

# Erasmus Darwin Academy

Pool Road, Burntwood, WS7 3QW

**Inspection dates** 11–12 September 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b> <b>2</b>
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The principal and senior leadership team are relentless in their drive to make sure that the academy provides high-quality teaching and a good all-round education for all.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong and the range of subjects they study is appropriate. Students have many opportunities to understand how democracy works in modern day Britain.
- The governing body is well informed about all aspects of the academy's work, including the quality of teaching and students' achievement. Governors hold senior leaders to account through a good balance of challenge and support.
- Behaviour and safety are good because students get on well with each other and their teachers. Students and staff are proud to belong to the academy.
- Teaching is good because teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations. Teachers use a variety of resources to motivate students.
- In art, teaching is consistently outstanding and students make exceptional progress.
- From average starting points, students make good progress. The proportion of students achieving five GCSE grades at A\* to C, including English and mathematics, is typically above average.
- The sixth form is good. Achievement on both A-level and vocational qualifications is good, and students are well prepared for their futures.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teachers use questioning techniques well to check students' understanding.
- There is sometimes not enough challenge for all students, including the most able and disabled students and those who have special educational needs.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 38 lessons, seven of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors undertook a work scrutiny that examined students' progress across the range of subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and subject leaders, groups of students, and the Chair and another member of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors considered the views of the 43 parents who have responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. They analysed the results of the 83 replies to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at the academy's data on students' progress, 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.

## Inspection team

Lisa Fraser, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Elizabeth Needham

Additional Inspector

Julian Souter

Additional Inspector

Julie Griffiths

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than most secondary schools.
- Erasmus Darwin Academy converted to become an academy school in July 2011. When its predecessor school, Chasetown Specialist Sports College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- Students come from mainly White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is much lower than average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium is lower than average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The academy works with King Edward VI School, Chase Terrace Technology College, The Friary School and Nether Stowe School to offer a broad range of courses in the sixth form.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards for Key Stage 4, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise standards across all subjects by ensuring that:
  - teachers use questioning techniques effectively to gauge students' understanding
  - there is consistent challenge in lessons for all groups of students, including the most able and disabled students and those who have special educational needs.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The principal provides strong leadership. Students and staff are proud to belong to the academy and share her vision and determination to achieve the highest of standards. As a result, all aspects of the academy's work, including teaching, behaviour and safety, achievement and the sixth form are good.
- Systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching are well developed and have made a good impact on improving standards. Subject leaders are actively involved in monitoring teaching in their departments. Several subject leaders who are new to their role are receiving good-quality coaching and support from senior leaders. Some staff at the academy are specialist leaders in education, and teachers in other schools also benefit from their good practice.
- Although the academy plans to introduce its own approach, at the present time in Key Stage 3, students' work is assessed using the former National Curriculum levels. From Year 9 onwards, teachers mark using GCSE gradings. Some subject leaders, including in art and physical education, have worked with teachers in other schools to ensure that their assessments of students' examination work are accurate.
- Staff say their development needs are well supported by a wide range of opportunities, including the 'Outstanding teacher' programme and training accessed through the Arthur Terry teaching school alliance. Teachers who perform well access upper pay scales whereas others do not. Senior leaders have not been afraid to take sometimes difficult decisions to tackle areas of underperformance.
- A broad range of mainly GCSE-level subjects is on offer at Key Stage 4. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Students have opportunities to learn about how democracy functions by participating in house and academy councils which enable students to have a say in the running of academy life. In Year 7, students visit the Houses of Parliament to learn about how democracy operates in Britain. Students in Year 8 go on to study parliamentary processes and general elections.
- Students are well informed about communities which may be different to their own. Interesting lessons in religious education and visits to places of worship, including a local cathedral, gurdwara and mosque, help students demonstrate good levels of understanding and respect for the views and beliefs of others. 'Religion, peace and justice' is part of the GCSE religious education programme of study followed by Year 11 students. All staff have recently completed training on wider British values.
- As an academy school, the academy is no longer obliged to work with the local authority. Senior leaders have made good use of external consultants to check their judgements on aspects of the academy's work.
- All safeguarding requirements are met. Staff are fully trained and knowledgeable about risk assessment and child-protection issues.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is ambitious for students. Governors have a good understanding of published data and know how the academy performs in comparison with other secondary schools nationally. Governing body minutes indicate that governors are exceptionally well briefed about all areas of the academy's work, including the quality of teaching and provision for disabled students and those who have special educational needs. The governing body knows how funding is spent, including the pupil premium funding, and checks on the impact it has on the achievement of eligible students. The governing body knows about performance management and what the academy is doing to reward good teaching and tackle any areas of underperformance. Members of the governing body attend regular training.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are keen to learn and are respectful of staff and each other, and this supports their good progress. Around the school, students respond quickly to staff requests and they are punctual to lessons. The environment is calm and orderly. Corridors are tidy and there are few examples of litter.

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students identify that bullying is not an issue and they understand bullying in all its forms. All students, and in particular students in Year 7 who have just joined the academy, say they feel safe. Their parents agree. Year 7 students were very complimentary about the help they have had to settle in from students in their mixed-age tutor groups. One student commented, 'I feel as if I'm at home.'
- Events, such as the annual presentation evening where many students, staff and parents join together to celebrate students' achievements, are well attended. Parents at this year's event spoke enthusiastically to inspectors about how their participation in focus groups has helped them feed into the academy's work in developing the behaviour policy. Teachers use students' planners effectively to communicate positive comments about students' progress to parents.
- Students are actively encouraged to get involved in academy life by taking on positions of responsibility, such as peer buddies and anti-bullying ambassadors. The head boy and head girl brief governors in governing body meetings on issues raised by the academy council.
- Attendance is in line with the national average. Although there have been some permanent exclusions in the past, an area known as 'The Student Inclusion Zone' has been established to tackle any rare incidents of poor behaviour.

### **The quality of teaching** is good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations. They plan activities with interesting resources which motivate students and support their good progress.
- Students are helped to develop very positive attitudes to learning and good social skills; they work particularly effectively in collaborative tasks and enjoy discussing their ideas in pairs and groups. All students, particularly the most-able, are encouraged to take the lead in their learning by finding things out for themselves and from each other. For example, students in Year 9 geography made rapid progress in their geographical decision making as a result of the teacher's careful planning, which prompted them to discuss with their classmates the legacy to local and national communities of the 2012 London Olympic Games.
- Teaching significantly enhances students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, students in a Year 8 music lesson developed their understanding of off-beat chords and enjoyed finding out about the musical features of reggae. In Year 7 French the teacher's good use of the target language enabled students to develop effective listening and speaking skills whilst also learning more about famous French people.
- Across the range of subjects, frequent opportunities to get involved in assessing each other's work help students understand how well they are doing. Marking is regular and students receive good-quality guidance on what they need to do to improve. The vast majority of students take good care over the presentation of their work. Homework tasks are appropriate and regularly set across the range of subjects.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs often benefit from good help offered by teaching assistants. In a few lessons, however, teachers do not provide work which challenges these students to maximise their potential.
- Not all teachers use questioning consistently effectively to check students' understanding and to probe for more comprehensive answers. In some subjects, teachers' questioning does not stretch more-able students to develop the detailed answers needed to secure the very top grades.

### **The achievement of pupils** is good

- Students join the academy with broadly average skills in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of students achieving five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics,

is usually above average; this indicates that students are making good progress. Results dipped in 2014, reflecting the changes in grade boundaries and the lower starting points that these students had, but academy data indicate that attainment across all year groups is above average.

- In English and mathematics, the proportion of students making expected and accelerated progress is typically high compared with that found nationally. Students achieve excellent results in art as a result of teaching which is consistently outstanding. Examination results in science improved markedly in 2014 compared with the previous year.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Their achievement and behaviour are well monitored by the head of special educational needs. As a result, teachers are provided with high-quality information about individual students' specific needs which they then use to inform their lesson planning. Extra help is also available from teaching assistants who support students through individual sessions in the area known as 'The Learning Hub'.
- In the past, students have been entered early for their GCSE examination in mathematics but this is no longer the case. In mathematics, the number of students attaining the top grades is broadly in line with the national average. Across the range of subjects, the most-able students achieve as well as their peers nationally.
- Gaps in the attainment and progress between disadvantaged students and their classmates are reducing over time. Academy leaders are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity, and additional funding through the pupil premium is used on a range of initiatives, including support from learning mentors in English and mathematics and extra mathematics revision resources. Last year, disadvantaged students in Year 11 were half a grade behind their peers in both English and mathematics.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used effectively to boost the performance of students in the 'STAR' group (students who joined the academy with Key Stage 2 results below Level 4) who last year made accelerated rates of progress in reading as a result.

### The sixth form provision

is good

- Achievement in the sixth form is good. The sixth form exceeds the 16–19 interim minimum standards and sixth formers demonstrate outstandingly positive attitudes to their learning. Attendance rates are very high.
- Attainment is rising strongly over time and, in 2013, was above average on both A-level and vocational courses. In 2014, all groups of students exceeded their targets. In art, students consistently make exceptional progress.
- Teaching in the sixth form is characterised by high standards and expectations. Well-focused individual support is available for all students. This helps students to develop approaches to research and finding things out for themselves, which prepare them well for further study beyond school. The proportion of students who stay on to complete courses has improved and is better than the average in the local area.
- Students are very positive about the quality of careers information, advice and guidance they receive. The vast majority leave the sixth form to go on to study at university, with a few students opting to take up apprenticeships.
- The academy's links with five local secondary schools ensure that the range of subjects in the sixth form is appropriately broad and balanced. Sixth formers have a high take-up of extra-curricular activities and they make a valuable contribution to academy life through mixed-age tutor groups; this is greatly appreciated by younger students.
- New leadership of the sixth form is working to ensure improvement plans identify suitable targets and areas for development. Just occasionally, the most-able students are not effectively challenged.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136886
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	448611

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<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>	930
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	140
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jason Marsden
<b>Principal</b>	Bernice Astling
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01543 685828
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<b>Email address</b>	admin@eda.staffs.sch.uk



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