

Sherwood E-ACT Academy

Wollaton Avenue, Gedling, Nottingham, NG4 4HX

Inspection dates

28–29 January 2014

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

- Standards are below average. Too few students left the academy in 2013 with five good GCSEs including English and mathematics. These students made less progress than they should have in both of these subjects.
- The progress current students make in English and mathematics is improving across the academy. However, there are some groups of students, in some year groups, where this is not yet the case.
- Teaching requires improvement. There is not enough good teaching to enable students to catch up quickly on previously lost learning.
- Not enough teachers plan lessons that enthuse and challenge students of all abilities. These teachers do not use assessment information effectively.
- The quality of marking varies widely across the academy and does not promote improvements to learning.
- Whilst students behave well overall, they are not always fully engaged in lessons because teaching is uninspiring. As a result, they make less progress than they should.
- Despite some subject leaders working hard to improve the quality of teaching, not all have been effective in doing so. Much of their work previously has been diluted by ineffective line management and support from the senior team.
- The governing body has not presented sufficient challenge to the leadership of the school until very recently. Governors do not ensure that extra government funding for specific groups of students is spent well.

The school has the following strengths

- The new co-Principals are driving a culture of high expectations and are doing so at pace. This is infectious. Staff are fully committed to improving this academy and morale is high.
- Students behave well, both in and out of lessons. They are polite and have very positive relationships with each other, and with the academy's staff.
- The safety of students is good. The majority of students attend the academy regularly because they feel safe and happy in school. Exclusions are very low in comparison to national averages.
- The academy provides effectively for students who have disabilities or have special educational needs. Hence, they make good progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 part lessons taught by 20 different teachers. Many of these lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders. Inspectors also reviewed some work previously completed by students. The information held by the academy on the progress current students are making in English and mathematics was analysed.
- Inspectors held meetings with the co- Principals, other senior and middle leaders, and with members of the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative of the academy's sponsor.
- Inspectors spoke with three groups of students in meetings and informally in lessons and around the academy. Inspectors observed students' behaviour in the lunch hall and around the school, in-between lessons and over break and lunch times.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of information, including the academy's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. A draft of the academy improvement plan was checked. In addition, inspectors scrutinised attendance and behaviour records, minutes from governing body meetings and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance. Safeguarding procedures and records were examined.
- Inspectors reviewed the 41 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire Parent View. They also considered the views expressed in 42 questionnaires returned by academy staff. The lead inspector also met with a small group of parents to hear their views about the academy.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the academy's views of the impact and effectiveness of the multi-academy trust's services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess how well the support provided by the multi-academy trust is helping to improve the academies for which it is responsible.

Inspection team

Philippa Darley, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Elizabeth MacFarlane	Additional Inspector
Alan Brewerton	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this academy

- Sherwood E-ACT Academy is a much smaller-than-average secondary school. It became an academy in September 2012 and is sponsored by E-ACT, which is a multi-academy trust.
- The academy is currently led by two interim Co-Principals who were appointed in November 2013. There is an acting Chair of the Governing Body.
- The proportion of students who are eligible for the pupil premium (additional school funding for particular groups, which in this academy applies to students who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after children) is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special education needs supported through school action is well above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is around half the national average and the vast majority of students speak English as their first language. The majority of students are White British.
- In 2013, the academy met the government's floor standard for achievement at the end of Key Stage 4.
- The academy does not currently make use of any alternative provision.

What does the academy need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, and so that all students, including those who are most able, make the progress they are capable of particularly in English and mathematics by:
 - eradicating inadequate teaching
 - ensuring that those teachers whose teaching is not consistently good, have individual programmes of support and are closely monitored, so that students make better progress in these classes
 - ensuring teachers use assessment information to plan lessons that make it clear to all students exactly what it is they want them to learn
 - challenging students to think more deeply about what they are learning and, therefore, improve their understanding
 - using the best assessment practice that is in the academy as a model, so that all teachers give detailed guidance to students on how they can improve their work.
- Improve the quality of students' engagement in lessons by:
 - providing more inspiring teaching to motivate students and raise their expectations about how much they can achieve
 - improving students' understanding of the impact their own learning behaviour has on the progress they make.
- Strengthen leadership and management, including the governance of the academy by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders use the precise information on students' progress to drive rapid improvement, and that clear targets are shared effectively with teachers and monitored by the governing body

- ensuring leaders at all levels in the academy consistently apply the new performance management system so that rapid improvement is made to the quality of teaching across all subjects
 - ensuring that all students eligible for the pupil premium funding and those who start the academy below level 4 in English or mathematics are provided with the additional support to which they are entitled.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.
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Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students enter the academy with achievement that is just below the national average, although for students in Key Stage 3 it is much lower.
- In 2013, too few students left the academy with five good GCSEs including English and mathematics. Not enough students made the progress they should have in English and, whilst their progress in mathematics was better, less able students did not reach the standards they should have.
- The progress that current students are making in English and mathematics has improved since the academy opened in September 2012. Progress is now moving closer to national expectations. However, rates of progress are not yet consistent across the academy. Groups of students, for example the more able, are not on track to make expected or better progress in some year groups.
- The previous policy of entering students early for GCSE mathematics improved students' examination confidence. However, it prevented the more-able students in particular from reaching the standards they could in this subject. This policy has now changed. Expectations have shifted away from students achieving a grade C or above to ensuring that all students are given the opportunity to reach their potential in this subject. Early indications show that this new practice is starting to pay dividends.
- In 2013, students eligible for support through the pupil premium achieved about two-thirds of a grade less than their peers in English and about half a grade less on average in mathematics. These students also made less progress in these subjects than their peers in the school. However, the gap in achievement for these students was less than is found nationally. Current information shows that, despite the fact that not all eligible students are receiving the extra support they are entitled to, overall these students are making better progress than previously.
- The achievement of students who are disabled or have special educational needs compares favourably with other students. The provision for these students is a strength of the academy. Their needs are identified early and the impact of the support that is put in place is monitored closely using progress information. The progress these students make is continuing to improve, particularly in English.
- Year 7 catch-up funding has been used to provide additional academic support in literacy and mathematics. The deployment of this funding has not always been effective. Some students have not received the support to which they were entitled.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because not enough students make the progress they should over time, particularly in English and mathematics. Some teaching at the academy is inadequate. There is still not enough good teaching to ensure that students make rapid gains in their learning to make up for their previous underachievement.
- Teachers are now receiving the support they require to plan lessons that will better meet the needs of their students. They have a more accurate understanding of the progress their students make and the gaps they have in their learning. However, some teachers, are finding it difficult to

plan lessons that make it clear to students what it is they should be learning. The level of challenge in these lessons is often too hard or too easy.

- All the students spoken with during the inspection said they enjoy their lessons and that teachers work hard to support them with their learning. The majority of parents agree with this view. Many teachers go out of their way to provide additional support to students during lunchtimes and after school. However, some teachers do not enable students to apply the positive attitudes they have to learning in their lessons.
- Where expectations are high and students have opportunities to investigate problems, apply prior learning to new situations and to think about challenging questions, they are very motivated and make good progress in their learning. For example, in an English lesson, students analysed a series of extracts from 'The Tyger' by William Blake. They worked together to interpret the meaning of the poem and to analyse the language devices the poet had used. These students excelled in drawing out a variety of interpretations and in raising questions and discussing the possible answers with their teacher.
- The quality of making and assessment practice in the academy is too inconsistent. The academy has a clear marking policy, but there is little evidence of teachers following it, or of students responding to it. Some teachers do provide clear guidance to students on how they can improve both their writing skills and the development of their subject knowledge. However, this is not widespread enough and, as a result, is having little impact on the progress students make.
- The teaching of reading, writing and mathematical skills across subjects is still in its infancy. In some subjects such as in history and geography, teachers support the development of literacy skills effectively. For example, students were given opportunities to 'skim and scan' newspaper articles and work was regularly corrected for grammar and punctuation.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Despite students behaving well overall, their behaviour still requires improvement because the quality of teaching does not enable students to engage fully in learning. In these lessons, teachers will leave students to idly chatter or allow them to take too long to complete simple activities. Too often, students complete tasks without actively thinking about what it is they are learning. Because of this, their understanding is not as well developed as it could be.
- School records show that incidents of poor behaviour in lessons are rare and students confirm this. In addition, recent changes to the academy's behaviour policy have created a greater consistency in how teachers, including those new to the academy, manage misbehaviour when it does happen.
- Teachers and parents rightly affirm that the way students conduct themselves and the quality of their relationships with each other is a key strength in this academy. Students are invariably punctual and prepared for lessons and are polite in conversation with adults. Their warmth in welcoming visitors to their school and classrooms is striking.
- At break and lunchtime, students need little adult supervision and students of all ages socialise well together.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students are aware of different types of bullying, including homophobic and racial bullying. They report that incidences of it are rare.

The academy trains older students to act as mediators and these 'Defence Against Bullying' (DABs) mentors support teachers in resolving incidents if they arise. Incidents of cyber-bullying are taken very seriously and students have received training from the police in keeping themselves safe online.

- Students' attendance is higher than the national average and continues to improve. Fixed-term exclusions are very low.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The recently appointed leaders and managers clearly demonstrate the skills and the drive to secure the essential improvements required at the academy.
- The appointment, last term, of the co-principals, and the subsequent restructuring of the senior leadership team has had a significant impact on the pace of improvement at the academy. One faculty leader stated; 'We have a clearer vision and focus on where we want to be and importantly, on how to get there'. They have created what is described as a 'zeal' for improvement. Both teachers and students report on the difference this has made to life and learning at the academy. As a result, standards are beginning to improve.
- Academy leaders provide an effective balance of challenge and support to teachers and support staff. Previous systems for performance management had little impact on improving the quality of teaching. These have now been overhauled. While there has not yet been enough time to implement them fully, leaders have quickly gained an accurate view of the quality of teaching in the academy. Individual programmes of professional development are now in place for all teaching staff.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses are largely accurate. The systems for capturing and analysing information on students' progress are effective in highlighting where improvements have happened, and where they are still needed. Leaders are still drafting the academy improvement plan.
- Subject leaders are now part of the wider academy leadership team. Senior leaders hold them to account for improvements in their subjects whilst providing them with structured leadership training. This is making them increasingly effective in their roles. They regularly analyse data on students' progress in their faculties and use this information with staff to evaluate the quality of their teaching and the effectiveness of the curriculum.
- Leaders have developed effective systems for tracking students' progress towards their targets in order to identify those who are in danger of underachieving. However, these are not informing whole-school improvement strategies precisely enough. Additionally, the impact of different strategies used to support those students for whom the academy receives the pupil premium are not yet being effectively monitored.
- Despite the size of the academy and the falling numbers on roll, leaders have been successful in maintaining a broad range of courses that offer academic and vocational options to students. There is enough flexibility within this to ensure that students of different ability levels can study appropriate qualifications whilst maintaining a breadth of subjects. The advice students are given on which courses to follow takes account of opportunities for progression into the local labour market as well as into further education.
- The academy sponsor has provided effective support and challenge to the academy, particularly over the last two academic terms. It has been instrumental in securing the leadership of the

academy, in supporting governors and in brokering consultancy support into a number of subject areas. Challenging targets have been set for the standards students should reach and academy leaders report bi-weekly to the sponsor on the progress being made towards these.

- Safeguarding arrangements meet all national requirements.

■ **The governance of the academy:**

- The governors of the academy now receive accurate information about the progress students are making and have a clear understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for improvement. Governance records show that they pose questions, and have questioned the information given to them in the past about the quality of teaching. However, they are aware that, until recently, they have not presented sufficient challenge to senior leaders. The academy sponsor has arranged for governors to be supported by a National Leader of Governance (NLG).
- Governors know that pupil premium funding has been spent broadly on additional support within English and mathematics to support those students at risk of underachieving. They have not been actively involved in determining how this money should be spent, nor in checking the impact it has had. Governors know that they need to ensure these funds reach all the students who are entitled to receive additional support, including the more able.

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	138365
Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	424946

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	390
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Acting Head of Governors	Nick Gostick
Interim Co-Principals	Peter Kingham & Kelly McKay
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0115 9521171
Fax number	0115 9403462
Email address	info@sherwoode-actacademy.org.uk

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