

Ormiston Horizon Academy

St Michaels Road, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire, ST6 6JZ

Inspection dates 1–2 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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, often from low starting points. Progress is good in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science.
- Teaching and learning have improved rapidly since the last inspection. Students enjoy their learning and rise to the increasing challenge and high expectations of their teachers.
- Students behave well. They are proud of their new building, their teachers and themselves. Students welcome visitors and are courteous and friendly. They regard their academy as a safe and positive environment.
- The curriculum is tailored to students' needs and is being developed to raise aspirations and promote achievement for all students.
- Pastoral care and support for students is outstanding. Attendance is rising steadily and rigorous checks on achievement and progress ensure that students who fall behind are quickly identified and supported.
- The principal and vice-principal provide outstanding leadership so that they get the best out of all the staff. The wider leadership team, subject leadership and governance are good. Strong leadership and management are improving all aspects of the academy's work, including the quality of teaching and students' achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are inconsistencies in the quality of marking and feedback that students receive and their response to such feedback. Some teachers do not set high enough expectations for the quality of presentation of students' work.
- Some of the most-able students could make even better progress.
- Teachers in some subjects are not doing enough to improve students' literacy skills.
- The sixth form requires improvement. The academy has made a good start but the sixth form is at an early stage of development.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 31 lessons taught by 31 teachers. Three of these were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. They attended an assembly and observed several registration sessions.
- Discussions were held with the Chair of Governors and several other governors, the senior leadership team, subject leaders, the special needs co-ordinator, a representative of the academy trust, the academy educational advisor and students from every year group.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents from the 29 responses to Parent View, the on-line questionnaire, and responses to the academy’s own parental surveys this year.
- The views of members of staff were gained from the 59 responses to the staff questionnaire, as well as in meetings and discussions with teachers.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school’s examination results and current progress data for all year groups, case studies of disadvantaged children and children whose circumstances make them vulnerable, attendance and behaviour records, improvement planning, safeguarding documents, minutes of governors’ meetings, performance management systems and information about how the academy uses pupil premium funding and what impact it has.
- The inspection team looked at the work of students in many subjects, including English, mathematics, science, design technology, art, health and social care, business studies, geography, information technology and BTEC sport. They also looked at portfolios of work produced by Year 12 students.

Inspection team

Judith Straw, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fiona Burke-Jackson

Additional Inspector

Bimla Kumari

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Ormiston Horizon Academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. However, the number of students on roll is increasing each year. It is a member of the Ormiston Academy Trust.
- The large majority of students come from White British backgrounds and the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds is low. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is very low.
- The proportion of students eligible for pupil premium funding is high. It includes over half of the entire school. Pupil premium is additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above the national average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A small number of students attend alternative courses at Phoenix U16, Groundworks, West Midlands and Sporting Stars Academy.
- The academy opened a new sixth form in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and so further drive up standards by:
 - improving the consistency of marking across the academy so that students regularly receive useful feedback on how to improve their work
 - requiring students to act on the advice given to them through marking
 - making sure all subject teachers share responsibility for raising standards of literacy by improving students' spelling and punctuation
 - always checking whether work marked by students is accurate
 - setting higher expectations for the quality of presentation of students' work
 - increasing the progress of the most-able students so that more make accelerated progress and achieve A* and A grades at GCSE at the end of Year 11.
- Further improve the quality of education in the sixth form by:
 - broadening the range of subjects available to students
 - developing leadership opportunities for sixth-form students within the academy
 - enhancing enrichment activities to give students a sense of identity
 - improving and extending careers advice and guidance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students typically join the academy with attainment which is significantly below average and with low levels of literacy. In 2013 students' progress in English and mathematics was slower than national figures and achievement in that year was less impressive. Students are now reaping the benefits of better teaching, higher expectations and positive attitudes to learning, so that this year they are on track to reach just above national standards for five GCSE passes at A*-C, including English and mathematics.
- Progress is good. Convincing inspection evidence shows that Year 11 students this year have made much better progress in both English and mathematics to meet challenging targets. The academy has a good track record of accurately predicting outcomes for students, confirmed by governors, members of the academy trust and a comparison with predictions made last year.
- Subjects previously identified in the last report as ones where students were underperforming are much improved. More students are taking science and standards are rising rapidly. Students have worked hard and improved their performance in languages and humanities subjects.
- Gaps in the achievement of girls and boys are narrowing rapidly. This is the case especially in mathematics and languages. Students have benefited from being taught sometimes in single-sex groups and all students now feel accountable to reach the targets set for them. A high proportion of students in most year groups is now making at least expected progress and this year is on track to be similar to the national proportion making better than expected progress.
- The most-able students are generally making good progress across the academy. They are now targeted to make better than expected progress in all subjects. The proportion in Year 11 in 2013 making better than expected progress was just below national figures in mathematics, but is set to rise this year in both English and mathematics.
- Students known to be entitled to pupil premium funding in Year 11 made slower progress than other students last year. Pupils eligible for free school meals were one full GCSE grade behind others in both English and mathematics. The gap in their achievement was wider than it was in 2012. However, because the academy has employed more staff and provided strong support, the gap is now much closer and is closing faster than found nationally in all year groups.
- Academy leaders use the Year 7 catch-up funding to provide extra support in reading, writing and mathematics for small groups of students who start Year 7 with National Curriculum grades which are below average. Students benefit from this group work and make rapid progress.
- The progress and achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is steadily improving. Students at school action make the same progress as similar students nationally and those at school action plus and with statements of educational need are making even better progress than is found nationally.
- Low levels of literacy mean that some students find it difficult to explain, defend and develop their answers. Too much work is characterised by poor presentation and incorrect spelling.
- Students' numeracy skills are developing well, as standards in mathematics and science continue to rise.
- The academy no longer uses early entry to GCSE as a matter of course. Early entry in mathematics is now used only for a small number of students at risk of not completing the course.
- The academy uses alternative provision for only a small number of students. The attendance, progress and well-being of these students are regularly checked by a senior leader, so that the academy can be sure that they are making good progress.
- As yet there are no externally validated examination results for the first year of the sixth form. Tracking data indicates that students' progress requires improvement, but the work in students' files shows an increasing proportion of progress that is good. Students are following a limited range of subjects and most are following a mixture of A-level, BTEC and diploma courses. All those currently in Year 12 are intending to stay into Year 13. The range of options for study in the sixth form is narrow and therefore currently limits the range of students' achievement. The

academy has plans to gradually increase the options available both for academic and vocational subjects.

The quality of teaching is good

- Scrutiny of the work in students' books and folders, from Year 7 to Year 12 in a range of subjects, as well as direct observations and discussions with students, show that teaching over time is good and that most students are making good, and in some subjects, outstanding progress.
- Teachers are usually experts in their subjects and impart their knowledge with enthusiasm, skill and often humour. They create a good environment for learning and relationships are positive. As a result, students are confident in contributing to class discussions. Most students respond well to the high expectations set for their participation and involvement.
- Teachers use questioning very effectively to elicit quality answers from students and encourage them to deepen their understanding and knowledge. This was particularly evident in English, where careful questioning led to students making huge gains in their understanding of different texts.
- Teaching in mathematics has gone from strength to strength since the previous inspection. This has led to a big increase in the proportion of students making good progress. Similarly good teaching in English has doubled the proportion of students making accelerated progress.
- The progress of the most-able students making expected progress and good progress is in line with national figures, but the academy staff are now targeting these students in a bid to increase the proportion making good progress and to increase the number of students gaining A* and A grades at GCSE. Teachers are providing greater challenge and extension work for the most-able students.
- Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to the quality of individual students' learning. Their support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs ensures that these students are interested and motivated and able to make the same good progress as others.
- In subjects such as drama, art, design technology, music and information technology students rapidly gain understanding and develop good skills in applying their learning. Examples seen during the inspection include students quickly grasping the essential of how to create animations in information technology, creating their own compositions of Samba music, demonstrating effective design skills in different technology sessions and controlling nerves to deliver fine performances in drama.
- Teaching in the sixth form is generally good. Students respond positively to the different atmosphere in the sixth form where they are working in partnership with their teachers. Teachers new to sixth form work are gradually developing their awareness of sixth-form teaching styles, supported by school leaders and the academy chain.
- The academy has effective strategies to improve students' literacy, including a strong focus on developing reading skills. However, not all teachers are meticulous in following the agreed strategies.
- Most teachers mark books regularly, providing useful advice on how students can improve their work. This is consistently the case in art and English. However, some marking is cursory and sometimes, work marked by pupils themselves is not checked by teachers and so mistakes remain. When requests are made for students to complete or further improve work, some students do not always respond, so opportunities to improve are lost.
- Some teachers do not set high enough expectations for the presentation of work in students' books. Opportunities are missed to improve students' spelling and grammar and work which is incorrect is sometimes praised.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are positive about academy life and speak of their pride in attending this academy. They respect the property of others and appreciate the stylish building and good facilities that they enjoy. As a result, there is no litter, graffiti or damage to any part of the building. Students are welcoming and well-mannered.
- Most students feel that they have a voice through the academy council and video diaries. They enjoy holding responsibilities, such as being prefects in Year 11. A group of students have been involved in planning a school bank, in partnership with a local Building Society which is due to open in the academy in September 2014.
- All students have personal tutors who check their progress across subjects. There is mentoring for those who need extra support. The welfare of each student is at the heart of the academy's work.
- Fixed-term exclusions are above average, but steadily reducing. This is because the academy sets high expectations for behaviour and attitudes and has zero tolerance if rules are broken. Exclusions are used as a last resort and students are provided with different lesson structures and complete additional work.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students report that there is very little bullying and any that occurs is quickly dealt with by staff. They say that offensive name-calling relating to race or homophobia is rare. Students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe because they learn about the dangers of drug abuse and the Internet across many subjects.
- Attendance has risen since the previous inspection and is in line with the national average.
- Students in the sixth form see themselves as role models for younger students. They are enjoying being the first cohort, but would like more opportunities to build up their identity as a group. As yet they have no specific roles and responsibilities except those relating to their courses, such as becoming sports leaders. They have good advice and support for their academic and personal progress, but careers advice is underdeveloped.

The leadership and management are good

- The principal and vice-principal share the highest expectations and have an unswerving commitment to ensure that all students achieves their goals, whatever their circumstances. As a result, improvement since the opening of the academy is strong and further rapid improvements are evident since the previous inspection.
- The drive to improve teaching has been relentless and increasingly successful. It has been achieved with the full co-operation of staff, many of whom comment on how much better their teaching has become because of the challenge, support and coaching that they have received. They speak of an 'enormous learning curve' so that teachers previously identified as underperforming are now leading training for others. In responding to the questionnaires, many staff commented on their pride in being part of the academy. Teaching assistants are included in meetings and training sessions and so play an important role in securing further improvements. All staff feel valued.
- Teachers and leaders know that they are accountable for the achievement and progress of their students and recognise that this is closely linked to pay progression.
- Senior leaders and governors engage in a range of activities to check up on the quality of teaching and learning. These include direct observation of teaching and learning in lessons, checking work in students' books, learning walks where a series of lessons is visited with an agreed special focus and frequently checking progress records. Leaders have identified inconsistencies in teaching and marking practice which they are beginning to address in the drive to make teaching outstanding, but these strategies are too recent to have a full impact on outcomes for students.
- Subject leaders have played an important role in securing higher standards. They are passionate

about education as such, not just teaching to an examination specification, but developing skills for life. Subject leaders know that enjoyment is central to good learning and so try to ensure that lessons have pace, variety and challenge.

- Leaders in the academy trust and school leaders invest heavily in staff development and offer support and challenge so the academy benefits from its membership of a wider learning community.
- The curriculum is good. The academy is constantly developing the range of subjects on offer to ensure that students have the best chance of success. Students now spend three years on Key Stage 4 work instead of two, in order to improve GCSE results. The Year 8 curriculum has been modified for low-ability students to give more time to the development of important literacy skills, including improving reading. The most-able students are expected to follow academic courses, rather than vocational subjects and there is a steady increase in the number of students following the EBacc (English Baccalaureate) route. All students take part in some work experience to prepare them for further training and work.
- The curriculum in the sixth form is tailored precisely to the needs of the students. Attainment on entry is lower than in many sixth forms. The academy offers courses which keep young students in education and increase their chances of success in progressing to higher education, apprenticeships or training. The only students who are not going to carry on into Year 13 are those who have already been offered apprenticeships. Next year the academy will increase the range of subjects available by offering biology A-level. Advice to students thinking of joining the sixth form is good, but there is not yet enough quality advice on the next stage of their education.
- Students across the academy enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities and these, along with the very positive ethos of the academy and inspiring assemblies support students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For the first time students will be able to take part in trips abroad.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors play an active part in holding the academy to account for its performance, supporting and challenging where necessary. The governing body has been strengthened by new appointments of governors with specific educational expertise. Governors are involved in a range of different strategies to check on how well students are achieving and the quality of teaching. These include analysing progress data and taking part in scrutinising the work in students' books so that they can see progress, or lack of it, for themselves. They take regular 'learning walks' and report on their findings to the entire governing body. They meet the student council to gain the views of students and help students understand the work of governors. They check on behaviour and attendance. They are involved in helping the academy make decisions on how to use pupil premium funding to achieve the best results for students and making sure that strategies deliver strong improvements for these students. Governors keep a firm hold on the budget and make sure that performance reviews are rigorous. They have robust measures to ensure that safeguarding requirements are met. They are totally committed to ensuring that every student has an equal chance to be successful. The Chair of Governors is regularly in the academy and all governors attend numerous academy events so that they are known and recognised by parents.

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	136680
Local authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	442589

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	599
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	31
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathon May
Headteacher	Rod Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2013
Telephone number	01782 883333
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	info@ormistonhorizonacademy.co.uk

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