

Park Hall Academy

Water Orton Road, Castle Bromwich, Birmingham, B36 9HF

Inspection dates 28–29 November 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Students do not make enough progress in a number of subjects, and particularly in mathematics. Despite some improvement from 2010 to 2012, standards at the end of Year 11 have been below average.
- In 2013, provisional data show that standards fell. Students made less progress than they should have done in English and mathematics.
- Teachers do not use accurate information about what students know and can do to plan work that is matched to students' ability. This means that work is often easy or too hard.
- Teachers do not always plan interesting and engaging learning activities. Students do not have the opportunity to work independently or together in groups.
- Students do not get clear feedback, either in lessons or in their books, on how to improve their work.
- Teachers do not use questioning well to deepen students' understanding and do not involve them in discussions.
- The sixth form requires improvement because students do not do well enough on their AS-level courses.
- Staff do not have high enough expectations of students' behaviour. This means students' attitudes to learning are not always positive. Lateness to lessons and some low-level disruption lead to interruptions to learning.
- Leaders, the governing body and the academy's sponsor have not ensured that teaching and achievement have improved.
- There is no clear, accurate system for checking students' progress that is used by all staff.
- Senior leaders' checks on the work of the academy are not rigorous, and policies are not implemented consistently.
- Leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching are not always accurate. Teachers are not given clear guidance on what improvements they need to make.
- The governing body does not ensure that senior leaders are held to account for actions to improve teaching and achievement set out in the academy's development plan.

The school has the following strengths

- Students say that they feel safe.
- Students in the sixth form achieve well in vocational qualifications.
- Attendance has improved this academic year and is similar to national levels for secondary schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 52 lessons, of which six were jointly observed with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with staff, students, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the sponsor.
- Inspectors considered the 62 responses to the online survey (Parent View), correspondence from parents and 25 responses to questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspection team observed the academy’s work, reviewed the records on students’ recent attainment and progress, the academy’s evaluation of its work and plans for the future, records relating to the management of the performance of staff, minutes of meetings of the governing body, as well as safeguarding, behaviour and attendance information.

Inspection team

Susan Williams, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Janet Harvey	Additional Inspector
Patrick Walsh	Additional Inspector
Anna Fisher	Additional Inspector
Justin McNeillie	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

- The academy is slightly larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- It became an academy in 2009 and is sponsored by the Arden Academy Trust, which runs an outstanding local school.
- The very large majority of students are from White British backgrounds. Other students come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The proportion of students for whom the academy receives pupil premium funding is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and some other groups.
- The academy receives Year 7 and 8 catch-up funding for a few students. This is additional government funding for students who did not achieve the expected Level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Some students attend courses at a range of other providers including Solihull College, Birmingham Metropolitan College, Merlin Training, Kingshurst Training and Arden Academy.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The Principal serves on the interim executive board of Oaklands Special School and is a trustee in the Unity Company, a collaborative of Northern Solihull Schools which is looking to establish alternative curriculum provision in the local area.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that a greater proportion is good or better by ensuring all teachers:
 - use accurate assessment information to plan interesting work for students and match the level of challenge to their ability so that all students make good progress
 - make lessons more active and enjoyable and support students to develop their skills in working independently or in groups
 - give students clearer feedback during lessons and in marking so they know how to improve their work
 - develop their use of probing questions to stimulate students' greater involvement in discussions and to deepen their understanding.
- Improve behaviour in lessons and around the school by ensuring:
 - staff have higher expectations of how students conduct themselves and make sure that low-

level disruption in lessons is not tolerated

– students improve their punctuality to lessons and develop more positive attitudes to learning.

■ Develop the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:

- a simple, accurate system, understood by all staff and governors, is used to check on students' progress and identify where extra help is needed to support students who are making slow progress
- monitoring and evaluation by senior and subject leaders is rigorous and that all policies are implemented consistently throughout the academy
- judgements on the quality of teaching are accurate and take account of the progress students make
- teachers are given clear next steps for improvement after leaders observe lessons, and that these are followed up to make sure that they have made a difference
- the governing body checks that there are clear actions in the academy's development plan that will improve teaching and students' achievement, and that the impact is monitored regularly so that academy leaders are held to account.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of pupil premium, 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

- Students do not make enough progress in a number of subjects, and particularly in mathematics. Although the proportion of students gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics improved from 2010 to 2012, standards remained below average and provisional data shows standards fell in 2013. Students made less progress in English and mathematics in 2013 than those who finished Year 11 in 2012.
- Students are sometimes not interested in their learning in lessons. Low-level disruption sometimes means that students do not make as much progress as they should.
- Students supported by the pupil premium funding receive extra help in lessons and in small groups. Some receive support to help them manage their emotions and some students attend other providers for courses. There was a gap of around one grade in English and mathematics between these students' attainment and their classmates in the examinations in 2012. Similarly, in 2013, the academy's analysis shows these students made less progress than other students.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are given extra help in lessons and some receive tuition in smaller classes. Progress for these students is mixed; some receive support from teaching assistants in lessons which helps them to make better progress. However, more commonly, work is not sufficiently well targeted and teaching assistants do not always support students effectively, so these students also do not make enough progress.
- Students start all of their GCSE courses in Year 9 and the academy enters all students for their examinations in English and mathematics in Year 10. However, this has not led to students making better progress. The academy's data show that the most-able students underachieved in 2013. Some students are disillusioned by taking examinations early and not doing well.
- The students who receive additional help from the Year 7 and 8 catch-up funding are also not making fast enough progress. The academy is piloting a course with a university to boost students' progress in literacy and early indications are that this is leading to faster progress for these students.
- The academy checks to make sure that the students who attend college courses are well supported. Achievement in these courses and other vocational options is much stronger than in other courses in the academy.
- All students have achieved five GCSE pass grades over the last three years, which is above the national average. In their best eight qualifications, taking into account the equivalent GCSE grades of other courses, the academy has consistently been above the national average. There was a slight dip in 2013, as the academy made changes to its courses to include more GCSE subjects.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement because students do not achieve well on some courses, particularly on a few AS-courses in Year 12. Students do better in A-level courses, reaching broadly average standards. Students studying vocational courses in the sixth form achieve well.

The quality of teaching**is inadequate**

- Teaching is weak and, as a result, students make inadequate progress. Teachers do not use accurate information about what students already know and can do to plan work that is exactly matched to their level of ability, to challenge more-able students and support those who are less able. Work is sometimes too easy for all students and this contributes to students' lack of focus and disengagement in lessons. This low-level disruption is not successfully tackled by staff and it slows down the progress students make.
- Sometimes lessons involve students listening to the teacher for extended periods with the result that their attention drifts and they lose interest. More interactive sessions, which students enjoy, are infrequent so students do not have enough opportunities to develop their skills in working independently or in groups, and to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Teachers do not apply the academy's marking policy consistently. Students' work is not marked regularly and students do not always receive feedback on their work. This means that students do not know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. In addition, opportunities for feedback from teachers during lessons are limited which also contributes to students making less progress than they should.
- Teachers use questioning to check students' understanding but questions are often simple and do not encourage students to think more deeply or to reflect on each other's views. Some students do not take part in these sessions and occasionally disrupt the learning of others because the teacher has not involved them in the work of the class.
- The strongest teaching in the academy is in the sixth form. In the best sessions teaching is characterised by strong questioning which involves the class in reflecting on issues and challenging each other. For example, in a geography lesson, students in Year 13 were learning about air pollution and actively tested each other's views using examination mark schemes and a sample answer. This level of discussion and challenge ensured that the students made rapid progress in the lesson.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**are inadequate**

- Staff do not have high enough expectations of how students should conduct themselves around the academy and in lessons. Students themselves are not always aware of how their boisterous behaviour affects others. There is too much low-level disruption in lessons that is not challenged sufficiently by staff. When teaching is not effective, students are not engaged and lose interest in their learning.
- Although students are not usually late to school, they are not always punctual to lessons, and this is not always dealt with by staff. Students do not always have positive attitudes to learning across the academy. The lack of focus and low-level disruption when students are not engaged in activities, or when work is not set at the correct level, means that students make less progress than they should.
- Students say that they feel safe at the academy, and almost all parents responding to Parent View agreed. Students are aware of how to keep themselves safe in different situations. They spoke about assemblies where they learned about different themes, such as safety when using the internet and the dangers of grooming by adults.
- Students do not think there is an issue with bullying in the academy and records confirm their view is correct. They know about different types of bullying including, online and homophobic

bullying. They are confident that staff would deal with any issues they raise.

- Some of the strategies to deal with more serious incidents of behaviour have been effective and exclusions have reduced. The academy works closely with the police to support the challenges students face outside school in the local area. Students think that this work is effective and believe, for example, that extremist behaviour is not an issue at the academy. The academy is effective in promoting positive relationships between different communities, ensuring equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination.
- The academy checks to make sure that students who attend part of their time at other providers are safe and well cared for.
- Attendance, which had been below average over the last three years, has improved and is currently similar to national levels.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- The steps taken by the academy's leaders to improve teaching and students' achievement have not been effective and both these areas are now inadequate.
- The academy does not have a simple, accurate system for checking on students' progress that is used and understood by all staff and governors to ensure that students make good progress. Assessments are not accurate which means that teachers do not set work matched to students' levels of ability.
- Subject leaders' checks on teaching and students' work in their departments are not rigorous. This has resulted in inconsistent practice within the academy. Implementation of policies throughout the academy is also inconsistent.
- Judgements on the quality of teaching by senior and subject leaders do not take account of the progress that students make in lessons or over longer periods of time. Their judgements are generous and therefore leaders do not have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. Teachers are not given clear steps for improvement which are followed up later to make sure that teaching improves.
- It is strongly recommended that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- The Principal is aware of the weakness in teaching and in subject leadership and that actions to bring about improvement have not been effective. His work supporting other schools and arrangements in the local area has limited his capacity to focus on driving improvements in his own school.
- A significant proportion of staff are paid at higher rates but this does not match the quality of teaching. However, these pay awards are mostly historic. The system for managing the performance of teachers is now more rigorous and teachers only receive pay increases if they meet their targets. This has meant that the governing body withheld pay awards for some staff on the advice of the Principal.
- The academy offers a range of curriculum options, mainly at GCSE level. The academy has traditionally offered a wide range of vocational options, in which students achieved well although

their performance in GCSE courses is weaker.

- The quality of teaching in the academy has not supported students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, although students have opportunities to reflect on some issues in assemblies. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted more strongly in the sixth form. Students have opportunities to discuss and reflect on each other's views and are encouraged to develop their thinking.
- The leadership of the sixth form requires improvement. Students have the option to take a wide range of courses, and they achieve particularly well in vocational subjects. Some students who have not achieved high grades in GCSE examinations in their chosen sixth-form subject do less well in some of their AS courses as they find the work difficult. Students are positive about the support and advice they receive to help them prepare for future training or employment.
- The sponsor trust has not provided the support or challenge that is needed to ensure the academy's leaders can bring about the required improvements in teaching and standards. The Arden Academy has provided light touch support, although some help has recently been provided for sixth form teaching and in mathematics.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Neither the governing body nor the sponsor trust have ensured that the actions of senior leaders have led to improvements in the quality of teaching and achievement. They have not ensured that there are clear actions in the academy's development plan which will lead to better teaching and bring about more rapid progress. Governors do not check regularly what impact leaders' actions are having and so do not hold senior leaders to account for improvement in teaching and achievement.
- Governors receive a very detailed report from the Principal about all areas of the academy, including reports on teaching and students' achievement, but the information is not analysed or summarised. This leads to a lack of clarity about the overall quality of teaching and about how well students and groups of students are making progress. Governors are aware that standards fell in 2013 and that there have been some staffing issues in mathematics but have not appreciated that progress in mathematics has been inadequate over the last three years.
- The governing body has discussed in meetings how pupil premium funding is used but governors do not know how much difference this is making to students' progress. Governors receive updates on the management of staff performance and sign off pay recommendations, challenging decisions to ensure there is evidence that staff have met their targets. Governors ensure that arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements and they review this aspect of the academy's work regularly.

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	135971
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	429603

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1130
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	156
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jan Hiorns
Principal	Tony Morrison
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 April 2012
Telephone number	0121 748 0400
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