Systems are not in place to enable sixth form leaders to adequately monitor and improve teaching and ensure consistently effective practice in the classroom.
- The academy's system for managing teachers' performance has not been linked closely enough to students' achievement and has lacked the rigour to raise standards.
- Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- The academy has used the funding received from the pupil premium to finance additional staffing and to support teaching in English and mathematics. This has had some impact on achievement and the gaps in progress have begun to close, but they remain. Funding has facilitated some effective additional support outside lesson time, including work with employers to secure apprenticeships.
- The curriculum offers a broad range of subjects across the year groups. While students are given choices and opportunities to study extra subjects, this does not always raise their achievement. There are opportunities for some students to study work-related courses which enable them to continue onto further training and employment. The sixth form curriculum is too narrow to adequately meet the interests and aspirations of its students.
- The academy ensures that all students, whatever their backgrounds, have the same opportunities. Students mix well together, regardless of their backgrounds, creating a harmonious community where discrimination is not tolerated.
- Targets for students are being made more challenging. However, leaders do not do enough to ensure that the information about the progress students make is sufficiently accurate to enable

staff to plan appropriate support.

- Recent plans identify the correct priorities for improvement. However, they are only beginning to be put into place and have not yet had time to have an impact on students' achievement.
- The academy has effective systems in place for safeguarding of students and staff. Safeguarding meets current requirements and governors ensure that the safety of staff and students is a priority.
- The sponsor has provided support to this academy, facilitating links with other academies in the trust, including an outstanding school within the group, but these are very much in the early stages. The focus has rightly been on improving teaching, but there has been too little impact.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have lacked clarity in understanding of the academy's performance in terms of achievement and the quality of teaching. The governing body has relied too heavily on the information it receives from senior staff. It has not done enough to challenge leaders and hold the academy to account for the performance of its students. They have not been involved in the production of the academy improvement plan. They were not fully aware of the weaknesses in the performance management systems when pay is not linked closely enough to teachers' performance. This is being addressed and they now know how the weakest teachers are being challenged to improve and how good teachers are being rewarded. Governors have a clear understanding of the academy's finances and are aware, for example, of how the pupil premium funding has been spent, but not of the impact it is having.



## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137706
<b>Local authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	399897

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>School category</b>	Academy
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,528
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	198
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Steve Clarke
<b>Principal</b>	Tomas Ashley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01902 368221
<b>Fax number</b>	01902 634253
<b>Email address</b>	postbox@willenhalle-actacademy.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)  
[Store St](#)  
[Manchester](#)  
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2013

