

# Harborne Academy

Harborne Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 3JL

**Inspection dates** 8–9 April 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		Good	2
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

- Students are not yet making the progress they should, particularly in English and mathematics. Students' writing skills are not developed well.
- Boys and the most able do not achieve as highly as other groups of students because activities are not always pitched at the right level.
- The quality of teaching varies too much. Students do not always know what they need to do to improve their work because it is not marked regularly in all subjects.
- Leaders do not check the quality of teaching rigorously enough.
- Subject leaders are not closely analysing the progress made by year groups or different groups of pupils.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Too few students gain qualifications in English and mathematics. Major changes are taking place, with a new sixth form opening in September 2014.
- The governing body is not using a broad range of evidence to form a clear view of how well the academy is doing. Governors do not check in enough detail how pupil premium funding is spent.

### The school has the following strengths

- The proportion of students achieving five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, is rising.
- There is some outstanding teaching in a number of subjects, including physical education and information and communication technology.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve well.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Students are polite, friendly and keen to do well. Academy prefects are excellent role models.
- The new headteacher has made a good start. All staff are keenly determined to raise students' attainment.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 26 lessons, seven of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors undertook a work scrutiny that examined students' progress in a number of subjects across several year groups.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and subject leaders, groups of students and the Chair and a member of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors looked at the academy's data on students' progress, lesson plans, minutes of meetings and records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance. They also reviewed the academy's checks on how well it is doing and academy improvement plans.
- There were no responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors considered the academy's own communications with parents.

## Inspection team

Lisa Fraser, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Elaine Hamilton	Additional Inspector
Robert Steed	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The academy is much smaller than most secondary schools.
- Students are from a diverse range of backgrounds. White British, Black Caribbean, Black African and Pakistani are the largest ethnic groups.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is very high.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is much higher than average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority and those with a parent in the armed services.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- During the past year, the sixth form has been in a period of transition. The academy has worked in partnership with its sponsor, Birmingham Metropolitan College, to offer courses to a small number of students. From September 2014, the academy will host its own sixth form with all courses offered on site.
- The academy works in partnership with the Oaks Collegiate to offer alternative provision to a very small number of students.
- At the time of inspection, the new headteacher had been in post for four months.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that achievement improves and all students make the progress expected by ensuring that:
  - work is challenging and pitched at the right level so that all students, particularly boys and the most able, make more rapid progress
  - the good practice in marking which exists within the academy is shared so that all students receive clear and regular feedback which lets them know how they can improve their work
  - all teachers focus on improving students' writing and presentation skills.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management by making sure that:
  - teachers' performance is assessed more rigorously
  - subject leaders check students' attainment and progress across all year groups and arrange targeted support for students, where appropriate
  - the governing body uses a broad range of evidence to form a view of the academy's strengths and weaknesses and checks how the pupil premium is spent.

An external review of governance, including the school'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 students requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because students are not yet making the progress expected in both English and mathematics. Boys now attain far fewer qualifications than girls and the most-able students are not doing as well as similar students nationally. Inspectors did not see evidence of consistently good achievement across the full range of subjects.
- Nevertheless, in 2013 the proportion of students achieving five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, improved and was above floor standards for the first time.
- Students join the academy with skills in reading, writing and mathematics which are well below average. In mathematics, attainment is low but rising; students currently make better progress than they do in English. A significant number of students speak English as an additional language. That means that, in many cases, their starting points in English are much lower than in mathematics.
- Scrutiny of students' work over time identified that a significant number of students have very poor writing skills. There is not yet a consistent approach to developing writing skills across different subjects. However, leaders have organised a good range of extra support sessions to boost students' reading skills.
- Additional funding for students supported by the pupil premium is spent in different ways, including extra support sessions for small groups of eligible students. Not all of the funding is directly linked to supporting these students' attainment and welfare. Some of it is spent on other projects, such as the academy's 'Personalised Learning Zone' which provides an alternative to exclusion for students who have been removed from lessons. Despite this, in 2013, Year 11 students supported by the pupil premium were only the tiniest of fractions behind their peers in English and mathematics. Students supported by the pupil premium attained more GCSE passes than their classmates.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs did much better across the range of subjects than their peers nationally in 2013. This is because these students' attainment and progress are well tracked and monitored, and extra support is arranged, where it is needed.
- Students who arrive at the academy with very limited English benefit from well-focused support. In 2013, Year 11 students who speak English as an additional language achieved more qualifications than their peers.
- Year 7 'catch-up' funding is used well to boost the literacy skills of students who join the academy with low attainment. Inspectors observed students' outstanding progress in a session in phonics (linking letters with the sounds they make).
- In the past, students have been entered early for their GCSE mathematics examination. In 2013, the proportion of students making the progress expected in mathematics was close to the national figure. In mathematics, the most-able students made similar progress to the same group nationally and were not held back.
- A very small number of students study off-site with other providers. Their attendance and progress are monitored closely by school leaders to ensure they achieve well.

- In 2013, achievement in the sixth form required improvement. Students were successful on work-related courses but hardly any achieved Level 2 qualifications in English and mathematics. From September 2014, it is proposed that the new sixth form will offer a broader range of science-related courses, including A-level qualifications.

### **The quality of teaching**

### **requires improvement**

- Although there is some outstanding teaching in information and communication technology, and in physical education, the quality of teaching requires improvement because it varies too much in other subjects.
- Teaching is not consistently effective because work is sometimes too easy or too hard for students to make rapid progress. The most-able students, in particular, are not given demanding enough tasks to do and so they do not reach their full potential. In some lessons, teachers do not pick up on the small number of boys who take a laid-back approach to their studies.
- Some teachers plan activities which allow students to practise writing skills in different subjects and contexts. Both the quantity and quality of students' written work vary depending upon the expectations of the teacher. Teachers do not ensure that students take care over the presentation of their work. However, students in the Year 7 'Skills School' receive excellent guidance from teachers which supports their rapid progress in writing.
- The quality of the marking of students' work is variable. Not all teachers pick up on basic spelling, punctuation and grammar errors in students' written work. In English, there are examples of marking that indicate some teachers give high-quality advice on what students need to do to improve their work. However, this is not consistent across all subjects.
- Relationships between students and staff are very positive in the vast majority of lessons. For example, in a Year 9 physical education lesson, students made outstanding progress in speed training exercises because they were able to reflect on each other's performance and offer mature suggestions on how to improve.
- Students in the sixth form say staff at Birmingham Metropolitan College have high expectations and employ a range of interesting resources. Students value the good-quality feedback they receive on their progress.

### **The behaviour and safety of students**

### **are good**

- The behaviour of students is good. In lessons, students have positive attitudes to learning and cooperate sensibly with each other. Students understand the academy's behaviour policy so are very clear about what leaders expect of them.
- Current records indicate attendance has improved considerably and is now above average. This is the result of a good system of rewards and sanctions; students are proud to have their good attendance and punctuality celebrated in assemblies. Leaders' sharp focus on behaviour has also seen a dramatic reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions.
- Academy prefects are excellent role models. They take the lead in community and charity work and also mentor younger students. The school council is active and currently involved in negotiating improvements in the quality of food on offer at break and lunch times.

- Around the academy students are polite, well-mannered and friendly. Students behave responsibly in the dining hall. Students spoke enthusiastically about how much they enjoy learning in the new building. They show good respect for their environment.
- In a few lessons, where teaching is weaker, there is a small amount of low-level disruption and off-task chatter in lessons.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. The governing body makes sure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
- Students say they feel safe and they have a good understanding of the different types of bullying. Inspectors observed Year 10 students delivering an assembly on homophobia which reinforced the academy's strong stance on equalities issues.
- Lessons in information and communication technology help students understand how to keep themselves safe online.
- Sixth formers are enjoying their learning and have no concerns about their safety at Birmingham Metropolitan College.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- Together with the deputy headteacher, the new headteacher has identified the right priorities which will move the academy forward. Nevertheless, leaders have not yet been successful in ensuring that teaching is consistently good and students make the progress expected in English and mathematics.
- The views of leaders at all levels about teachers' performance are too generous. While teaching is regularly observed in the classroom, leaders do not routinely take into account other elements of teachers' performance to form their judgements. Insufficient weight is given, for example, to scrutiny of work and analysis of information on students' progress, to ensure that leaders have a comprehensive view of the impact of teaching on students' attainment.
- Subject leaders' focus on students' attainment and progress is not sharp enough. They are not using the information available to give them a clear idea of the progress of key groups of students in every year group. As a result, they are slow to take action to tackle underachievement in their subjects.
- Even so, leaders have high ambition for students. Staff are positive about the changes which have taken place so far and give the new leaders their full backing. The setting of targets for teachers is becoming more robust. From September 2013, leaders are ensuring that teachers only receive pay rises if students make good progress.
- Creative and innovative approaches employed by teachers in the Year 7 'Skills School' make a strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are very respectful of cultures which are different to their own. For example, a number of students in Year 8 spoke excitedly about how much they enjoy studying African drumming in music. After-school clubs and activities, particularly the new 'Saturday school', are popular with students.
- The range of subjects on offer is kept under constant review by senior leaders to ensure that it meets students' specific needs and interests. Significant numbers of students have already signed-up for the new sixth form opening in September 2014 because they are keen to follow

courses which will prepare them for medical-related professions.

- Students are well prepared for their futures; an above-average proportion of students leave the academy to move on to further education, employment or training. Even so, students in Key Stage 4 say they would appreciate more careers advice and guidance about the choice of options available in the local area.
- As an academy school, the academy is no longer obliged to work with the local authority. Support from the academy sponsor has been used to inform leaders' views of the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have extensive experience in further education. They have employed an experienced headteacher who supports their knowledge and understanding of how to raise achievement and the quality of teaching. Good checks, such as those of the performance management board, are beginning to hold leaders to account. However, governors are not yet sharp enough in their analysis of information on students' achievement across all year groups and are not using a broad enough range of evidence to evaluate the academy's strengths and weaknesses. The governing body is aware of how students supported by the pupil premium are achieving but is not checking in enough detail how additional funding is spent. Governors seek to update their knowledge and skills by attending appropriate training.

## 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 students' needs. This ensures that students 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 students' needs. Students 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 students 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>	136213
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	442593

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<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>	509
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	30
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Roger Minett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Christopher Hilton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 February 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 464 2737
<b>Email address</b>	enquiry@harborneacademy.co.uk

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