

# The Winsford E-ACT Academy

Grange Lane, Winsford, Cheshire, CW7 2BT

## Inspection dates

28–29 January 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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

- Too many students do not make sufficient progress.
- The gap in achievement between students supported by the pupil premium and their peers has not reduced consistently.
- Leaders and governors have not secured consistently good teaching across the academy.
- While coaching and training are used effectively to improve teaching, some weaker practice remains.
- Teachers do not take all opportunities to develop students' literacy skills.
- Some lessons do not engage or interest students. This leads to low-level disruption by some students.
- The academy does not take sufficient account of students' views on bullying.
- The academy does not prevent discriminatory language.
- The sixth form requires improvement because achievement has not been consistently high. Over time, too many students have not completed sixth-form courses.

### The school has the following strengths

- The progress made by students is improving over time.
- Leaders at all levels are fully committed to improvement.
- Arrangements for the performance management of teachers are robust and provide for effective development.
- Attendance has improved and matches the national average.
- Strong leadership of the sixth form is leading to better teaching and higher achievement.
- Leaders have managed the move to the academy's new building well.
- The curriculum is structured well to meet students' needs.
- Support and challenge for the academy from its sponsor are effective.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 39 part-lessons taught by 37 teachers including three joint observations with senior staff. They sampled students' work in all year groups. Tutor groups were visited and other activities observed during morning coaching time.
- A visit was made to the Internal Support Centre which provides support for students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, subject leaders, the head of sixth form and the special educational needs co-ordinator.
- Inspectors met with groups of students and talked with others in lessons and around the academy.
- Documents were examined including the academy's self-evaluation document, improvement plan, performance management summary, safeguarding records, governing body minutes and samples of records of review by middle leaders.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of governors and a representative of E-ACT.
- Inspectors reviewed 24 responses to Parent View, which is the Ofsted on-line questionnaire and the academy's own parental surveys. They considered information from contacts with individual parents.
- The views of staff were received and analysed through 21 staff questionnaires returned.

## Inspection team

David Selby, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Janet Palmer

Her Majesty's Inspector

Christina McIntosh

Her Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Williams

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The academy moved into its new purpose-built premises in September 2013.
- The academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The academy has an internal resource base called the Internal Support Centre which provides support for potentially vulnerable students, particularly in relation to their behaviour. This is housed in an older building adjacent to the new building.
- Eight students attend part-time off-site provision at Reaseheath College. Six students attend part-time off-site work placements.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium<sup>1</sup> is well above the national average.
- The proportion of students that the academy has identified as disabled or having special educational needs and requiring support through school action is above average and is increasing. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of educational needs is broadly average.
- The very large majority of students are of White British heritage. Almost all students speak English as their first language.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy is sponsored as part of E-ACT's multi-academy trust.
- 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.

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

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
  - ensuring that teachers have high expectations in all lessons and plan activities which interest and challenge all students
  - creating and taking frequent opportunities to develop students' literacy skills
  - ensuring that the learning needs of younger students are met fully
  - building further on the strong teaching practice which already exists in the academy and enhancing this by broadening the impact of the training teachers receive.
- Improve leaders' and teachers' use of data on students' achievement to ensure that increases in the rates of progress of students in English and mathematics are secure and sustained and lead to:
  - all groups of students making progress which reaches at least national expectations
  - the gaps between groups of students, including those supported by the pupil premium, rapidly closing.

The pupil premium is specific, additional funding provided to support the education of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, pupils who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years, children who have been looked after continuously for a period of 6 months and children whose parents are currently serving in the armed forces.

- Ensure that leaders take the views of students fully into account when checking the effectiveness of policies and actions.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Most students enter the academy with attainment that is at or below the expected level in English and mathematics.
- Over the last three years, students have made less progress than students nationally. Despite increases, students do not reach or exceed the nationally expected levels. This has contributed to the proportion of students gaining five GCSEs at grade C including English and mathematics failing to increase year on year. Few students gain the highest GCSE grades.
- In 2013, when compared to similar students nationally, more-able students made less progress than less-able students in English. In mathematics, where progress is less than in English, students of all abilities made similar progress.
- The achievement of students in their eight best results at GCSE is improving and now matches the national average for students of White British heritage. However, the progress made by these students in English and mathematics remains a concern.
- The academy's own tracking indicates that students are making faster progress. Inspectors observed good or better progress in lessons in Key Stages 3 and 4. However, the significant minority of lessons where this is not the case limits learning overall.
- Progress in reading, writing and mathematics shows considerable variation. Resources are targeted to boost the achievement of students in Year 11. Less support is available to younger students.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs have similar achievement to that of their peers. The close monitoring and effective support of students in classes planned to meet their needs speeds up their learning.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium make less progress than others do and are consequently behind their peers by approximately one GCSE grade in English and mathematics. These gaps reduced from 2012 to 2013, although narrowing of the gaps in progress has not been consistent over time. More-able students in this group make relatively less progress.
- The progress of sixth-form students at GCE A-level in 2013 was below the national average, although it was broadly average in other qualifications. All sixth-form teaching seen by inspectors was good. Stronger teaching is supporting faster progress. The proportion of sixth-form students who complete their courses has been lower than national figures. Significant investment has been made in teaching to allow students who failed to get a good GCSE grade in English and mathematics to do so. Early results show that few of the students included have done this.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching has not led to securely good progress in English, mathematics and other subjects over the last three years.
- Lessons observed and students' written work suggest that teaching is improving and leading to faster progress, particularly for students in the sixth form. No inadequate teaching was seen during the inspection.
- Teachers have access to high quality training programmes to help them improve their teaching. These are matched to teachers' needs. While improvement for individuals is clear, the quality of teaching is inconsistent. The examples of good and better practice seen in some classrooms are not evident in others.
- Where teaching is most effective, expectations of students are high and teachers plan activities that are challenging and interesting. Students are fully involved and learn rapidly, as in a highly effective Year 7 drama lesson on developing expression in mime. In this lesson students were active from the start. The enthusiastic work of students was used by the teacher to illustrate and

extend what was expected. In contrast, instances of low-level disruption occur in some classes when teaching does not engage the students.

- Good use of constructive marking makes a strong contribution to learning in some subjects, including mathematics. Many teachers encourage students to assess their own and each other's work. This is often done diligently and accurately. However, the low levels of literacy of some students sometimes make this approach ineffective.
- Leaders recognise that improvement of many students' basic skills is necessary to allow for faster progress. However, the good approaches to developing writing in some lessons are not used by all teachers. The library is used to provide additional support for Key Stage 3 students with their reading, although students spoken to say that they rarely read for pleasure.
- Accurate writing is encouraged through, for example, the use of lists of key words. However opportunities for display of written materials in classrooms and around the academy are not used well to help students with their literacy.
- Subject leaders now have more responsibility for the quality of teaching in their subjects. They regularly observe lessons, examine students' work and review the marking in their books. Findings from these checks identify where improvement is needed. They also confirm the inconsistency seen by inspectors.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils

### requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. There is low-level disruption in some lessons. While the number of students being excluded from classes for poor attitudes has fallen, too many students still require this sanction.
- Attendance is increasing and has risen to the national average. Persistent absence has reduced significantly over the last three years.
- While all exclusion from school is reducing and is in line with national averages, exclusion of students known to be entitled to free school meals and with disabilities or special educational needs is disproportionately high compared to others in the academy.
- Students are generally respectful to adults and welcoming to visitors.
- Students usually behave well around the academy although the academy's bullying logs indicate instances of poor behaviour between students, particularly off the premises. The academy's comprehensive records analyse the groups of students affected by bullying, but do not always record the type of bullying appropriately. Higher rates of bullying affect groups of students known to be entitled to free school meals and with disabilities or special educational needs.
- The academy does not effectively prevent discriminatory and derogatory language. Students spoken to on the inspection said that homophobic language is 'heard every day', although not in front of teachers.
- Students say that they are aware of the risks around cyber-bullying and that any is dealt with effectively.
- A small number of responses to Ofsted's on-line (Parent View) survey were received. A small minority of the parents responding disagreed that students are well-behaved or felt that bullying is dealt with effectively. Responses to the academy's own surveys are more positive in these respects.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement. While no incidents that indicate that students are unsafe were seen in lessons or around the academy, the academy's programme for personal, social and health education does not ensure that students are aware of important matters in keeping themselves safe. The academy's approach to personal, social and health education is to be changed later this year.
- The students who spoke to inspectors said they felt safe in the academy.
- Systems and procedures for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.

**The leadership and management requires improvement**

- The principal and senior leaders are committed to the academy's improvement and they are taking robust action to ensure that this happens. They have secured rapid improvement in, for example, middle leadership and planning for the use of the pupil premium. However, many changes are relatively new and have not had their full impact, particularly in improving the quality of teaching consistently and consequently rapidly increasing students' achievement.
- The academy's move to its new building has been managed well. The facilities and layout make a good contribution to improved learning. The facilities are being used to improve the transition of students into the academy.
- Leaders' monitoring of the work of the academy leads to large amounts of data. These are being used increasingly to plan for improvement. For example, the recently introduced system to track the impact of the pupil premium funding is already leading to changed teaching strategies for the students included. However, data on bullying is not used effectively because it is not linked to students' opinions and data on achievement is not used well enough to ensure that all students make sufficient progress.
- Effective systems to manage and reward teachers' performance are in place. Where performance is not good enough, further challenge and support is used to ensure improvement. There are a number of teachers whose teaching has improved as a result.
- The curriculum is structured and timetabled well and is relevant to students' needs. Option choices are broad for students in Key Stage 4. Support for students with lower basic skills is planned well.
- Students have opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through a range of extra-curricular activities. However, these areas are not given sufficient emphasis in lessons in all subjects. Leaders plan to increase the amount of religious education taught to students in Key Stage 4 later this year.
- The sixth form is led well. The new head of sixth form has raised expectations of all aspects of sixth-form life and this has led to improved teaching, learning and attendance. There is good advice and information for students, whatever route they intend to follow after the sixth form. Students who met inspectors were very positive about their sixth-form experience and the support they receive.
- E-ACT provides effective support and robust challenge to the academy. Regular visits from an education adviser involve reviewing data on academy performance and observation of practice in classrooms. The multi-academy trust has facilitated good opportunities for the training of teachers, including links with an effective academy elsewhere in the chain.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have clear aspirations for the academy and provide support and challenge. In the past, this has not led to rapid increases in achievement or the quality of teaching. They take a robust approach to teachers' pay and progression.
  - Governors are involved in monitoring the work of the academy, although their role in evaluation and planning for improvement is less developed.
  - The information available to governors on the use of the pupil premium helps them to understand its impact.
  - Governors have worked closely with leaders over a time of significant change for the academy. They have managed a difficult financial situation in a way that has minimised the effect on students.

## 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>	136184
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	434137

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<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>	1,034
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	110
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tom Peryer
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew Taylor-Edwards
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 February 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01606 592300
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