

Nechells Primary E-ACT Academy

Eliot Street, Nechells, Birmingham, B7 5LB

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Inadequate 4
Achievement of pupils	Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching	Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management	Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Achievement of pupils currently in school is inadequate because they do not make enough progress in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Standards in reading and mathematics at Key Stage 2 are well below the national average. They are below in writing.
- Teaching is inadequate in Key Stages 1 and 2. Teachers do not plan activities that build effectively on what pupils already know.
- The work for more-able pupils is often too easy and too difficult for those who are disabled or have special educational needs.
- Pupils do not know how to improve their work because teachers do not provide them with the precise guidance they need.
- Leaders and managers are not effective in helping pupils make good progress and to improve teaching.
- Checks on the quality of teaching are not rigorous. Senior leaders identify weaknesses in teaching, but do not make sure that these weaknesses are dealt with swiftly.
- Leadership does not have sufficient expertise to help teachers in the academy improve their teaching.
- The governing body does not have the skills or knowledge required to hold leaders and managers to account for the achievement of pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress.
- The newly appointed Executive Principal has an accurate understanding of what needs to be done to raise pupils' achievement.
- Most pupils behave well and are polite and kind to each other.
- Pupils state that the adults in the academy help them feel safe.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 13 lessons. Four of these were observed jointly with the Principal.
- In addition to lesson observations, inspectors reviewed pupils' work with the Principal. They also listened to pupils read and observed playtime and lunchtime activities.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, the Executive Principal, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and groups of pupils. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the multi-academy trust. Inspectors spoke informally with parents at the start of the academy day.
- Questionnaire responses from nine members of staff were reviewed.
- There were insufficient responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) for these to be made available to inspectors.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the academy's action plans, governing body minutes, information about pupils' achievement, and records relating to teaching, attendance and behaviour.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the academy's view 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

Usha Devi, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Timothy McGuire

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

- Nechells Primary E-ACT Academy is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The pupils come from a range of cultural heritages, the largest group being of Pakistani origin.
- An above average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below the national average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is above the national average.
- The academy has a breakfast club and an after-school club. Both are managed by the governing body.
- In December 2013, the Principal of the local secondary school, Heartlands E-ACT Academy was appointed as the Executive Principal. She oversees the work of Nechells Primary E-ACT Academy and another primary academy.
- The multi-academy trust has started consultations to merge the governing bodies from the three academies for which it is responsible.
- The 2013 end of Key Stage 2 provisional results show that the academy does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The academy has reviewed this provisional information. The academy's own calculations suggest that the final results will show that the academy meets the government's current floor standards.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by making sure that all teachers:
 - take account of what pupils already know, understand and can do when planning activities, especially for more-able pupils and those who are disabled and have special educational needs
 - have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and the quality of work that pupils produce
 - provide pupils with the precise guidance they need to improve their work.
- Raise pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by making sure that pupils:
 - spell correctly, use grammar and punctuation appropriately and write legibly
 - have the opportunity to solve more difficult mathematical problems
 - have regular chances to use and extend their reading, writing and mathematical skills and knowledge in different subjects.

- Ensure that all leaders and managers:
 - have the skills needed to check carefully the quality of teaching and pupils’ learning
 - have the expertise required to help teachers improve their teaching
 - use information about pupils’ achievement to check carefully how well different groups of pupils are learning
 - take prompt action once weaknesses are identified in teaching and pupils’ learning
 - make sure that pupil premium funding is helping pupils who are eligible for this additional support to make good progress and reach higher standards in all year groups.

- Make sure that governors develop their skills so that they can ensure that leaders and managers help pupils make good and better progress.

An external review of governance and the academy’s use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and governance may be improved.

Ofsted has made recommendations for action on governance to the multi-trust academy.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Pupils currently in Key Stages 1 and 2 make inadequate progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The rates of progress pupils make vary between lessons and classes because of weaknesses in teaching. Although pupils sometimes make expected and good progress, pupils' work confirms that they do not make enough progress over time. In some classes, individual pupils' work has deteriorated markedly since the start of the autumn term.
- In 2013, standards at the end of Year 6 were well below the national average in reading and mathematics. They were below average in writing. Most pupils in Year 6 made expected progress from the end of Key Stage 1. Some made good progress. Standards at the end of Year 2 were average. In both Years 2 and 6, boys attained lower standards than girls.
- Current standards are low and achievement for all groups is inadequate as reflected in the progress seen in pupils' books.
- Additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is used in a number of ways. For instance, some pupils receive extra help with their reading, writing and mathematics, while others attend after-school clubs. The impact of this funding on the achievement of pupils in all year groups has not been checked by senior leaders or governors. In 2013, the vast majority of pupils in Year 6 were eligible for additional support. There were too few pupils who were not eligible for this additional support, in order to make a reliable comparison between achievements of these two groups.
- Work set for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is often too difficult. Consequently, pupils struggle to complete their work without a lot of help from an adult. This slows down the progress they make.
- More-able pupils make inadequate progress because their work is often too easy. In one class, a few pupils had written comments such as 'I can already do this' and that 'this is easy' in their mathematics books. Despite this feedback, the teacher continued to plan activities that lacked sufficient challenge.
- Children start the Nursery with skills and understanding that are well below those expected for their age. Although children make good progress in Nursery and Reception they start Year 1 with below average levels of attainment. Staff place a strong emphasis on developing children's speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematical skills. Consequently, progress in these aspects is much stronger than in the recent past.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- The quality of teaching is inadequate in Key Stages 1 and 2. Teachers do not take enough account of what pupils already know, understand and can do. Planned activities do not help the more-able pupils and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to build on their previous learning. Despite this mismatch, most pupils remain attentive during lessons.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of producing are too low. They allow pupils to

produce very little work, or work that is poorly presented and is too untidy to be read easily.

- Pupils make mistakes with their spelling and use of grammar and punctuation because teachers do not teach these aspects well enough during lessons.
- Teachers do not provide opportunities during 'guided reading' sessions for pupils to adequately improve their reading skills. In one lesson, a group of more-able pupils were writing sentences that had to include specific words. This activity was too easy for them and did not help them improve their reading or writing.
- In mathematics, pupils are rarely given the opportunity to solve more difficult problems. The simple, basic questions the pupils are regularly given prevents them from extending their mathematical knowledge and limits their progress.
- Teaching assistants sometimes hinder the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They do not encourage pupils to think for themselves. In one instance observed by inspectors, a teaching assistant spelt out individual words for a group of pupils instead of giving them a chance to write the words on their own.
- Teachers' marking does not provide pupils with the guidance they need to improve their work. In one class, a pupil remarked, 'my work is not always marked so I don't know how I am doing'. In this class, there were a few books that had not been marked since September 2013.
- During this inspection, there were occasional examples of effective teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2. In Year 3 for instance, pupils had to find fractions of whole numbers. The teacher asked pupils probing questions and gave them precise guidance as they worked. This encouragement helped the pupils to think carefully about the strategies they were using to find their answers. Furthermore, it helped them to identify where they had made mistakes and what they needed to do to correct their work.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of children. They plan activities which capture the children's interests, help them to develop a range of skills and enable them to make good gains in their learning. In one example, the teacher successfully encouraged children in Reception to explain what happens to clay while making a dragon and to use interesting words to describe the dragon. One child confidently said, 'I need to put water on the hard clay... it dries as it gets harder', another added, 'My dragon is a bit like a triceratops.' Occasionally, opportunities are missed to extend the learning of more-able children.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In most lessons, pupils are keen to talk about their work with others and the adults they work with. They listen carefully and stay focused even when their activities lack challenge or are too difficult. However, there are a few occasions of low-level disruption, especially when activities are uninspiring.
- Pupils' behaviour around the academy is strongly influenced by teachers' and teaching assistants' inconsistent approach to behaviour management. The majority of adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and pupils are expected to walk calmly and quietly. However, this is not always the case and on occasions some teachers and teaching assistants permit pupils to walk around the academy and enter classrooms a little too noisily.

- Pupils told inspectors that while most pupils behave well and are thoughtful; a few occasionally use unkind names. They added that there have been a few incidents of bullying. Academy records show that incidents of name calling and bullying are small and have been handled appropriately.
- Pupils of different ages and backgrounds work and play together well. They are polite and considerate. This, alongside assemblies and opportunities to learn about other faiths, contributes well to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. Pupils' do not have a good enough understanding of how to keep safe when using computers for example. In contrast, they talk confidently about the importance of crossing the road carefully and not talking to strangers when playing outside.
- Pupils say they feel safe in the academy because adults listen carefully to any concerns they may have.
- Attendance has improved and is just below the national average for primary schools. The parent support worker keeps a watchful eye on the attendance of individual pupils and the academy uses a range of rewards to encourage pupils to attend regularly.
- Pupils who attend the breakfast club and after-school club are well looked after. The pupils that attend these clubs enjoy taking part in a wide range of artistic and sporting activities.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- The Principal and other leaders have not responded quickly enough to the weaknesses in pupils' achievement and the poor quality of teaching. They are not making sure that pupils in all year groups have the chance to achieve as well as they could. Ineffective leadership has resulted in significant differences between the good achievement of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and inadequate achievement of other pupils in the academy.
- The Principal has linked teachers' pay to pupils' achievement and made clear to staff that pupils are expected to make good progress. The Principal recognises that despite this expectation, achievement in Key Stages 1 and 2 is inadequate. There are a number of reasons for this. The systems for checking the quality of teaching and pupils' learning lack rigour. Leaders and managers do not act swiftly to address weaknesses they identify in teaching and pupils' achievement. In addition, not all senior leaders and teachers with responsibilities have the skills needed to make it clear to staff in the academy what makes teaching good and outstanding.
- Senior leaders collect a range of information about pupils' achievement. They meet regularly with staff to discuss the actions that need to be taken to help individual pupils make faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, once these actions are agreed, senior leaders do not make sure that the agreed actions are implemented and make enough of a difference to pupils' achievement.
- The Principal, Vice-Principal and other leaders check regularly the quality of the teaching. However, when observing lessons, they do not focus enough on how well pupils are learning. Consequently their advice to teachers does not identify precisely what teachers need to do to help all pupils make better progress.
- The teachers with responsibility for mathematics and pupils who are disabled and have special

educational needs are new to their roles and are keen to help pupils achieve well. However, they do not have the skills required to lead on improvement in their areas of responsibility without extensive support.

- The academy's plans for improvement do not identify the exact actions that will be taken to raise pupils' achievement, improve the quality of teaching and strengthen leadership and management. The plans do not make clear how governors will be able to check that the planned actions are making enough of a difference to pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.
- The academy's current system for recording information about pupils' progress and attainment is cumbersome. It does not provide a clear view of the achievement of different groups of pupils. The Executive Principal has recently introduced a new system that will enable leaders and staff to check how well different pupils in all year groups are learning. Academy leaders are in the process of analysing and re-checking the information on how well pupils are doing because it does not match sufficiently the work in pupils' books.
- The topics and lesson activities selected by some teachers do not always inspire pupils. In a few lessons observed, some pupils showed little interest in their work and this hampered their progress. Opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their reading, writing and mathematical skills in other subjects are limited.
- The academy is using its additional sports funding to help teachers improve their teaching of physical education by working with specialist sport coaches. The range of sporting activities that pupils can participate in has also increased. The academy has not checked the impact of this funding on pupils or teachers.
- Parents and carers who spoke to inspectors have a mixed view of the academy. Many spoke positively about pupils' behaviour and confirmed that their children were safe in the academy. Some raised concerns about communications with staff and said they would like staff to be available at the start of the day so that they can pass on relevant information. In response to this, the Principal is going to review the morning time arrangements.
- The impact of the multi-academy trust has been limited. The trust has not responded quickly enough to the academy's significant weaknesses. Thirteen months after the opening of the academy, the trust arranged for a detailed review of all aspects of the academy's work. This review took place in October 2013 and accurately identified a large number of weaknesses in pupils' achievement, teaching and leadership. Many of these weaknesses were still evident at the time of this inspection.
- The Assistant Vice-Principal with effective support from the Executive Principal is positively affecting the work of staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage. She has a good understanding of children's achievement and is able to give teachers and teaching assistant useful advice.
- The recently appointed Executive Principal has very quickly gained a crystal clear understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. She has organised for the newly qualified teachers in the academy to receive support with their teaching from staff at another local school. The Executive Principal has rightly identified the need to review the roles and responsibilities of all staff and check the impact of the additional support that pupils receive from teachers and teaching assistants.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance is inadequate. The governing body has failed to hold senior leaders to account for the achievement of pupils and the quality of teaching. Not all members of the governing body have enough understanding of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. This is because some do not attend meetings or planned training events. Governors know how pupil premium funding is spent but have not challenged leaders about why eligible pupils for this funding do not make enough progress in all year groups. They know that teachers' pay is linked to the achievement of pupils and only agree an increase in pay if pupils' make good progress. Nevertheless, they have not questioned why the quality of teaching in the academy is not improving quickly. Some governors, such as the Chair of the Governing Body visit the academy regularly and ensure that the academy meets the requirements for safeguarding pupils.

- Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

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	138396
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	426885

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Noran Flynn
Principal	Mrs Debra Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	27 April 2010
Telephone number	0121 464 2102
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