

Perry Beeches II The Free School

Newhall Street, Ladywood, Birmingham, B3 1SE

Inspection dates	29–30 April 2014		
Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
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.

- This school 'seeks what is true, seeks what is right, seeks what is just' for students, and they thrive as a result.
- The outstanding leadership and management of the executive headteacher, the headteacher, her senior team and her middle leaders is bringing about high academic and personal development standards for students.
- The consistently high quality of training, and development for teaching and support staff, sustains excellent teaching.
- Staff at all levels model the importance of learning by studying for further professional qualifications.
- Students find learning interesting, enjoyable and motivating because teaching is outstanding. As a result, students work very hard to meet the high expectations of their teachers and the high hopes of their parents and carers.
- Occasionally, teachers stick too rigidly to their plan, moving to new content too quickly; learning then slows because students have not properly learnt the first new idea.
- Marking and feedback to students are consistently good for all classes. Students know off by heart what they need to do to improve, although they do not always do it.
- All students achieve well in all subjects, achieving above-average standards from below-average starting points.
- Students develop excellent communication skills in conversation, debate and extended verbal responses.
- Students behave exceptionally well in and around the school, because they are proud of the school and take personal responsibility for doing well.
- Attendance is very high and punctuality very good in all years.
- The school's work to keep students safe is outstanding. Teachers and other staff give a high priority to promoting equality of opportunity. They tackle racism, homophobia, and religious intolerance systematically and sensitively.
- The range of enrichment opportunities for students both locally and nationally is exceptionally effective in developing the social, moral, cultural and spiritual attitudes of students.
- The sixth form is outstanding because of the excellent teaching and personal support by staff for students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 27 lessons, and nine after-school enrichment sessions. Senior staff joined three of those lessons, and inspectors observed the feedback by these leaders to the teachers.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the executive head of Perry Beeches Academy Trust, the Chair of the Governing Body, the community coordinator, senior and middle leaders, teachers, support staff, and groups of students. Inspectors also spoke informally to students during lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors looked at students' work, including displays of their work around the school, and at records of students in action in the community.
- Inspectors took into consideration 25 responses to 'Parent View', Ofsted's online survey of parents' views, and 51 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised information about students' achievement and attendance, notes of meetings of the governing body, and information about the management of staff performance and their training.

Inspection team

Brian Cartwright, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Robert Steed

Additional Inspector

Carol Worthington

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Perry Beeches II is a new Free School that received its first students in September 2012. Currently, there are students in Year 7, Year 8, Year 12 and Year 13. It is, therefore, smaller than the average secondary school. Most sixth form students come from Perry Beeches Academy.
- It is part of the Perry Beeches Academy Trust. Perry Beeches Academy, which is an outstanding school, and an initial teacher training provider. Twelve 12 trainee teachers contribute to the teaching staff at Perry Beeches II, from the Teach First and Schools Direct (salaried) schemes.
- Almost all the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest of these groups is Black Caribbean.
- The proportion of students whose first language is not English is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is well above average. The proportion of students supported by school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is average.
- Over half the students are eligible for the pupil premium, which is well above average. This is additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and any with a parent in the armed services.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure students have the time to respond to the excellent feedback and advice for improvement they receive from teachers.
- Ensure teachers gauge the impact of their teaching on students' learning as the lesson unfolds, and then respond flexibly as necessary by adapting their initial plan if learning slows.
- Maintain the intense focus, high expectations, excellent progress and responsibilities experienced by students in Years 7 and 8 as the school grows.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The attainment of students when they enter the school in Year 7 is lower than the national average. They make rapid and sustained progress in Years 7 and 8. Teachers regularly assess and report the attainment of their students. These assessments are checked carefully by managers of different subjects, and by external staff from other schools in the academy trust. Inspectors confirmed that, by the middle of Year 8, academic attainment is higher than normally seen, and that this represents outstanding progress.
- Students have developed remarkably good communication skills that show in their conversation, debate and extended verbal responses to questions from teachers. It was an outstanding feature of all the lessons visited by inspectors, and in conversations inspectors had with students. This high level of response is usually evident in their written work, so long as the task they are given allows them sufficient scope to give their own thoughts and explanations. Any shortfalls in spelling or presentation are swiftly spotted by teachers.
- The accuracy of teachers' assessment allows close and frequent monitoring of students' progress, and subsequent tailoring of additional support if progress slips momentarily. School data clearly show that the initial attainment gap between boys and girls in Year 7 has now disappeared in Year 8 as the boys catch up.
- More able students extend their high levels of performance, and that includes those with talents in the arts and sports. A competitive approach to rewarding progress for gifted and talented students has further improved their motivation and achievement. The after-school enrichment programme is part of the strategy of extending opportunity for all, so all reach their potential.
- Students in receipt of the pupil premium show the same high rates of progress; their academic standards are indistinguishable from other pupils. This is a result of very good support in class, because most teaching challenges and stretches every learner. There is also an effective intervention programme of one-to-one teaching, coupled to additional literacy and numeracy enrichment lessons.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs also benefit from the support and intervention and are making better than expected progress. By Year 8, almost every student supported through school action is reaching the same high level of attainment as their peers.
- The 21 students in the Year 7 catch-up programme have caught up, making exceptional progress in English.
- Sixth form students took AS level examinations in 2013, achieving very well and attaining above-average results. Almost all continued to Year 13, and all Year 13 students have offers of university places for 2014.
- The quality of sixth form work in many areas is outstanding. The school sixth form curriculum offers only academic 'enabling' subjects. All students must have achieved GCSE grade C or better in English and mathematics before starting. This is a deliberate policy to ensure students have the widest possible opportunities in their future, including access to Russell Group universities.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The combination of effective lesson planning, excellent marking and feedback to students, and usually interesting lesson activities accommodates the range of learning needs of students. Students are highly motivated by the lesson content in most cases. These features combine with exceptionally positive teacher-student dialogue to ensure that teaching over time is outstanding.
- Strong reinforcement of literacy features in all lessons, with particular emphasis and encouragement for students to say what they are thinking, and why they are thinking it. Common posters highlighting grammar rules feature in every classroom. Students work very well together, and develop excellent presentational skills including confidence in speaking publically. Numeracy receives close attention and opportunities are seized to connect mathematics with other subjects. For example, in design and technology, work on 'nets' (the starting point of making card boxes from a flat sheet of card) was linked by the teacher to the experiences of students in mathematics.
- In almost every lesson observed by inspectors, teachers expertly timed the various activities to perfection, keeping students on their toes. But they also allowed time for students to think about new ideas, or practise new skills, before moving the learning on. Learning activities match the abilities and previous experience of students very well. As a result, very little time is wasted by students repeating work, struggling with work that is too difficult, or pottering through work that is too easy.
- A common feature in all subjects is the effective and repeated use of clear learning objectives as the lesson unfolds. These objectives are set out in simple language, allowing students to assess for themselves where they are in terms of academic learning. There is repeated emphasis on moving students beyond simple recall of facts, to interpretation, evaluation and synthesis of ideas; this higher-level learning emphasis begins in Year 7.
- On rare occasions, teachers stick too rigidly to their original plan. Although in hindsight teachers recognise that students' learning has slowed, they do not adapt or change the plan in a timely manner. In other, even more rare instances, the subject matter fails to engage the students' interest. This is not always predictable, of course, but having a 'plan B' to hand would avoid prolonging the problem. In some examples, both these situations arise from the inexperience of new teachers. However, a powerful feature of teaching is the honesty and accuracy of teachers' own self-review of lessons. When a shortfall has occurred, they know why and fix it for the next time.
- Teachers have good information on their students' previous and current performance. This is used very effectively to plan lessons that accommodate different abilities and starting points. In most examples, more able students tackle suitably demanding tasks from the outset of a lesson.
- This high quality of planning is one reason why students with special educational needs do so well; extra support is available but in most cases not necessary; the teacher is meeting the needs of every learner. Students know this, welcome the personal attention they are receiving in this school, and are flourishing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students are proud of their school. They say it is a privilege to be here, and take that privilege seriously. Their positive attitude makes a major contribution to the quality of teaching and learning they receive. Teachers respond to the

commitment of their students with yet more enjoyable learning challenges. One student in Year 8 thought the school was lovely; she is not wrong; it is a delightful place to come and learn.

- The lively, friendly ethos promotes hard work and success; the school buildings are fresh and kept immaculately clean and tidy by students and staff alike. Staff spend time with students in informal conversations at breaks and lunchtimes. A well-understood rewards and behaviour policy makes it clear that respect for one another is essential.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Students learn how to deal with bullying in all of its forms including specific teaching about homophobic bullying, e-safety and racism. The curriculum includes special events that address gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender prejudice, racism, including Black History, and the potential dangers of social media.
- The personal development of students is taken just as seriously as their academic progress. It is part of the high-quality teaching ethos that sets out to challenge disadvantage, promote equality, and lift the ambitions of students. As a result, students demonstrate exceptionally high personal values, kindness, confidence and expectations. One student in Year 8 summarised his understanding of the school's purpose, when he volunteered the following to an inspector: 'This school seeks what is true, what is right, and what is just.'
- Attendance is over 98%, in all years including the sixth form. This is much higher than the national average. Punctuality is 99%. Students simply are not late to lessons, except in the rarest of instances, and then are deeply apologetic. Poor behaviour incidents are very rare but, when they do occur, are taken seriously. Fixed-term exclusions are low, and there are no repeat offenders.
- Because teachers are themselves still actively studying for further professional qualifications, they model the discipline and hard work necessary. Students want to achieve well and are confident their teachers will ensure that happens. Students expect to be challenged to think hard, and expect learning to be enjoyable as well as demanding. So when the occasional lesson episode does not match that expectation, students can become restless. This does not spill over into disruption, but it is a sign that students have not connected with that task.
- Students know without hesitation how well they are doing, and exactly what they need to do to improve further. They can say this without reference to notes in their diaries, called 'passports'. This good understanding reflects the consistently high quality of feedback by teachers to students.
- Sixth form students are equally involved in school life, from helping younger students with reading (which is making a strong contribution to raising literacy standards), to taking responsibilities for site supervision. Many are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award. One student accurately recognised the school was building them as a person.
- Students of all ages say there is a strong sense of partnership between teachers and students. They value the support this brings and also recognise that, as a result, they have a voice. They also say, 'It feels more like a family than a school.' Inspectors agree; the level of personal support, the prompting of students to improve and the friendly challenge is exceptional, and a powerful factor in the rapid progress students are making.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The academy trust sets a clear mission for this school, in providing an excellent comprehensive education for local students in economically challenged urban settings. It aims for all students to have full access to the opportunities available for any young person, anywhere in England. The school has successfully embarked on that journey.
- A key reason for the rapid impact on students' attainment, compared with their previously lower-than-average success in primary school, is the consistently high quality of monitoring and evaluation of teaching. This includes a clear 'open-door' policy, in which it is routine for colleagues to observe each other and learn by this sharing of practice.
- Most of the middle and senior staff have brought the effective practices from Perry Beeches Academy to this school. No time has been wasted, therefore, in starting such systems from scratch. Easy access to frequent moderation of academic standards with colleagues in the academy helps to secure judgments on students' progress. This is then linked to teachers' performance and pay.
- High expectations of what students can achieve are a second key aspect of leadership. School leaders at all levels are quite rightly sceptical of the apparently low academic average attainment of students when they arrive in Year 7. Instead, they assume these students are capable of much better standards. They are taught accordingly; the assumption is that all will make better than expected progress and all will eventually achieve good GCSE grades. Already, all pupils are exceeding the average rate of progress, by some margin.
- The responses of parents to 'Parent View' were overwhelmingly positive; all would recommend the school to others. Of the 51 staff questionnaires, almost all returned 100% positive responses, and all were unanimously positive about the quality of leadership and management, and proud to work at the school. The school's headteacher and her senior team have demonstrated excellent leadership and management.
- Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is as important to the school as academic success. Systematically, the school curriculum ensures every student is taught about respect, equality, tolerance and charity. Frequent visits to places of worship, museums, theatre, outdoor pursuits and local industry combine effectively with visits from business people, artists and performers, politicians, public services and local community groups. It is no surprise, therefore, to find students relishing taking responsibility for themselves and others' learning, in helping one another, and in maintaining the school's learning environment so well.
- Almost every student attends an after-school club or additional support class. These run for 30 minutes every day, some for 60, and give access to the full range of teaching resources and subjects, including the performing and visual arts, science, technology and computing.
- The management of staff performance links directly to students' achievement, and is driven by a shared ambition for high standards. Very good programmes of further training for staff include support for them to take additional qualifications, including masters and doctorate level research. Voluntary weekly staff training events are attended by all teaching staff. There is an expectation that all staff continue to learn (Everyone a learner). That link to academic work is illustrated well with the involvement of a well-respected academic historian, whose contribution to history learning is substantial.
- The school meets the requirements for safeguarding students. It has clear and well-rehearsed health and safety policies that use the local authority's procedures, including their expertise and

advice.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body takes great care to monitor and evaluate the performance of all aspects of the school through assigning individual governors to different strands of the school improvement plan; regular reports from each strand inform the governing body, and allow quick resolution of any concern.
- The governing body uses external consultants to advise the governors on the headteacher's performance, which is measured by students' outcomes.
- Systematic reviews of the health and safety policy, the curriculum, safeguarding policy and budget ensure strategic changes are made in time to accommodate the rapid growth in student numbers.
- The governing body has commissioned an independent inspection to give governors an independent view on provision, including the quality of teaching.
- Governors ensure pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide additional teaching and support staff, for intervention and enrichment support for the students for whom the funding is received.

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	138200
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	426892

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
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	280
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Day
Headteacher	Jackie Powell
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0121 270 8090
Email address	enquiries@perrybeechesii.co.uk

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