

Ormiston Forge Academy

Wrights Lane, Cradley Heath, B64 6QU

Inspection dates

19–20 November 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		Requires improvement	3
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

- Achievement in mathematics requires improvement. There are early indications that more students are making the progress that they should relative to their different abilities, but teachers are having to work hard to reverse students' past underachievement.
- Teaching is not consistently good, either across the academy or within departments, so that in some lessons students' progress is slow.
- The way teachers follow academy guidance on improving skills in reading, and in numeracy, is inconsistent across the academy.
- Teachers sometimes do not use the information they have about students' prior learning to match work to their needs with sufficient accuracy. When this happens, students lose interest in their lessons and their behaviour is not managed effectively.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, have an extensive range of information that is available to them but this is not always used to good effect and their views are sometimes too positive.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers, including governors, are committed to their ambition to turn the academy around. The principal has ably challenged a culture of complacency and is relentless in his quest to ensure all students have good teaching all of the time.
- Where teaching is good or better, students make rapid progress and achieve very well, overcoming barriers caused by weaknesses in their reading.
- The numbers of temporary exclusions have significantly fallen.
- Attendance is improving and is now above average, and fewer students are persistently absent from the academy.
- The 'Success Centre' is highly effective in improving students' attitude to learning and providing support for those who are at risk of not doing as well as they could.
- The sixth form is good. The academy makes a positive difference for these young people and prepares them well for university, employment or training.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 lessons, including six that were observed jointly with senior leaders, and visited groups of students during form time.
- An inspector walked around the school with a senior leader to look at how students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted around the academy.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, vice-principals, other senior and subject leaders, the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body and three other members. The lead inspector also spoke with representatives from the academy’s sponsor.
- Inspectors spoke with five groups of students in meetings, as well as at other times in lessons and around the academy at breaks and lunchtimes.
- The inspection team considered the views of the 15 parents and carers who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire, and analysed the 51 responses to Ofsted’s staff questionnaire.
- A variety of information was analysed about examination results, students’ progress, their attendance and behaviour and other aspects of students’ personal development, and achievement. The inspection team also reviewed a range of documents, including the academy’s self-evaluation and its records relating to the monitoring of teaching and safeguarding of students.

Inspection team

Denah Jones, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Peter Humphries

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Beverley Mabey

Additional Inspector

Rena Saggu

Additional Inspector

Gulbanu Kader

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ormiston Forge Academy became an academy in January 2012 and is sponsored by the Ormiston Academies Trust (OAT). It is much larger than the average secondary school and has a large sixth form.
- There is a much larger than average proportion of students who are supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Most students are White British with most of the remainder being from Pakistani backgrounds.
- There is a broadly average proportion of students who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action is very small. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- There are currently five students in Year 11 who access alternative, or off-site, provision. This includes EDS Black Country Wheels and NOVA Training, and a range of other organisations which provide courses to satisfy the interests of individual students.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4.
- The principal has been in post since January 2012 and a number of other middle leaders were appointed in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of good and better teaching by:
 - making sure that all teachers use the information they have about students' prior learning, to provide the right level of challenge for all students
 - checking that all teachers regularly tell students what they need to do next to improve the quality of their written work.
- Improve achievement in mathematics through identifying where there are gaps in students' numeracy skills when they join the academy by:
 - using a diagnostic numeracy test to identify gaps in knowledge and skills
 - strategically planning activities to fill these gaps and include these in teachers' planning within mathematics and as part of a whole-academy numeracy policy
 - carrying out checks to make sure that numeracy skills are well taught
 - checking that students have mastered these skills.
- Help students to overcome weaknesses in their reading by making sure that all teachers are using the guidance that has been given to them.
- Strengthen the effect leaders and managers have on achievement by:
 - reducing the amount of information that is provided to teachers and leaders so that it is more manageable
 - making sure they concentrate on the key headline figures and identify the steps needed to improve examination results.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **requires improvement**

- In 2012, 57% of students achieved grade C or above in five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics, which is broadly the same as the national average. Results fell sharply in 2013 to 45%. A significant contributor to this fall was a decline in standards of attainment in mathematics.
- Students join the academy with attainment that is well below average in English and in mathematics.
- The literacy levels of students when they start in the academy are of great concern. Reading age tests for current Year 7 students show that almost three quarters of the year group have a reading age below that of their actual age. Following a reading intervention programme, all students in the current Year 8 have improved their skills and about a third of those on the programme have caught up. Many of these students are supported by Year 7 catch-up funding which is being used effectively to improve their progress in English.
- The progress of the small number of high-attaining students is not yet good enough, although academy leaders have introduced a more flexible curriculum to allow more-able students to start GCSE courses early to provide a greater challenge in Year 9. This will provide more students with the opportunity to develop their knowledge and to achieve the higher A and A* grades.
- In English in 2013, 71% of Year 11 students made the progress that was expected of them which is above the national average, and 18% made better progress. In contrast, students made poor progress in mathematics and less than half of Year 11 made the progress that students of similar abilities make nationally.
- Inspection evidence shows that things are getting better in mathematics and the academy is starting to see an improving trend in achievement in this subject, particularly at Key Stage 3. This is the result of a new leadership structure in the department with a focus on identifying weaknesses in teaching and learning, and intervening where this is not good enough.
- In 2013, there was a narrowing of the gap in attainment for those students supported by pupil premium funding, although standards fell for all students in the academy compared with 2012. In 2012, a greater proportion of pupil premium students than nationally, was successful in achieving five or more good GCSE grades including English and mathematics. The academy's information on 2013 examination results shows that in English, students who were eligible for free school meals were about two thirds of a GCSE grade behind those not eligible. This is an improvement of almost a whole grade on the 2012 figure. In mathematics, students who were eligible for free school meals were about a third of a GCSE grade behind those not eligible, compared with more than a whole GCSE grade behind in 2012.
- In 2012, the progress made by Key Stage 4 students from Pakistani backgrounds was higher than that of other students in the same year group, and was particularly strong in English. Information provided by academy leaders shows this has continued.
- The progress of the small number of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is generally good. Additional support provided by teaching assistants makes a positive difference in developing these students' learning.

- In 2013, attainment and progress in mathematics was being hindered by the academy's policy of entering students early for their GCSE mathematics examination. High attaining students were not given sufficient opportunity to develop their skills and to attain the higher A and A* grades in mathematics. This policy has now changed and higher ability students are not entered early in mathematics.
- The very small number of students who attend off-site provision are supported well with courses that meet their needs and interests and provide opportunities for work placements. These students make good progress and will have the chance to continue beyond Key Stage 4 to a higher level should they wish. Students in Year 10 have similar opportunities available but do not leave the site as they receive training through the academy's 'Success Centre'.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Students who start in the sixth form are generally lower attaining compared with students in other sixth forms nationally. Progress in Year 13 is better than in Year 12. At A level, the proportion of students who achieved two or more A-level passes (including equivalent qualifications) has increased from 72% in 2012 to 83% in 2013. Analyses on adding value (ALPS) presented by the academy show that progress overall has improved from 2012 to 2013.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Although the academy's commitment to improve teaching and learning is starting to have a positive impact, the quality of teaching is still too variable within subjects and across the academy. Teaching in the sixth form is more consistent and is usually good or better.
- In some mathematics lessons, work in books is being incorrectly assessed. This lack of reliability makes students think they are working at a higher level than they are. Students do not know what numeracy skills they have mastered or the areas where they still need to improve.
- Pockets of poor teaching, particularly in science and in mathematics, are starting to disappear. Students who spoke with inspectors during the inspection told us they had noticed a big change in science. Students said they often used to have supply teachers but this has changed and they now enjoy their science lessons more than has previously been the case.
- Students told inspectors that, in the best lessons, teachers plan a variety of activities which interest everyone and they are challenged to produce their best work. Inspectors saw this for themselves in a Year 7 geography lesson on the physical and human features of the United Kingdom where students had to find things out for themselves to move their learning on.
- Where teaching is good or better, marking in books is informative and tells students what they need to do next. In some lessons, the academy marking guidance to improve students' skills in reading and in writing is being used well. Inspectors were able to see how students had responded to this and had made better progress as a result.
- Some teachers are very skilled in using questions to encourage students to review their learning and also to think carefully and deepen their understanding. This was seen in a Year 12 sociology lesson in which students were asked to consider the reasons for the increase in divorce rates. The teacher ably encouraged students to challenge each other's viewpoints through using one student's response and asking others to develop this further.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- In some Year 9 lessons, behaviour was poor when some students found tasks too easy, finished early and then became bored and disruptive. In other lessons where there was poor behaviour students could not start the tasks and had to wait for help from the teacher.
- During the inspection, inspectors noted there were a number of students who did not arrive on time for the start of the academy day. Logs of lateness show punctuality is improving and academy systems to improve punctuality are starting to work.
- Academy leaders have focused on improving behaviour and safety. Students treat each other, and adults, with respect. They show good manners towards each other and move around the academy site without any fuss. Students were welcoming of visitors and were keen to tell inspectors what they liked about the academy and what areas had improved. For example, students feel safer since the site has been secured with a fence.
- Attendance is improving, and is above average. The academy has been particularly successful in reducing the number of students who are persistently absent.
- The 'Success Centre' has worked particularly well in reducing the numbers of students who are excluded. The centre provides a wide range of support including a 'nurturing' environment where students at risk of not doing as well as they could are given the extra help they need.
- Students told inspectors there were hardly any bullies and that when bullying does occur they were confident that, if it was reported to an adult, something would be done about it and the bully would be punished. They know about the different types of bullying, including racist, homophobic and online bullying. Staff and parents who responded to questionnaires say the academy deals with cases of bullying effectively.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Findings from checks on the quality of teaching are used by leaders to plan training for teachers. A group of teachers is being supported in developing their skills on the Improving Teacher Programme. The impact of this training has not yet been measured to see if it is making a difference. Observations of teaching during the inspection found a few areas where practice is inconsistent such as in using the whole academy literacy policy and the policy on marking students' work.
- The principal and governors have restructured the leadership of the academy and there are a number of leaders in a new role. Leadership at this level is still developing and is not yet having sufficient impact on examination results, particularly in mathematics where there is more ground to make up.
- Senior leaders and governors have a clear focus on the pursuit of excellence. The principal tackles staff underperformance rigorously and is committed to ensuring every student has good teaching for all of their lessons.

- Leaders and managers have focussed on appropriate priorities and have succeeded in raising attainment in English and in science. Weaknesses in teaching are being resolved through changes in staffing and by setting high expectations of staff performance which are closely monitored by senior leaders. Some teachers have made the decision to leave the academy, whereas others are working hard to improve their skills with support from outstanding teachers and a range of development programmes.
- The success of the strategy to remove weak teaching in science was evident in the improvement in science examination results in 2013. A similar strategy is now being used to improve teaching in mathematics, where the department is now jointly led by two leaders and better teaching and learning is being driven by highly skilled teachers.
- Targets are set for teachers, using examination results, and senior leaders rigorously monitor the performance of teachers against these targets, together with regular observations of teaching and checks on the quality of marking.
- The training of leaders in the academy is a priority to make sure everyone is able to carry out their role to a high standard. The sponsor has provided a range of high quality training and coaching for leaders at all levels, including support for governors.
- Leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, are improving their ability to use information to identify strengths and weaknesses of the academy. However, analyses produced are sometimes overly detailed and too lengthy to allow those reading the information to identify the main messages. This can lead to an over-generous view of the overall effectiveness of the academy as was seen by inspectors in the academy's self-evaluation document.
- Academy leaders have introduced a skills-based curriculum for students in Years 7 and 8, which is delivered by the form tutor. This includes communication, co-operative working, independence, reflection, self-management and leadership. Students asked say they enjoy this course and leaders told inspectors that students are more motivated and have improved their attitudes to learning as a result.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good and the academy has responded quickly to the demands of the 16-19 Study Programme. All Year 12 students now have the opportunity to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy at a level appropriate to their needs. There is a wide variety of courses available for students, including vocational courses at a range of levels. Students have access to good quality careers and university information and have opportunities to develop their personal, social and employability skills.
- Students experience a wide range of spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities which ensures their development in this area is good. Around the academy there are displays of students' work such as using and applying mathematics through the theme of a holiday, high quality art work from students in Year 10, photographs of students taking part in enrichment during Activities Week and receiving support for learning at the Mountain Centre in Wales. An additional hour, 'period 26', is built into the week for students to take part in a variety of other enrichment activities, study support or where further reinforcement of standards of behaviour is needed.
- The academy's systems for ensuring the safeguarding of students meet statutory requirements.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body was restructured when the academy opened. Newly appointed governors have undergone training and bring a good range of skills and experiences to their role. They are highly supportive of the academy and the work of the principal but offer a firm challenge to academy leaders. Governors know the key challenges facing the academy such as in improving achievement in mathematics, improving teaching and narrowing the gap in attainment for students supported by pupil premium funding. Information on teachers' performance is provided to governors who make decisions on teachers' pay and rewards. Governors were not clear about what has been done to improve the reliability of information on student progress that is presented to them. They were also not sure how much progress is being made by students across Key Stage 3 or that the school website fails to meet requirements in relation to the content it should display.

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	137673
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	399889

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1323
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	324
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Rayner
Headteacher	Andrew Burns
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01384 566598
Fax number	01384 638471
Email address	andrew.burns@oatforge.co.uk

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