

West Walsall E-ACT Academy

Primley Avenue, Walsall, WS2 9UA

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| Inspection dates | 28–29 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 in English and mathematics is inadequate. Too few students make the progress they should and therefore fail to reach the standards they are capable of by the end of Key Stage 4.
- Teaching is inadequate. There is not enough good or outstanding teaching, particularly in English and in mathematics.
- Teachers do not always plan work which is challenging enough for all students. When work is too easy, students lose interest and start to disturb others who want to work.
- Academy leaders are taking action to improve the quality of teaching and the progress students make, but these actions have been too slow and, as a result, are not improving teaching quickly enough.
- Students' attitudes to learning are not always good enough. Some students do not arrive on time for their lessons and this means lessons are slow to start and time is wasted.
- Academy leaders, including governors, have not challenged teachers and subject leaders over inaccuracies in their assessments of students' progress. As a consequence, improvement plans have been based on inaccurate information.
- The academy does not have the capacity to improve quickly enough to stop more students underachieving. A number of key posts are vacant. As a result, good leaders are having to take on additional responsibilities.
- The sixth form requires improvement as too many students are not making good progress in their subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Attendance has improved since the academy opened and is now above average. There has been a reduction in the numbers of students who are frequently absent.
- The number of temporary exclusions has reduced.
- Academy leaders have changed the range of courses available for students, so that they are more suitable for their abilities.
- A new approach to teaching reading has been introduced and is starting to improve the reading skills of the weakest readers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons, including five that were observed jointly with senior leaders. They also observed an assembly, form times, breaks and lunchtimes and visited breakfast club.
- An inspector was shown around the academy by two students from Year 8 and the principal joined another inspector on a tour looking at how students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted around the academy.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, vice principal, other senior and subject leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and the academy sponsor’s educational advisor.
- Inspectors spoke with four groups of students in meetings, as well as at other times in lessons and around the academy at breaks and lunchtimes.
- The inspection team was unable to consider the views of parents and carers who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire, as only six replies were received. The views gathered from parents and carers following a recent Year 11 parental engagement evening were considered. Inspectors also analysed the 33 responses to Ofsted’s staff questionnaire.
- A variety of information was analysed about examination results, students’ progress, their attendance and behaviour and other aspects of students’ personal development and achievement. The inspection team also viewed a range of documents, including the academy’s self-evaluation and its records relating to safeguarding of students.
- 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

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Denah Jones, Lead Inspector | Her Majesty’s Inspector |
| Jackie Jones | Additional Inspector |
| David King | Additional Inspector |
| Glenn Mayoh | 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

- West Walsall E-ACT Academy opened in September 2012 and is sponsored by E-ACT. The academy is average sized and has a sixth form.
- Almost three quarters of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, of which there is a large proportion from Pakistani backgrounds. About two thirds of students in the academy speak English as an additional language.
- Just over 60% of students in the academy are supported by pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The number of disabled students and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action plus or with a statement is very small; the proportion supported at school action is well above average.
- There are currently 11 students who attend alternative or off-site provision, all on a full-time basis. Students attend either Impact Education and Training, Vine Education Trust or Walsall College.
- The academy operates a breakfast club on site in addition to other centres where students can access a range of additional support they need such as The ARC (Academic Recovery Centre).
- In 2013, the academy failed to meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4.
- The academy has a number of vacancies for key posts, namely: vice principal with responsibility for curriculum and standards; assistant principal with responsibility for teaching and learning; subject leaders for English and languages; and three vacancies for governors.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that all is good or better, particularly in English and in mathematics, by:
 - insisting that teachers set high standards for behaviour in lessons so that all students know what is expected of them and no lessons are disturbed through chatter
 - making sure that teachers make accurate assessments of the levels students are working at
 - making sure that all teachers use the information they have on students to identify gaps in their learning and tailor their teaching to effectively fill these gaps
 - making sure that teachers' marking of students' work states clearly what students need to do to improve their work and that teachers check that this has been done.
- Give students a better chance of succeeding in the next stage of their education or training by making sure they leave the academy able to read well and to use their skills in mathematics by
 - improving students' reading ages so that they are closer to, or above, their actual age
 - providing students with opportunities to practise using their skills in mathematics to solve numerical problems.
- Close the attainment gap between those students who are eligible for the pupil premium and their peers by making sure that all teachers and leaders use the information they have about students' achievement to notice when students are not doing as well as they should and help

them to catch up.

- Improve the impact of academy leaders at all levels by:
 - ensuring that leaders, including governors, develop an accurate understanding of the academy, based on effective use of accurate data
 - ensuring that subject leaders are held to account by senior leaders and governors for the quality of teaching in their areas.

Ofsted will make recommendations for action on governance to the authority responsible for the academy. An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the academy's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Achievement is inadequate because students do not make the progress they should in English and mathematics.
- Students join the academy with attainment that is well below average in English and mathematics. In 2013, Year 11 students gained results that were much lower than could reasonably be expected given their starting points. Just 31% of these students achieved five GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics. These results, combined with the information on the progress students made since joining the academy, demonstrate that the academy failed to meet the government's floor standard in 2013 and represents a decline in standards from the predecessor school in 2012.
- In 2013, only about half of students made reasonable progress in English and fewer in mathematics. The progress of current students is indicated to rise, but only slowly. Their progress is more secure in English where the quality of teaching is improving. There are still too many weaknesses in the quality of teaching in mathematics to be confident that progress in mathematics will improve.
- There is only a small proportion of more-able students in the academy. In 2013 they made less progress in English and mathematics than similar students nationally. Across all of their subjects, teaching is not sufficiently challenging for more-able students and they leave the academy with standards below where they should be.
- The pupil premium funding has been used to provide additional teachers in English, mathematics and science, and additional teaching assistants to support learning and behaviour and to create opportunities for individual support sessions. There is little evidence of this funding making a difference to the achievement of students eligible for it. In English in 2013, students who were eligible for free school meals were almost a whole GCSE grade behind those not eligible. In mathematics, students who were eligible for free school meals were more than a grade behind those not eligible. This situation has declined compared with the predecessor school in 2012; information provided by the school shows only small improvements are indicated for current students.
- Pakistani students achieve far less well than similar students nationally; however, their attainment and progress are not much different from other groups in the academy. Information provided by the academy shows that Pakistani students are now attaining higher standards and that support for these students is improving.
- In English and in mathematics in 2013, disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action, school action plus or a statement made less progress than expected given their starting points. Information provided by the academy shows this is improving as a result of much sharper monitoring of these groups and better support being provided for individual students.
- Students start in the academy with very low literacy levels. In each year group over 70% of students have a reading age below their actual age; around half of students are very weak readers, having a reading age below nine years and six months. Academy leaders have used a few different reading schemes to try to accelerate students' reading. Very recently they have introduced their own programme which is tailored to the interests of individual students. This is starting to have a noticeable effect and students are quickly improving their reading ability. Year 7 catch-up funding is being used very effectively to provide this literacy support for students entitled to this funding. They have also attended a summer school to improve their skills after leaving primary school.
- Students who attend alternative off-site provision achieve well in the courses provided for them. They attend full time and their progress is checked carefully by the school, as well as their attendance and behaviour. One student, when asked, commented that he felt this had helped to stop him from being permanently excluded from the academy.
- Less than half of the cohort is entered for their GCSE examination in English at a point before

the end of Year 11, with a much smaller number being entered in mathematics. Academy leaders consider entry decisions carefully and use this as a way of motivating students to work towards achieving higher grades.

- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement. Students make about the progress that is expected of them, from their below-average starting points, in their AS- and A-level courses. They make better progress in vocational courses. They are developing their employability skills well and are being given the opportunity to improve their skills in English and mathematics at a level appropriate to their ability.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate. Due to weak teaching over time, most students are not making the progress they should, particularly in English and in mathematics. There is too much teaching that is not yet good enough to make sure that students achieve well and make rapid gains in their learning.
- There is too much variability in the quality of teaching, both within subjects and across the academy. Too few students are taught by good or better teachers and go on to succeed in line with their potential.
- Good and outstanding teaching was seen consistently in sixth form lessons and this is helping students to make rapid progress and improve standards in the sixth form. Teachers have good subject knowledge and ask students challenging questions which encourage them to think deeply about their work.
- In far too many lessons, teachers do not use information on students' progress to plan activities which engage all students and keep them learning for the whole of the lesson. Sometimes the work is too easy and sometimes too difficult, and students lose interest quickly and start to disturb others who want to work.
- Too many students have poor attitudes to their learning. They do not move quickly enough between lessons and this often results in them being late. This is not always challenged by teachers or academy leaders. When students are late for lessons, the lesson has a slow start and time is wasted.
- The most-able learners are not always challenged sufficiently by work that is hard enough. Sometimes they lack resilience and are not keen to try different ways of working things out.
- Marking is not sufficiently frequent, or of good enough quality, for students to know what they need to do to improve their work. There is a new policy for marking across the academy, but this is not yet being used consistently by all teachers. Students identify their own strengths and areas they need to improve and teachers respond to this with further guidance. In the best examples seen, students act on the advice given by teachers and their skills improve as a result.
- When teachers tell the students a level or a grade for a piece of work, this is sometimes over generous and inaccurate. This means that students sometimes think they are better at a subject than they really are and do not spend enough time developing skills to fill gaps in their learning. This inaccurate information does not help leaders at all levels in identifying underachievement.
- Teaching assistants and other support staff used in lessons make a positive contribution by giving effective support to those who need it. For example, in a sixth form art lesson, the technology technician used her knowledge from her own study of art at university to support students in exploring some ideas for themselves.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Behaviour in lessons too frequently depends upon the quality of teaching. Students are not always able to manage their own behaviour or to recognise that their actions are preventing

others from learning as well as they want.

- Students conduct themselves in an appropriate way around the school site, but some students are reluctant to move quickly to lessons, particularly at the end of break or lunchtime. Students report that there are some lessons for which 'you just don't want to be late', but others where the teacher does not challenge them when they walk in late.
- Students report that bullying does occur occasionally, but they are confident that it will be dealt with when they report it to an adult, and that the bully will be punished. They know about the different types of bullying, including racist and bullying associated with using social networking.
- Students report that behaviour has improved; this was seen in information provided by academy leaders which showed a reduction in the number of incidents recorded for undesirable behaviour.
- There has been a fall in the number of temporary and permanent exclusions, with the latter being used effectively for only the most extreme cases of poor behaviour.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement.
- Attendance improved in 2013 to above the national average and the numbers of students who are frequently absent have reduced to below the national average. There are still some groups of students whose attendance is not as good as similar groups of students nationally, such as those who are eligible for free school meals.
- There are still far too many students who arrive late for school in the morning.
- Students know there are areas around the site where groups of smokers gather at social times. There is a shortage of soap in the sinks.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Academy leaders have not yet been able to secure the necessary improvements in teaching to raise the achievement of students in English and mathematics. Records of checks on the quality of teaching show that it is improving, but there is still too much variability within subjects and across the academy.
- Academy leaders, including governors, do not have an accurate picture of the standards students are reaching in assessments. This is because teachers do not always accurately mark and assess the quality of students' work.
- New systems have been introduced that should allow academy leaders at all levels to better identify where particular groups of students are underachieving. Currently, there is far too much information, and too little that is accurate, to enable leaders to make a difference to teaching and to drive improvements.
- The academy is heavily reliant on support from the sponsor as there are a number of areas where there is insufficient leadership capacity to bring about improvements without the sponsor's help. This support was largely ineffective before April 2013, but is now being provided through the academy's educational adviser and an outstanding academy, rather than different educational consultants.
- There are a number of vacancies in key posts in the academy which have yet to be filled so that the workload can be shared more equitably across senior and subject leaders, and so that they can take responsibility for particular areas of the academy improvement plan. Currently, senior leadership is stretched and these leaders do not always hold subject leaders to account for improving the quality of teaching in their areas with sufficient rigour.
- Through the sponsor, academy leaders have been able to organise a wide range of support to improve leadership and teaching. Leaders from an outstanding academy have provided very effective support on introducing ways to use assessment information. Additional support has been given to the leadership of the English department and, recently, to improve marking across the academy. Training has also been delivered to governors and academy leaders on making accurate judgements on the quality of teaching. This support is yet to have the necessary

impact.

- Improving the literacy skills of students is a priority for the academy. Students with very low reading ages attend a breakfast club and use a bespoke package which is improving their reading. There is a whole-academy approach to literacy and the inspection team saw lessons in a range of subjects where students were being encouraged to use 'connectives' in their writing. In lessons where students had positive attitudes to their learning and teaching was good, this worked exceptionally well.
 - Improvement plans clearly identify the main priorities needed to improve the academy. Measurable 'milestones' are set so that academy leaders can monitor their progress and judge their success in raising achievement and improving teaching and behaviour.
 - Leaders have adapted aspects of the academy's provision, such as the curriculum, to better meet the students' needs. A variety of courses is provided, including academic and vocational 'pathways'. More students are now provided with a 'pathway' to lead to the English Baccalaureate and are able to study a language and a humanities subject. There are also plans to introduce GCSEs in biology, chemistry and physics for more-able students.
 - Academy leaders monitor the performance of teachers using examination results and observing the quality of teaching. This means that only the best teachers are rewarded for their work.
 - Academy leaders have been resolute in improving attendance and behaviour across the academy and have been largely successful in this.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is ambitious for the academy and is developing and improving its understanding of all aspects of the academy's performance. There are currently three vacant positions on the governing body.
 - Governors have been limited in the challenge they can provide to academy leaders because the information they have received on students' progress has been inaccurate.
 - They know the key challenges, such as improving English and mathematics and reducing the wide gaps in achievement for students supported by pupil premium funding.
 - Governors support the Principal in checking the performance of teachers to make sure this is rigorous, and there have been a number of staff who have left. Governors ensure that all requirements relating to safeguarding are met in full and regularly reviewed.
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What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 138374 |
| Local authority | Walsall |
| Inspection number | 426895 |

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

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| Type of school | Academy Sponsor Led |
| School category | Secondary |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 865 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 163 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Ian Boneham |
| Principal | Andy Hubble |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number | 01922720741 |
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