

EBN Academy

1580 Coventry Road, Yardley, Birmingham, B26 1AL

Inspection dates

7–8 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well. Most make good progress in English, mathematics and science and are rapidly making up ground that they have lost in the past.
- Students make good progress in improving their behaviour and their attitudes to school and to learning. The classrooms are typically calm and orderly. Students of all backgrounds behave well and get along together. The attendance of some students has improved markedly.
- Students say they feel safe in the academy. Arrangements for keeping students safe are excellent. Students respond well to the genuine interest that adults have in their safety, well-being and academic success.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' work and behaviour. There is a positive, supportive climate in lessons.
- The desire to see every student reach his or her potential is at the heart of the academy's work. Leadership, including governance, is strong and is driving improvement at a good pace. Staff are fully supportive of the academy's direction and ambitions.
- Arrangements for quality assurance and monitoring the academy's effectiveness are detailed, regular and thorough.
- Governors and members of the Trust are assiduous in holding the academy's leaders to account for all aspects of its work.
- Parents are pleased with the academy's work and highlight improvements in their children's behaviour and attitudes both at school and at home.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students' progress in mathematics is not as strong as in other subjects.
- Teachers ask too few questions that require students to explain their reasoning, compare viewpoints or think deeply.
- Teachers' marking does not always highlight the specific next steps students need to take.
- Although improving, overall rates of attendance are below average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in eight parts of lessons. The observations were undertaken jointly with the Principal or Vice Principal.
- A meeting was held with two parents and the views of parents as expressed in the academy's recent survey were considered. The Parent View website was not available.
- Meetings were held with the Executive Principal, Principal and Vice Principal, other members of staff and members of the governing body who are also members of the East Birmingham Network (EBN) Trust. The inspector met a group of students and spoke to other students informally.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised. This included the academy's assessment and tracking information, policies and procedures relating to protecting students and keeping them safe, case studies of individual students, information about attendance and behaviour, minutes of meetings of the governing body, the academy's self-evaluation and the plan for improvement.
- The responses in questionnaires completed by 19 members of staff were considered.
- The inspector visited one of the off-site alternative providers used by the academy.

Inspection team

Linda McGill, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- EBN Academy opened in September 2012. It is a free school under the auspices of the East Birmingham Network Trust. The Trust was established by the eleven secondary schools that make up the East Birmingham Network Educational Partnership. The academy moved to new premises in May 2013.
- The academy provides alternative provision for students mainly from the network's secondary schools who have been excluded or who are at risk of exclusion, but also admits a few students who are without a secondary school place.
- Students currently on roll come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Some speak English as an additional language but few are in the early stages of learning English. There are more boys than girls. Most of the students have special educational needs, mainly relating to emotional and behavioural difficulties. No student has a statement of special educational needs. All have previously experienced some disruption to their secondary school education. A small number have refused to attend school in the past.
- Over half of the students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The academy does not receive additional funding (pupil premium) for these students.
- About a quarter of the students attend alternative providers for part of the week. The alternative provision used comprises The Prince's Trust, South and City College Birmingham, Learn Fit and Birmingham Metropolitan College.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to the level of the best by providing teachers with support and training so that they:
 - extend their skills in asking questions that deepen students' understanding, probe their thinking, promote debate and discussion and require students to explain their reasoning
 - in their marking, highlight for students more precisely what they need to do to progress to the next level
 - identify why some students do not make as much progress in mathematics as they do in other subjects and take steps to rectify this.
- Strive even harder in working with students and their families to improve attendance and narrow the gap with the national average for mainstream schools.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- When they start at the academy, many students have not made the progress expected of them since leaving primary school because of disruptions to their secondary school education. Some have a lot of ground to make up. Many students' reading ages are well below their chronological age. In addition, most have become disillusioned with schooling.
- As a result of the academy's efforts, students quickly settle in and get back on track with their learning. The majority of students, including the most able, are now making good or better progress in English and science, and good progress overall in mathematics. They are no longer uninterested in schooling and they have typically positive attitudes to learning. This, together with good teaching, is helping students to catch up on where they should be. Leaders and teachers understand that the ultimate goal is to help students reach the grades in their GCSE examinations that would be expected given their results at the age of eleven.
- Students read frequently and reading aloud is a common feature in lessons. The academy follows a carefully structured programme to boost students' reading ages and provides one-to-one support for those who do not move forward quickly. Students typically write in exercise books rather than on loose sheets of paper. The books clearly illustrate the good progress that many have made in improving their skills in writing at length and in developing an argument.
- Students' increasing confidence and engagement in lessons mean that they are often willing to accept a challenge and attempt work that is harder than their current level.
- This year, a fifth of the students in Year 11 are expected to gain five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics. Well over three quarters are expected to gain five or more passes overall and every student is expected to leave with at least one qualification. The academy does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- The academy's assessments show that there are no major gaps between the achievement of different groups of students, or between boys and girls. Students who are learning to speak English are given practical support to make sure that they fully understand what is being taught. Students who are known to be eligible for free school meals do better than their fellow students in some year groups or subjects, and are not far behind in others. Group sizes are small, which makes statistical comparison unreliable.
- The students who attend other alternative provision make progress that matches that of their fellow students. They are supported to make up for any work that they may miss while attending another setting.
- All of the students in Year 11 are expected to go on to employment or further study.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers are highly skilled at making positive relationships with students and at creating an atmosphere in lessons that strikes the right balance between support and challenge. Students said that their teachers listen to them and that 'they focus on you because they want you to do well' and 'we learn more here'. Leaders and staff believe that good teaching is crucial in bringing about improvements in behaviour, as well as in learning.
- The academy's monitoring records show that teaching has improved a great deal over the course of this academic year. This is confirmed by the impact teaching has had on speeding up

students' progress.

- Teachers assess and track students' attainment and progress frequently. They quickly spot areas of relative weakness and students will often work either with teachers or their personal coaches to fill gaps in their knowledge and understanding.
- Work in lessons is pitched at appropriate levels. Teachers adapt tasks according to the students' different abilities, but also give students the chance to challenge themselves by choosing harder work when they feel confident. Charts on the walls indicate the levels each student is working at in all subjects and any upward movement is recorded straight away by moving the student's name on the chart. This is a powerful motivator.
- Teachers vary their approaches in lessons in response to the students' needs and preferred ways of learning. Some sessions are lively and participative, and in others students are expected to work steadily and concentrate by themselves. Both have a good impact on progress.
- Every piece of students' work is marked in line with the academy's agreed policy. This is checked each week by the academy's leaders. Students also review and comment on one another's work. They make corrections and revise pieces of work when requested. Occasionally, although teachers' marking gives praise for effort and achievement, it does not indicate clearly enough what students need to try to do next.
- Most teachers are quick to spot when students have mastered a particular skill or idea and move them on straight away. This does not always happen and there are some occasions when students finish a task and wait to be told what to do next.
- Teachers involve students in question-and-answer sessions that check knowledge and understanding. They are rightly concerned that all students make good progress in lessons. However, they are sometimes too quick to move on, and do not always take the opportunity to ask a student a follow-up question, require them to give explanations or engage in a debate when they spot that students have come to different conclusions, in order to deepen their understanding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. This is so both in lessons and around the building. Students are respectful of their teachers and other adults and they get on well with one another. For many, this represents a marked improvement in a short time. The academy's records show that incidents of unacceptable behaviour have decreased considerably since the start of this year.
- Students get on willingly with their work in lessons. They cooperate and help one another out if needed. This makes a positive contribution to their learning.
- Low-level disruption is not common. Any incidents that do occur are managed swiftly and sensitively by staff. This helps to ensure that the atmosphere in lessons and around the academy is calm and safe.
- Students speak positively about the impact that coming to EBN has had on their life-chances. They are proud of what they have achieved and view the future with optimism. One said, 'This place has opened doors for me.'
- Students said that they feel completely safe in the academy. They know about different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, but insist that it does not occur at EBN. Parents agree with this

view. Students were confident that no-one is picked on or teased about their looks, background or sexuality.

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Leaders and staff are acutely aware of the risks students may face outside the academy. They work effectively with partner organisations to raise students' understanding of how to deal with different challenges.
- Academy staff have good relationships with other providers and carry out regular checks on the quality of alternative provision.
- The academy takes a firm stance on unauthorised absence and follows up any unexplained absence, including by calling at the students' homes. Many students' attendance improves a good deal once they start at EBN and the proportion of students whose attendance is a cause for concern is diminishing steadily. The academy provides lessons on line for a few students who have particular difficulties and are unable to attend, in order to re-engage them with learning.

The leadership and management

are good

- The academy's leaders and governors share a determination to provide the best for the students so that they leave EBN well prepared for the next steps in their lives. This shows clearly in the high expectations they have of the staff and of the students. Staff understand the vision and share the ambition; several members of staff said how proud they were to work at the academy because of what has been achieved already. Every member of staff who returned a questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed that the academy is well led and managed.
- Every aspect of the academy's performance is subject to rigorous quality assurance. Teaching is closely monitored. Training and professional development opportunities are frequently provided to improve further the quality of teaching. Teachers and other staff are reflective practitioners and keen to improve their performance.
- Accountability is strong; leaders at every level evaluate the strengths and aspects for development in their areas of responsibility and are expected to drive improvement. Leaders and teachers must meet the targets they are set for students' progress each year if they are to be rewarded with a pay rise.
- Improvements made since the academy opened confirm that leaders have the capacity to bring about change for the better. Leaders' actions have had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and, consequently, on students' achievement. Each student is known as an individual and action is taken to ensure no-one is left behind. Leaders are aware that there is still some work to do, in particular regarding attendance and in moving teaching closer to outstanding. The plan for improvement focuses on the most important areas and contains some challenging targets. Not all targets are readily measurable, however.
- The curriculum rightly emphasises reading, writing, mathematics and science. These are not subjects in which students previously excelled. However, because they are well taught and tasks are matched carefully to students' needs, students now take pleasure in learning in these subjects and the wider curriculum. Students choose from a number of vocational options to supplement their academic studies. Students are carefully guided in making their choices so that there is a clear pathway towards qualifications at an appropriate level or further study. The academy has no outdoor space. Students are taken off-site to undertake physical activities; however, this means that opportunities for vigorous activity are not frequent.

- The academy's ethos, values and expectations make a strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The academy has good relationships with parents. Parents value the regular communications they receive regarding their child's progress.
- Arrangements for protecting students and keeping them safe meet statutory requirements.
- The academy benefits a good deal from support from the schools in the EBN Educational Partnership. All of the schools share their expertise. This has made a good contribution to improvements in teaching at the academy.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- is strong and effective. The governing body's members bring a wide range of skills and have considerable educational expertise. Governors and members of the Trust are regularly given detailed and accurate information about aspects of the academy's performance, including the quality of teaching and students' achievement. They ask pertinent, challenging questions and seek explanations. Governors have high expectations of the academy's leaders. Leaders are held closely to account and, as with the teaching staff, rewards are closely linked to performance. Governors keep a close eye on financial matters and make sure that the academy provides value for money. This includes making sure that all groups of students, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, make good progress.

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	138775
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	426882

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

Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	13–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	66
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Quinn
Principal	Jennifer Norbury
Date of previous school inspection	Not Previously Inspected
Telephone number	0121 6059370
Fax number	N/A
Email address	enquiry@ebnfs.org

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

