

Oasis Academy Blakenhale

Infants

Blakenhale Road, Birmingham, B33 0XD

Inspection dates 2–3 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	This inspection:	Requires improvement 3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement 3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement 3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement 3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement 3
Early years provision		Requires improvement 3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils do not achieve nationally expected standards in their work, especially in writing, because their progress has not been fast enough.
- Teachers do not use their knowledge of what pupils already know well enough to plan learning activities that stretch pupils of all abilities. This is particularly so for the most-able pupils.
- Expectations of pupils are not always high enough and so teachers do not set sufficiently high challenges to excite and enthuse pupils and develop new skills.
- Teachers do not always ask questions skilfully enough to check pupils' learning and understanding.
- Teachers' marking does not give pupils enough information for them to be able to improve their work.
- Topic work is not used to develop literacy and numeracy skills sufficiently.
- Pupils are not enthusiastic about their work in all lessons and so they do not consistently show good attitudes to learning.
- Difficulties in recruiting appropriately experienced staff have held back improvements in teaching and learning.
- Some leaders are not yet contributing enough to raising pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Recently appointed leaders are helping pupils to make better progress, particularly in the Nursery.
- The Academy Trust Council has taken bold decisions in holding leaders and teachers accountable for pupils' progress.
- Staff assessments of what pupils already know have improved. This means that they now have accurate starting points in each class, in order to plan for progress.
- Productive partnerships with the junior school and other members of the academy trust are challenging staff to develop their skills, and this is starting to help pupils to make faster progress.
- Pupils say that they are happy in the academy. They feel safe, and know how to get help if they need it.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons and an assembly. They also listened to pupils reading, looked at their workbooks and checked information about their progress.
- Meetings were held with pupils, parents, the Academy Trust Council, and academy leaders.
- There were not enough responses on the Ofsted Parent View survey site to record results.
- A range of documents were considered. These included the academy’s analysis of how well it is doing, its improvement plan and policies (including those relating to staff performance), minutes of the Academy Trust Council’s meetings, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors examined work in pupils’ books and around the school.

Inspection team

Lynne Bradbury, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Westall	Additional Inspector
Jennifer Edginton	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds. Other pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds.
- Oasis Blakenhale Academy became an academy in February 2013, sponsored by the Oasis Community Learning Multi Academy Trust. When its predecessor school, Blakenhale Infant School, was last inspected by Ofsted in 2011, it was judged to require special measures.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is average, and this is also the case for the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs or the new education, health and care plan.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium funding (those known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority) is above average.
- The Executive Principal is also the Principal of Oasis Blakenhale Junior Academy. She and the Associate Principal were appointed in January 2014 after a period of great turbulence and instability in the academy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement by improving:
 - the way in which assessment of what pupils know and can do is used to plan learning activities which stretch all pupils, but particularly the most able
 - the level of interest and challenge in lessons, so that all groups of pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and committed to making progress
 - teachers' use of questions during lessons to improve pupils' understanding and move on those who are capable of making faster progress
 - marking of pupils' work so that pupils have clear understanding of what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve
 - pupils' spelling and punctuation skills, and opportunities to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills through topic work.
- Develop opportunities for all leaders to improve their skills, so that they accelerate the improvement of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The Academy Trust Council have been in place since February 2013. Their effectiveness was limited in the first year because staff changes and turbulence disrupted the changes to inherited systems. Their determination to find appropriate leaders for the academy meant that development was delayed. However, since the current Principals have been appointed, there has been an urgent focus on improvement. This has been effective in establishing teachers' accurate understanding of assessment. It is beginning to raise rates of pupils' progress, and this is evident in the work of current pupils.
 - Development was initially slow in the academy. However, with the appointment of the Executive Principal and Associate Principal, rigorous monitoring of the work of staff has led to accurate judgements by the Trust Council and senior leaders. These, in turn, have resulted in an accurate identification of the most important areas for development and appropriate planning for improvement.
 - Judgements about teachers' success, academy effectiveness and pay decisions, are based on pupils' progress and lead to appropriate training. This is beginning to be effective in improving the quality of teaching, and teachers are held to account in pupil progress meetings following half-termly assessments.
 - English and mathematics subject leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas to improve within the academy through rigorous checking which is leading to improvements in teaching and pupils' progress. They devise well-focused action plans to address areas which need to improve further. Not all subject leaders have currently developed these skills sufficiently.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developing across all aspects of the academy. Pupils' appreciation and tolerance of difference are helping them to understand British values, traditions and customs as well as Britain's position in the world.
 - Pupils enjoy their topics, which combine work from a wide range of subjects. There are not yet enough opportunities for pupils to develop their basic literacy and numeracy skills through these topics. Homework extends pupils' interests in the topic areas.
 - The academy's commitment to equal opportunities for all pupils is demonstrated in the improving progress made by most groups. Additional funding is used to pay for extra staff and equipment to ensure that all pupils can benefit from all the school has to offer.
 - The pupil premium funding has been used to provide pastoral and emotional support for disadvantaged pupils and to give them extra opportunities through clubs and visits.
 - Leaders have used the additional primary school sports funding so that pupils have extra sporting experiences led by professional coaches. Pupils say that they enjoy these sports during school and in clubs. Staff have also had extra training through the funding to develop their skills.
- **The governance of the school:**
- The Trust Council members bring specialised and professional skills to their role in improving the work of the academy. They undertake appropriate training through the Trust to help them to judge the work of the academy for themselves. Their commitment to high-quality improvement is evident in their perseverance in establishing effective leaders within the academy. This has led to much faster improvement in the last two terms.
 - The Council has set ambitious targets for staff performance, and uses rigorous systems for checking progress and making salary decisions. They have been bold in holding staff firmly to account where necessary. This has led to a rapid turnover of staff, which also initially slowed development.
 - Council members work very closely with academy leaders to identify priority areas for development, devise well-targeted action plans, and check progress against these rigorously. All judgements are made based upon pupils' achievement. Improvement plans are funded, and carefully managed and monitored.

- Extra funding, such as the pupil premium and the additional school sports funding, is used appropriately to boost pupils' learning and skills.
- The Trust Council ensures that safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. They are attentive in lessons and there are few disruptions to classes, but their attitudes do not yet reflect excitement, enthusiasm and determination to learn. Pupils do not yet show a high level of motivation to learn in some classes.
- Pupils demonstrate positive relationships, make friends across many groups, and show respect for each other and tolerance of difference.
- In the last two terms, pupils have developed greater care in presenting their work.
- Pupils say that the staff care about them and they trust them to help when needed. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and supportive.
- Pupils are polite and show a respect for adults, and each other. They enjoy their sports activities and appreciate the clubs offered. They value the school's reward systems and respond well to praise.
- Pupils are sensible when supervised as they move about the academy, and they play sensibly in the yard with 'peer mediators' to help when needed.
- Staff, pupils and the parents who met with the inspectors say that behaviour is generally good. Records within school show that a great deal of work has been done to improve this aspect of the academy's work.
- Attendance is below average. However, the academy's policies to support pupils with difficulties in attendance and punctuality area are beginning to have an effect.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Safeguarding processes meet statutory requirements and effective policies and practices are followed by all staff and pupils. The school makes appropriate checks on visitors, including supply teachers, sports coaches and those who lead assemblies.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and are developing an understanding of the different forms that bullying can take, including those which involve mobile phones and the internet. They say that any bullying is dealt with by the staff very quickly.
- Pupils say that staff check very carefully that pupils do not use derogatory language or say negative things about groups of people who are different in some way.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Staff have not previously had a clear enough understanding of what pupils can already do, and this has hindered them in planning work at the right level of difficulty to challenge pupils and extend their learning. This has improved recently because of the training that teachers have had, and they are now matching work more effectively to pupils' capabilities, leading to better progress. However, this remains less well developed for the most-able pupils. The most-able pupils are still not being moved forward in their learning fast enough in all classes.
- Teachers do not ask sufficiently probing questions to develop pupils' understanding, or to track pupils' progress during lessons and move learning forward.

- In classes where pupils' achievement is improving most rapidly, marking and feedback by teachers help pupils to know how to improve their work. However, this practice is not yet fully in place across the academy.
- Staff have established an atmosphere of respect in lessons and they use rewards for good behaviour well to encourage pupils to work hard. They build good relationships in an atmosphere of warmth and trust.
- Regular checks on pupils' progress are now undertaken so that teachers can identify any pupils who are falling behind.
- Homework, based upon topic work, captures pupils' interest and helps them to make progress. Teachers do not yet use subjects other than English and mathematics sufficiently to develop reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Teaching assistants are developing effective skills in supporting disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. This makes an important contribution to these pupils' learning.
- All staff encourage the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness within the subjects taught and in experiences outside the classroom. For example, during mathematics, pupils learn how to share equipment and, in other subjects, they learn to take turns and to respect each other's views.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Until the last two terms, pupils in all year groups had made slow progress, particularly in writing. Progress is now beginning to speed up, particularly in the Nursery, but still requires further improvement to close the gaps in pupils' learning.
- Teachers' lack of training in developing pupils' understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) led to limited progress for pupils, particularly in writing, in the first year of the academy. During the last two terms, focused training in this area has led to particular improvements in written work, though spelling and punctuation have been slower to improve. The proportion of pupils who attained expected levels in the Year 1 phonics test this year was below average.
- In 2014, pupils in Year 2 achieved standards in reading, writing and mathematics which were below average. However, teachers' more accurate assessment of attainment and progress is now enabling them to set a better level of challenge for most pupils, which is beginning to lead to faster progress.
- The most-able pupils are not set challenging enough work to enable them to reach the higher standards of which they are capable.
- Pupils generally enjoy reading and are beginning to develop a better understanding of their books. Where pupils make the most progress, guided reading lessons focus on stretching them through teachers' probing questions and interesting tasks, but this is not the case in all classes.
- Work in pupils' books confirms that the progress of most pupils in English and mathematics has improved in the last two terms. Pupils are beginning to understand how to improve their work.
- A wide range of subjects are combined into interesting topics which are enabling pupils to develop skills in these areas. Teachers are not yet giving pupils sufficient opportunities to develop their literacy or numeracy skills in these subjects.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have made slow progress in the past because of inaccuracies in assessments of their achievement. This has improved in the last two terms and is now enabling them to make better progress.

- The attainment of pupils receiving support through the pupil premium is below that of their peers in school and of those nationally. In 2013, disadvantaged pupils were two terms behind their classmates in writing, six months behind in reading and a term behind in mathematics. When compared with pupils nationally, they were assessed as a term behind in writing and less than a term behind in reading and mathematics. More accurate assessment of their learning has this year led to recent improvements in their progress.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Children join the Nursery with skills and knowledge which are below, and sometimes well below, what is typical for their age. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, their attainment is still below expectations.
- Children in the Nursery make good progress because staff work with parents to build a clear understanding of what children can already do, and they are helped to build upon this knowledge in each area of learning.
- Children develop confidence quickly, make friends and begin to build relationships. They make good progress in the Nursery because they settle to their work happily, their behaviour and attitudes are good, and they quickly grow in confidence. Parents contribute to assessing their children's starting points.
- This good progress is not continued in the Reception class because staff have not been as effective in using children's past achievements to plan their next steps in learning. This has also been adversely affected by changes in staffing. Because of this, children are not as enthusiastic about their work.
- Leaders' work to develop the department has been particularly effective in the Nursery in a very short period of time because leaders check carefully how well children are doing and what needs to improve. Systems to track children's progress and to plan new learning are effective in the Nursery in raising achievement, and are beginning to be extended to the Reception Year.

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	139120
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	447825

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Sponsor-led Academy
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	283
Appropriate authority	Oasis Academy Trust
Chair	Chris Edwards
Principals	Denise White (Executive), Clare Hoods-Truman (Associate)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
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