

# Heartlands Academy

Gt Francis Street, Nechells, Birmingham, B7 4QR

## Inspection dates

5–6 February 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Students receive an outstanding education at Heartlands Academy. This includes their personal and social development as well as their academic achievement.
- The Principal, leadership team and governors have ensured that the academy serves its community, provides the highest quality education and opportunities for all its students. They have secured a harmonious environment in which students learn and thrive.
- All groups of students, regardless of their background or culture, make outstanding progress. The progress students make in English and mathematics is much better than the progress of students in most schools.
- The academy's provision for the teaching of literacy is outstanding and students, from low starting points, make rapid improvements in their reading and writing, so that their literacy skills do not hold back their learning in other subjects.
- Teaching is consistently good and very frequently outstanding. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and plan dynamic lessons which motivate students to learn. However, there are occasions when the most able students do not have opportunities to make rapid progress.
- Equality of opportunity has a high priority at the academy. Real efforts are made to ensure that no student experiences any barrier to their learning. The progress of each student towards their target is monitored regularly, and action is quickly taken if anyone falls behind.
- There is an exceptionally positive learning atmosphere throughout the academy. Students display excellent attitudes to learning. They behave impeccably, show high levels of respect and courtesy towards each other and to their teachers and other staff.
- Students feel safe at the academy. They know all staff will do their best for them and ensure that they are safe at all times. Parents are wholeheartedly positive about the academy. This is endorsed by staff who feel that academy leaders hold their interests uppermost.
- The sixth form is good and improving. Last year 85% of students went on to study at university with the remaining students finding employment or apprenticeships. It is not yet outstanding because the achievement of some students is less than expected.
- Leaders have a relentless focus on maintaining and building on established high standards. The impact of governance is outstanding.

## Information about this inspection

- 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.
- Inspectors observed parts of 41 lessons across all year groups, including 20 jointly observed with senior leaders. The work in students' books was evaluated. Shorter visits were made to other lessons and to activities including registration time and assemblies.
- The inspection team observed the behaviour of students as they arrived at the academy, during lesson changeovers, at break and lunchtimes, as they left the academy premises at the end of the day as well as in lessons.
- Account was taken of the results of the academy's own questionnaire given to parents as there were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, for these to be taken into account by inspectors. The replies to the academy's staff questionnaire were considered.
- Inspectors looked at important documents including the examination results and records of students' assessments. They scrutinised the academy's policies and procedures for safeguarding and child protection. They examined records relating to behaviour and attendance and looked at documents used by leaders and governors to check the work of staff at the academy.
- Inspectors met with groups of students of different ages, abilities and backgrounds. They discussed achievement, teaching, behaviour and safety.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, academy leaders, including heads of subjects, governors including the Chair of the Governing body and representatives of the academy sponsor, E-ACT.

## Inspection team

Peter Humphries, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Raye Allison-Smith

Additional Inspector

Frances Le Pla

Additional Inspector

Glen Goddard

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Heartlands Academy opened in September 2009 and is sponsored by E-ACT.
- Most students come from the immediate locality.
- The academy is smaller than the average secondary school.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is below that in other schools. The proportion of students supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A higher proportion of pupils than average come from minority ethnic groups. The majority of students are of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black African and White British heritages.
- The number of students who speak English as an additional language is considerably higher than the national average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is much higher than average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The academy currently does not make use of alternative provision to deliver other academic or vocational courses. The academy uses St George's Academy, Birmingham to provide alternative provision for students who have behaviour, emotional or social difficulties.
- The academy has a sixth form and does not collaborate with other education providers.
- Academy leaders and teachers provide support to colleagues in local primary and secondary schools. This work involves, for example, helping teachers to develop strategies to improve the quality of teaching and assisting leaders in accurately evaluating their schools and planning and implementing specific and appropriate improvement plans.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which sets the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Ensure more students in the sixth form make good progress across all AS and A2 courses.
- Ensure an even higher proportion of students, including the most able, make outstanding progress across all subjects, especially in science, and year groups, by ensuring that:
  - they have work that challenges them adequately and ensures that they have to regularly use and apply their thinking skills
  - teachers develop students' ability to think, reflect and communicate clearly.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students at Heartlands Academy make outstanding progress in the majority of subjects. Results at GCSE have been improving in the last two years and are above the national average in mathematics and significantly above at grades A\* to C in English.
- Most students start the academy with attainment that is well below average. However, in 2013 the proportion of students making and exceeding expected levels of progress in English and mathematics was significantly above the national averages.
- Academy leaders have tackled the fall in students' attainment and progress in science in 2013. Current information about students' progress shows that students now make progress that is in line with national figures. A scrutiny of students' books by inspectors in science confirmed that students are producing work that is in line with expectations for their age, and often beyond.
- Students of Pakistani and Black African heritages make above average progress, particularly in English. Students of Bangladeshi and White British heritages make progress that is above national figures in the majority of subjects.
- Students who speak English as an additional language make substantial progress in English and progress that is in line with national figures in most other subjects. The academy's policy that students who speak English as an additional language are placed in teaching groups that suit their academic ability is ensuring that their academic progress is not hindered by their initial inability to speak English fluently.
- The progress of the most able students in English is significantly better than that in other schools nationally, and above national figures in mathematics. However, the progress of this group is less secure in science and humanities.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make significant progress from their starting points in English and mathematics and in line with national figures in other subjects.
- The small number of students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties who attend the St George's Academy have good attendance and make good progress in a range of subjects including in English and mathematics.
- There is an outstanding commitment to equality of opportunity. The large numbers of students who are eligible for the pupil premium funding make progress that is considerably above national figures especially in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and humanities. As a result, GCSE results for this group of students are also above national figures. On average, students known to be eligible for free school meals gained approximately a third of grade lower than other students in both English and mathematics at GCSE. This gap increased slightly in 2013. However, information provided by the academy shows that the gap has closed in 2014 in Years 10 and 11.
- Year 7 'catch-up' money is being used effectively to ensure students acquire the literacy and numeracy skills they need to be successful. Students benefit from one-to-one support, small group teaching, including excellent intervention to improve reading and comprehension skills. This programme has proven extremely successful in its support of literacy in all subjects. Since joining the academy, the reading ages of Year 7 students have, on average, increased by two

years.

- The support provided for reading and literacy across the academy, including in the sixth form, is excellent. Students frequently read a wide range of material. Opportunities to read are given to students in all subjects. The vast majority of students said that they enjoy reading. Students are given many opportunities to write for extended periods of time and as a consequence the standard of students' writing is high. In 2013, 20% of Year 11 made five levels of progress in English.
- Students' numeracy skills are well developed and they are able to use and apply these skills in a range of situations and subjects such as science, geography, physical education and design technology. Students show resilience when they encounter mathematical problems and can use a range of strategies and approaches to solving problems. Students' progress in mathematics has been significantly above national figures for the last three years. In 2013, attainment at GCSE level was above national figures at grades A\* to A and broadly in line at grades A\* to C.
- The academy does not enter students early for their GCSE examinations.
- The academy prepares its students extremely well for their future education and careers. The majority of students have well developed literacy, communication and numeracy skills. In 2013, all Year 11 students carried on into further education, employment or training. All sixth form students leaving the academy went to university, found employment or entered an apprenticeship.
- A wide range of evidence, such as data on progress, work scrutiny and observation of learning in lessons, shows that the achievement in the sixth form is good. A small number of students do not make the progress expected of them in a range of subjects.
- The academy keeps accurate records of how students are progressing. These data clearly indicate that progress in all subjects is set to continue to rise even further.

### **The quality of teaching**

**is outstanding**

- The teaching at Heartlands Academy ensures that the vast majority of students make excellent progress, especially in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use this to plan lessons that stimulate the students' interest, imagination and desire to do well. As a result, students make rapid progress across the majority of subjects. The Advanced Skills Teachers and Lead Practitioners on the teaching staff contribute to a training programme that ensures high standards of learning and teaching are maintained.
- High quality teaching is underpinned by teachers' excellent use of assessment. Teachers have a very strong understanding of how well each student is doing and what students need to do to strengthen their subject-specific knowledge and understanding. The information is shared very effectively with students through high quality oral feedback. However, very occasionally, students have to repeat work that they can already do and understand, rather than moving on to more challenging tasks.
- Teachers use questioning effectively to check students' understanding. However, not all questioning required students to think deeply or to reflect on their answers to ensure their responses were in greater detail. This restricted the learning for a minority of the most-able

students.

- The marking of students' work is of a high quality. It is helpful to students and provides advice on what they can do to improve. Students have opportunities to act upon this advice and there is clear evidence their work improves as a result.
- The teaching of literacy is outstanding. The academy literacy policy requires and ensures all teachers develop students' levels of literacy. Students have many opportunities to read for pleasure and for gathering information needed for lessons. Students across all year groups, including in the sixth form, who have difficulty reading, have access to a range of interventions including phonics (sounds that letters make) based programmes. In all subjects, students have opportunities to write for extended periods of time. All students have dictionaries and 'spelling, punctuation and grammar' books which they regularly use to improve their vocabulary and spelling.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together to ensure teaching meets the needs of the whole group, including disabled students and those with special educational needs. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed and have a clear impact on raising the achievement of the students with whom they work. Teachers use the feedback from teaching assistants on students' progress to plan appropriate learning activities for individual students. The Principal and governors have increased the number of qualified teachers so that in some groups students have access to two teachers with specialist subject knowledge. This was shown to be particularly effective in mathematics lessons where misconceptions were quickly identified and corrected.
- Students who spoke to, and met with, inspectors spoke glowingly about the quality of teaching across the academy; they value the excellent working relationships they have with their teachers and particularly appreciate teachers' willingness to provide additional support and guidance when they fall behind or need extra help. This included working on Saturdays and during school holidays.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- The academy is an exceptionally calm and purposeful environment in which to learn and flourish socially, personally and academically. Students from a diversity of cultures work together harmoniously to ensure the academy's aim of 'High Aspirations and High Expectations for All' can be achieved. Students' extraordinary social, moral, cultural and spiritual development permeates all aspects of academy life. As a result, students from all backgrounds get along very well together and are extremely tolerant of others' differences.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Parents and students agree that students are safe in the academy. Students have an excellent and keen understanding of the dangers of bullying in all its forms, including that based on racism and homophobia. In discussion, students say that instances of bullying are rare and any cases are quickly and effectively dealt with.
- The development of students' e-safety ensures they are fully aware of the dangers of cyber bullying and the misuse of mobile phones including 'sexting'.
- Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable, including those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, told inspectors that they are well cared for by staff and students.

- Students who attend the St George's Academy say that they feel safe and are aware of what to do if there are any concerns.
- Students' attendance, including that for minority groups and those who are supported by the pupil premium grant, is above the national average for secondary schools.
- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students take their learning very seriously. They believe everybody has the right to learn, and they manage their own behaviour, and that of others. Students recognise the positive contribution learning and good behaviour has to their school and adult life and work.
- Students' exemplary behaviour makes a strong contribution to their learning and achievement over time. Students say they love coming to the academy. One student spoke for many when he said, 'I'm lucky to be at this school'. At the start of the day, teachers check to ensure students have all the correct equipment. As a result, students are always ready to learn and rarely interrupt learning to ask for equipment. Students have good learning habits and regularly use their dictionaries and 'spelling, punctuation and grammar' books to improve their work without prompting.
- Students are very proud of their academy and they demonstrate this by wearing their uniform with pride. The academy buildings and facilities are treated with respect by all students. After busy break and lunchtimes, there is little litter as students use the bins provided. The students' toilets are clean, hygienic and free from graffiti.
- Students arrive punctually at the academy. Students' movement about the buildings is safe and well-organised and they arrive at lessons on time. The behaviour in the dining room, library and other social areas is excellent. The high quality food provided in the dining room is enjoyed by a large number of students in a pleasant, welcoming and communal environment
- The Year 11 prefects make a positive contribution to the academy community and are treated with respect by students from all year groups.
- Students demonstrate a mature appreciation of their place in society. For example, a number of students have been working with the 'Friends in Nechells', a group of senior citizens who live in the academy catchment area. This project has been successful in forging strong relationships with members of the community who previously felt vulnerable and has helped to break down barriers based on age, race and culture.
- As a result of the proactive approach to behaviour management, the academy has not permanently excluded any students for two years. The numbers of fixed term exclusions are decreasing rapidly.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The Principal sets the tone for all members of the academy community through her clear expectations and unrelenting focus on improving achievement and the life chances for students. This community emphasis makes a strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The impact of the academy's actions to improve the achievement of students whose



circumstances make them vulnerable is enabling those students to make progress well above similar students nationally.

- Teachers are set ambitious targets to improve their teaching and nothing less than good performance, judged by outstanding student progress and attainment, is accepted or rewarded financially. Leaders undertake regular and rigorous monitoring of teachers across the academy, by dropping into lessons, checking students' books, and using information about students' progress to assess the quality of their teaching. All members of staff have embraced the leadership mantra that learning can be watched by 'Any one in Any Lesson at Any Time'. Teachers engage in a regular dialogue about learning and excellent practice is routinely shared.
- Very effective strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning have had a clear impact in raising achievement by ensuring students receive a consistently high quality of education. Comprehensive and personalised training for teachers has led to a significant increase in the proportion of outstanding teaching; no teaching is inadequate.
- Subject leadership is very strong in the vast majority of subjects. Excellent appointments to subject leadership roles and good quality training for middle leaders is ensuring that high levels of progress and attainment are sustained.
- The school provides a broad and balanced range of subjects through all of the key stages including an appropriate balance between academic and vocational courses in Year 10 and 11. Provision is made for the most able students to study single science. Students' literacy skills are highly developed across all subjects so that they are better able to access learning.
- A wealth of activities that take place before, during and after school and at weekends and in the school holidays. These activities include sport, drama, debating, revision sessions, and residential visits. The academy library is open until 7pm every evening enabling students to study and complete homework in a safe and secure environment. The academy's extensive range of visits enables students to both participate in and observe a wide range of cultural activities. Students from the academy achieve success in a wide range of sports and have appeared on local television as a result of their success.
- Students receive excellent information, advice and guidance, including careers advice, throughout their time at the academy. All students leaving the academy go on to further or higher education, employment or training.
- The academy's success in engaging with parents of all backgrounds and cultures is shown by high rates of attendance at consultation evenings and other academy events.
- The academy sponsor, E-ACT, provides appropriate support for this outstanding school. It rightly believes academy leaders have the capacity to manage its own improvement. Help and guidance is provided through, for example, external reviews, analysis of school data and advice about access to human resources. The sponsor provided funding to the academy so that they could appoint Lead Practitioners in a range of subjects.
- Safeguarding meets all statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors know their academy extremely well. They have a very good understanding of the quality of teaching in the academy and through setting targets for teachers to improve their work, they ensure there is a strong link between the quality of teaching, the achievement of



students and teachers' progression through the pay scales. Governors regularly visit the school to monitor the quality of learning first hand but also seek external validation of the academy's judgements about teaching. Members of the achievement committee have a very secure understanding of school performance data and use this to provide rigorous challenge to school leaders. Governors are well aware, for example, that achievement in science has been below that of other subjects, and are monitoring very carefully the impact of initiatives to address this. Governors carefully monitor that resources are used for the benefit of students, including those eligible for the pupil premium. They regularly review statutory policies and ensure that all requirements are met, including those relating to students' safety.

## 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>	135907
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	440655

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<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>	842
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	92
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Fair
<b>Principal</b>	Glynis Jones
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 January 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 4643931
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