

Oasis Academy Blakenhale Junior

Homestead Road, Garretts Green, Birmingham, B33 0XG

Inspection dates 10–11 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not applicable
	This inspection:	Requires improvement 3
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils	Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement is not yet good. Standards are below average in Year 6. There is some variation between the attainment of boys and girls in reading and writing.
- Pupils do not make fast enough progress in Years 3 to 5 to enable a higher proportion of more-able pupils to reach the higher levels in Year 6.
- Weaknesses in pupils' calculation skills holds back their progress in mathematics.
- Staff turnover and illness has reduced leaders' capacity to speedily improve teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Teachers do not always expect enough of pupils, especially the most able.
- Teachers do not question pupils well enough to summarise and deepen their learning. Planned activities in lessons do not enable pupils to build quickly on what they have already learned.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils make good progress in Year 6. Gaps in attainment between the disadvantaged pupils and their classmates reduce significantly.
- Writing skills are often taught well.
- Teachers' marking provides pupils with helpful guidance.
- Well-considered actions taken by leaders have improved behaviour throughout the academy. Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- The well planned personal, social and health education programme underpins pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The executive principal, ably supported by her leadership team and academy councillors, provides good leadership. Leaders check the academy's work regularly; they ensure that assessment is accurate and know where further improvements need to be made.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all year groups through visits of varying length to classrooms to check on pupils' learning. On some visits they were accompanied by the executive principal or the associate principal.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading.
- Samples of Year 6 pupils' work from last year and this year in writing and mathematics were looked at together with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with academy staff, a group of pupils, two academy councillors (governors), and the regional academy director.
- Inspectors took account of the 34 questionnaires completed by staff. Too few responses have been made by parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire in the last year for them to be recorded on the Parent View website. An inspector spoke informally to a few parents at the beginning of the academy day.
- Inspectors checked a range of evidence including: monitoring records; consultants' reports; the academy improvement plan; the academy's own data on pupils' attainment and progress; and policies, procedures and practice relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Derek Aitken, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Angela Mulligan	Additional Inspector
Marian Driver	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy opened on 1 February 2013 as part of the Oasis Community Learning Trust. It is governed by an academy council which also oversees the work of Oasis Academy Blakenhale Infants. The executive principal was appointed in December 2013 to lead the two academies and the other senior leaders have recently started to work across the two academies.
- Blakenhale Junior has experienced considerable staff turnover due to long-term injuries, illness and related factors. Temporary arrangements have been made including the appointment of staff new to teaching.
- The academy is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The remaining pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils (pupils supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care), is far higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with statements of education, health and care plans is also above average. Currently, four pupils have such statements.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- A breakfast club operates on the academy site. It is managed by the governing body and was included in this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching consistently good or better, and increase the proportion of pupils achieving at the higher levels by ensuring that all teachers:
 - use questioning more effectively to deepen learning
 - use classroom activities that consistently enable pupils to build quickly on what they have learned and can do
 - always provide the most-able pupils with work that makes them think hard and learn as quickly as they can.
- Improve pupils' achievement in mathematics by developing their calculation and thinking skills and enabling them to acquire a wider range of strategies for solving calculation problems.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The executive principal and team of senior staff lead the new academy well. The executive principal's regular evaluations of the academy's performance are detailed, accurate and securely based on a wide range of evidence.
- Actions taken are timely, well considered and fully focused on developing the academy's work. The full impact of some measures devised to improve teaching and achievement, has been delayed by staffing difficulties. Nonetheless, notable gains have been made, particularly in improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Procedures for managing staff performance are clear. Staff targets are firmly based on the national *Teachers' Standards* and linked with ambitious targets for pupils' progress and school priorities. These are regularly reviewed and reasonably adjusted if required. Evidence is used well to tackle underperformance.
- The new integrated leadership across the infant and junior academies is enabling key staff to assess the standards and needs of pupils more sharply when they join Year 3. The school is in the early stages of working towards full implementation of its preferred approach to assessment following the removal of National Curriculum levels.
- Effective and up-to-date tracking systems ensure pupils needing support are identified quickly. Recent appointments to staff, with responsibility for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs ensure that this classroom support is effective. The academy is now offering good 'in-house' services to help parents meet their children's pastoral needs.
- Staff with responsibilities for subjects have a good understanding of how well pupils are doing through half-termly checks which include observing groups and hearing pupils read. They regularly check lesson plans to make sure teachers work to a common timetable of topics across year groups. They are clear about what needs to be done to improve teaching and to raise achievement and know where extra support is needed to improve the standards of targeted pupils.
- The academy's curriculum (the subjects taught) is broad and balanced. There are plenty of useful opportunities for pupils to apply basic skills in new and interesting ways. Broader themes are explored that support pupils' personal development, covering their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, well. This was observed, for example in a Year 6 lesson, where pupils explored an 'emotion equation' to consider how changes in human feelings can affect the actions they take.
- Lessons are supplemented by enrichment activities such as trips and residential visits outside the local area which deepen effectively pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain. Pupils understand diversity and accept differences. They have a growing awareness of other faiths such as Buddhism and festivals, such as Ramadan through their visits to other places of worship and links with the academy's partner school in Zimbabwe.
- Pupil premium funding has been used suitably to employ extra staff to enhance pastoral care and to support pupils more intensively in lessons. The impact is carefully tracked.
- Leaders targeted some of the national primary sports funding to support dance as a means of improving pupils' physical fitness. Specialist coaching for pupils and staff and a new after-school club has resulted in increased interest and participation in dance, particularly from boys. This funding has helped to increase the number of sports clubs available for pupils and for the wider community during holiday periods. Sport sessions at lunchtimes have contributed to a reduction in playground incidents.
- The academy trust holds leaders to account through, for example, a series of frequent visits, during which data are examined, classroom teaching is observed, and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements are confirmed. These visits also include the use of external consultants and result in reviews supporting long-term planning. The trust brokers useful training opportunities for less experienced teachers.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have received thorough training to help them fulfil their advisory duties to the Oasis Community Learning Board. Key governors know their duties well and have drawn up plans for their further development. Fully documented records of their meetings in the last eighteen months show that they have been extensively briefed by the executive principal on all aspects of the academy's work. They capably use their expertise and knowledge to closely question senior leaders about the academy's performance.
- Their effective support for, and challenge to, senior leaders helps the academy set clear goals for the future.
- Governors know how well the academy is doing. The regularity of visits they undertake to observe pupils' learning at first hand has increased steadily. They have a secure understanding of the data describing pupils' attainment and progress. They are aware of how different groups of pupils are achieving and which aspects of their skills need further development.
- Governors prepare pupils positively for life in modern Britain through actively promoting the academy's values which are founded on widening pupils' horizons and are reflected through the academy's link with Oasis Academy Zimbabwe.
- They have spent pupil premium funding suitably to ensure it has the required impact on raising eligible pupils' achievement and on improving their well-being.
- Governors are suitably aware of procedures for managing staff performance and use the information they receive carefully to check whether the principal, other leaders and staff have achieved their targets before agreeing to pay rises.
- Governors ensure that current government requirements for safeguarding are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils grow in maturity as they move up the year groups and by Year 6 most pupils show a keen sense of responsibility to their classmates and their academy.
- Pupils accept classroom routines and settle quickly to their work, for example, after a change of lessons or after break-times. They respect the need for quiet in assemblies and reflect calmly on the academy's values which often draw on spiritual and uplifting moral and social themes, as was observed for example in an assembly based on the 'Chariots of Fire' film.
- Most pupils enjoy learning new skills, and, as they get older, develop the confidence to respond to their teachers' questions quickly and to collaborate usefully with each other on pair or group tasks. Pupils' growing independence is developed through responsibilities, for example as library monitors and prefects.
- Pupils of different ethnic backgrounds mix easily with each other at work and at play. They value school trips in helping them to build relationships. They greet visitors politely and in a friendly way. Although they are sometimes a little excitable in public areas, such as the breakfast café, relationships are mainly good-humoured.
- Changes to behaviour policies and procedures and the recent recruitment of staff with expert knowledge of managing challenging behaviours have been appreciated by staff and pupils. Teachers have benefited from useful training in techniques in minimising disruption while pupils speak positively of the 'carrot' tokens reward scheme. Exclusions reduced substantially last year.
- The academy records and monitors attendance and punctuality carefully and promotes them actively through weekly awards. Attendance rates rose sharply last year and the number of pupils who were persistently absent reduced.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Suitable procedures and systems are in place for regulating visitors' access to the premises and checks are regularly made to ensure health and safety requirements are met. Staff take particular care to ensure that pupils are hydrated during physical education lessons in hot weather.

- Relevant staff keep clear logs of incidents of misbehaviour. There are few recorded examples of verbal or physical bullying and racist behaviours and no examples of homophobic bullying. Pupils report that some of their peers use mildly unkind words occasionally to describe their classmates but that this practice rarely leads to serious arguments. Pupils are given regular reminders about playground rules and clear advice in the academy about the safe use of social media. Older pupils are aware of the services of Childline and say staff listen readily to any concerns they have.
- Leaders ensure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive the required support, either directly in the academy or through the involvement of outside agencies.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is too variable to enable pupils to make consistently good progress. Overall, teaching is less effective in mathematics than in reading and writing.
- Teachers usually provide pupils with learning activities that they enjoy but they do not always ensure that these build continually on what pupils have learned. Although teachers provide clear explanations, they sometimes make limited use of questioning to draw responses from quieter pupils and to summarise or deepen pupils' learning. These weaknesses prevent pupils from developing their knowledge and skills at a fast rate.
- Good classroom relationships and the effective management of pupils' behaviour focus pupils' attention on their work and ensure lessons get off to a settled start. Pupils' concentration and willingness to respond to questions, especially in the younger age groups, occasionally starts to waver. This happens, for example, when teachers use methods which do not arouse pupils' curiosity when they introduce a new topic or activity.
- Leaders take swift, firm actions to remove weaknesses in teaching and provide full, well-judged support to staff who need help to improve their practice. This support has resulted in some improvements in teaching. However, the high turnover of staff has hampered the best efforts of leaders to build strongly on training and to achieve continuity in pupils' learning.
- In mathematics, teachers do not have consistently high expectations for pupils' progress. Sometimes the mental calculations pupils are asked to do are too easy. As a consequence, there are too few opportunities for middle- and higher-attaining pupils to practise their thinking skills and to discuss with each other various strategies for arriving at solutions.
- Disabled pupils and those pupils with special educational needs are mainly supported effectively by teaching assistants in lessons. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, pupils were guided successfully to work out their own approaches to the correct use of the equals sign before trying out a harder challenge.
- Writing skills are often taught well. Early handwriting is usually neat with letters well formed. Pupils take effective small steps in their learning, as was observed, for example in Year 4 lessons, when a small range of simple connectives was presented and practised across the classes to enable pupils to construct longer sentences. Learning was efficiently reviewed and pupils responded well to the challenge of trying out more complex connectives.
- Marking of pupils' writing, especially in the older age-groups, provides pupils with useful guidance and helps them to improve their command of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment when they join Year 3 varies, but it is often low, as was the case for Year 6 pupils who left the academy in July 2014 and for pupils in the current Year 6 classes.
- There are no national test data yet available for this academy for 2014, but teachers' assessments show that overall, attainment by the end of Year 6 was below average. While most pupils were assessed by teachers as achieving the nationally expected Level 4, too few were deemed to have reached the higher Levels in reading and mathematics. These assessments are confirmed by inspectors' observations, discussion with pupils and looking at pupils' work. Some pupils did not do as well as they should have done in mathematics.
- Pupils do not make good progress overall, particularly in Years 3 to 5. Some gaps in attainment remain between boys and girls and disadvantaged pupils and their classmates. In 2013, Year 6 disadvantaged pupils were about six months behind their classmates overall in reading and writing, and two terms' behind in mathematics. Current academy data shows that gaps between these groups are narrowing, especially in Year 6, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, as pupils' progress quickens over the year.
- Overall, pupils do not make fast enough progress across the academy to enable more pupils to work at more challenging levels. Consequently, some of the most-able pupils are not given good opportunities to develop their knowledge, understanding and ideas fully over a sustained period of time. On a few occasions time is lost as they wait for pupils in other groups to finish their work. Tasks in mathematics lessons do not sufficiently probe their thinking skills or help them to develop wider skills such as perseverance.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the same rates of progress as their classmates because their needs are identified early and teaching assistants provide effective support.
- The rate of pupils' progress is accelerating, showing the impact of good leadership initiatives. Pupils develop good attitudes to their work. Some younger pupils can reflect on their learning and give constructive praise to their classmates. By Year 6, they know how to improve the presentation and quality of their work. They are able to assess their own work and follow up teachers' comments.
- While lower- and middle-attaining boys sometimes lack confidence in reading, the most-able girls often read fluently. They explain their reading preferences confidently, provide their classmates with useful advice to help them vary their expression and show some understanding of expressive vocabulary.
- An increased range of opportunities for pupils to write for a range of purposes in other subjects is enabling more pupils, especially girls, to reach the higher Level 5 in Year 6 in writing.

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	139129
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	447835

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	355
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Edwards
Principal	Denise White
Date of previous school inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	0121 783 3960
Fax number	0121 789 8179
Email address	info@oasisblakenhalejunior.org

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