

James Brindley School

Bell Barn Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2AF

Inspection dates 13–14 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Inadequate 4
Leadership and management	Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Inadequate	4
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 special measures.

- Pupils' absence from the academy is not investigated quickly enough to keep them safe. Action taken is not recorded properly or at all.
- Patterns of low attendance are not analysed well enough to know why they happen. Some leaders have low expectations for pupils' attendance.
- The academy's safeguarding policy is not suitable for the wide range of different needs catered for. It does not give staff enough useful information about what they should look out for.
- Some staff are not clear about the procedures they should follow if they are concerned about a child's welfare.
- A number of pupils are only given access to half a week of education.
- Pupils' progress in English and mathematics is too variable from one centre to another.
- Staff do not always expect high enough standards of work from pupils.
- Senior leaders have an unrealistic view of the academy's effectiveness. They have not noticed or tackled some of the weaknesses in day-to-day management at some of the centres.
- When leaders ask staff to take action to improve their work, they do not consistently check if this action has been taken and so weaknesses remain.
- Information about pupils' achievement is not analysed precisely enough to know if pupils at different centres and with different needs are making enough progress.
- Governors do not always receive the accurate information they need in order to be able to challenge and support. The governing body is too small to cope with this large specialist academy.

The school has the following strengths

- Some leaders run their centres very well and have good procedures for safeguarding and for monitoring attendance.
- There is some good and outstanding teaching across the centres.
- Pupils in hospital are skilfully supported to keep learning as much as they can while they are ill.
- Across the academy, pupils are sensitive to each other's needs and support each other well.
- Pupils' progress is regularly assessed and leaders work closely with staff to plan any extra help that pupils need.
- Many pupils make good progress with their academic work and the vast majority of older pupils gain GCSE qualifications.

Information about this inspection

- The Principal was not present during the inspection. There has been an Interim Principal in post since mid-September. The inspection team liaised with the Interim Principal and the three Vice-Principals.
- Inspectors visited the three main teaching centres, the three major hospitals, the four specialist centres and the Pathway provision (see 'Information about the school'). They observed lessons and tuition in classrooms and on the wards. All the Vice-Principals carried out some joint observations with inspectors.
- During observations and at informal times, inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences and discussed their work with them.
- Inspectors held meeting with senior leaders, leaders of some of the different centres and the home tuition service, and teachers. They also held informal conversations with staff from the academy and some medical staff. They met with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body.
- The team considered 112 responses from staff to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, and 20 responses from parents or carers on Parent View. They spoke to a small number of parents at two of the hospitals and to leaders from three mainstream schools that have links with James Brindley.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of written evidence, including policies, records of behaviour and attendance, safeguarding documents, the academy's analysis of achievement and examples of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Sue Morris-King, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Linda McGill	Her Majesty's Inspector
Karen Gannon	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michael Best	Additional Inspector
Sue Cox	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- James Brindley School converted to become an academy in the spring term 2013. When the predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted in 2008, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The academy has a number of centres catering for pupils with a wide range of needs, mainly related to medical or mental health conditions. The centres are spread across Birmingham.
- One hundred and ninety-six pupils are registered only at James Brindley. They attend one of three teaching centres: Dovedale, Parkway and Northfield. There are few primary-aged pupils and more than half the pupils are in Key Stage 4. Around a third of pupils who are single registered have a statement of special educational needs. Around three quarters are white British, and a quarter are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A small number are looked after by a local authority. Not quite half are eligible for the pupil premium, the additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who are looked after.
- Dovedale has pupils from Key Stages 2 to 4, and caters for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. Parkway and Northfield are for Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils with medical needs.
- Most of the other pupils are dual registered with their main school. These pupils are either in hospital or are resident in a specialist centre for a period of time.
- The academy has around 200 pupils at any one time at Birmingham Children's Hospital, smaller numbers at Heartlands Hospital and The Royal Orthopaedic Hospital, and sometimes pupils at the Queen Elizabeth and City Hospitals.
- The specialist centres, Oleaster, Newbridge and Ardenleigh each cater for up to 20 pupils with a range of mental health needs. The Willows takes around 35 pupils.
- If Early Years Foundation Stage children are at hospital they receive some teaching, as appropriate. The hospitals and specialist centres also teach post-16 students as necessary.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups, with special educational needs or who are looked after in the hospitals and specialist centres varies from one week to another.
- A small number of pupils who were previously taught at home, some of whom are dual registered and some of whom are single registered, attend Pathways for half of each week. They do not attend any other provision during the week.
- Over 100 pupils are taught in their homes by the James Brindley home tuition service.
- James Brindley is a teaching school. Various senior leaders are national or specialist leaders of education (NLEs or SLEs).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the procedures for safeguarding are equally good across all centres by:
 - making sure that non-attendance is always followed up swiftly, that very prompt action is taken when a pupil's whereabouts are not known, and that all actions are clearly recorded
 - tailoring the safeguarding policy so that it deals specifically with the needs of the different groups of pupils who are taught by the academy
 - ensuring that all staff know the procedures to follow and who to go to at their own centre when they have a concern about a pupil's wellbeing
 - making sure that governors know how effective safeguarding procedures are at each centre
 - minimising the use of part-time timetables at all centres
 - reviewing the Pathways programme so that pupils have access to full-time education, or as close as their medical needs allow, in line with statutory guidance.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that all safeguarding procedures are effective, including those for following up non-attendance
 - accurately analysing pupils' attendance at each centre and the reasons for non-attendance
 - thoroughly analysing the work of each centre so that strengths can be maximised, and relevant actions planned and implemented
 - consistently following up monitoring and evaluation activities to ensure that the actions that have been identified for staff to take have been taken
 - ensuring that information about pupils' achievement is analysed precisely in order to know if pupils at different centres, with different needs and staying for different lengths of time, are making enough progress
 - ensuring that governors receive full, accurate and timely information about all aspects of the academy's work, particularly safeguarding, attendance and achievement, so that they can provide more effective challenge and support
 - seeking to expand the governing body so that they can distribute tasks and gather first-hand evidence of the effectiveness of each centre.

- Improve pupils' attendance by:
 - setting high expectations for each pupil's attendance
 - developing a more effective range of strategies to help those pupils with low attendance to attend more frequently
 - emphasising the importance of attendance at lessons in each of the centres
 - celebrating good and greatly improved attendance at school and at lessons.

- Improve the quality of teaching and thereby the outcomes for pupils, particularly in English and mathematics, by:
 - consistently using assessment information as well as a range of monitoring information to identify aspects of teachers' work that need improvement, and supporting and challenging teachers in a focused way so that these improvements happen
 - ensuring that all teachers expect consistently high standards of effort and presentation from pupils
 - making sure that marking is frequent enough, helps pupils to feel proud of what they have achieved and lets them know what they need to do to improve
 - ensuring that all learning environments across all centres are of an equally high standard and support learning.

An external review of governance, including a specific focus on the academy's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- The academy evaluates itself as outstanding. This is not accurate. Each of the centres functions quite independently and the effectiveness of each is too dependent on the centre leader. This has led to too much variability.
- There are flaws in some of the day-to-day management of centres. Senior leaders do not know enough about how well each centre runs on a day-to-day basis; they have not noticed or have not tackled some of the weaknesses.
- The most serious weaknesses are in the management of safeguarding and attendance. While most centres follow up absence at once and record their actions, some do not. Not all leaders understand the importance of making sure that, as far as possible, all pupils (and especially those who are a child protection concern) are safe when they are absent or go missing from school. Poor or non-existent record keeping in some instances adds to the risk as colleagues are unable to ascertain what actions have been taken.
- Staff are not always clear about the processes for reporting concerns about a pupil's welfare within their centre. The safeguarding policy was out of date at the start of the inspection. A revised policy is too generic and does not recognise the different and special needs of the academy's pupils with respect to safeguarding. No reference is made to the separate safeguarding policies of the hospitals and specialist centres, all of which are different.
- Pupils who attend Pathways only have provision for half of the week. This programme does not allow them to access more education on a flexible basis, according to their health, and raises concerns about their safety when they are not in school.
- Senior leaders monitor and evaluate the work of the academy in a range of ways. However, they do not check thoroughly enough whether anything has changed as a result of their monitoring.
- A small minority of staff and leaders feel unclear about the direction of the academy or feel that they have been unsupported in their work in the past. These concerns and different views are beginning to cause some tension at different levels of the organisation. However, many staff express very positive views about working at the academy.
- Pupils' progress is assessed regularly across the main teaching centres, together with the hospital and specialist centres. This information is gathered systematically and used well by leaders to set individual goals for pupils. It is not analysed well enough by senior leaders to give detailed information about groups of pupils or the performance of different subjects across different centres.
- There are examples of some innovative and effective practice at different centres. Some centre leaders, supported by other senior leaders, set high standards for the wellbeing and achievement of their pupils. They have good, robust systems and processes to ensure that these standards are reached. The curriculum, particularly in the hospitals, is often carefully designed to meet pupils' needs. It includes appropriate provision to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.
- The primary school physical education and sport funding is being spent well to improve pupils' involvement with and enjoyment of sport. Pupil premium funding is largely spent on staffing but is not always targeted to the pupils who are eligible. No evaluation of Year 7 catch-up funding was available.
- Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have not ensured that safeguarding policies and procedures are secure. They have not had the training they need to help them to understand achievement and attendance, and what these might

reasonably look like in this setting. Governors do not always receive the information they need from leaders in a form that will help them to know how good each aspect of the academy is. Nevertheless, they do ask leaders some challenging questions about how well the academy is performing. They have questioned leaders' evaluation of the academy's overall effectiveness.

- There are several vacancies on the governing body and the current number of governors is too few for this complex multi-site organisation. This has limited the extent to which governors know each of the centres. The Chair and other governors have worked hard to recruit more governors but this has not yet been successful.
- The governing body knows how the pupil premium and other additional funding is spent but does not discuss how it will be allocated at the outset.
- Governors are involved in the performance management of staff. The Chair appropriately challenges or supports decisions about pay rises on the basis of the evidence provided.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils who attend the three main teaching centres generally have positive attitudes to their learning. Many make significant improvements with their confidence and their ability to work with others once they join the academy. Clear routines and expectations help pupils who need support to improve their behaviour over time.
- At the hospitals, pupils of all ages show enormous resilience in the face of their illnesses. Many show great determination to attend their lessons and participate fully. Older pupils study hard for their examinations when they can.
- Pupils' needs at the specialist centres mean that behaviour can be challenging. Staff manage this skilfully and many pupils make great improvements in their behaviour towards themselves and others as their mental health improves.
- Pupils at all centres usually show sensitivity towards each other's conditions and individual needs.
- Pupils appreciate and benefit from the Pupil Parliament, which includes all the James Brindley provision. They feel able to contribute to the life of the academy. One pupil, for example, explained how she had ensured that wheelchair ramps were being installed in different areas to improve life for others.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is inadequate. This is because procedures to check where pupils are when absent or if they go missing from school are not good enough.
- Some pupils at the main teaching centres have high levels of absence. Sometimes this is because of medical appointments. However, this is not always the case and the academy does not consistently challenge low attendance well enough.
- Pupils, including those with high levels of anxiety, generally feel safe and quite relaxed at the teaching centres. They trust the staff and know who they can talk to if they are concerned.
- In the hospitals, good attention is paid to pupils' wellbeing and safety. A supportive environment helps them to feel that they can keep learning during their stay.
- At Ardenleigh, careful risk assessments enable pupils with a high level of need to take part in a wide range of activities. Patterns of refusal to attend lessons are carefully analysed and appropriate action is taken in consultation with the medical staff. Similarly, leaders at The Willows are systematically tackling refusal to attend lessons so that pupils can keep learning during their stay.

- The academy has done some good work to teach pupils about, and to celebrate, individual differences. For example, pupils are taught about sexuality and gender in a way that suits their age and understanding. This helps pupils who are, or may be, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender to feel safe at the academy.
- Pupils who stay at the academy long-term are taught about e-safety.
- The academy has started to pay appropriate attention to the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Across the three main teaching centres there is too much variation in the quality of teaching, particularly in English and mathematics. Expectations of what pupils can achieve in a lesson or over time are not always high enough. This adversely affects the progress that pupils make.
- Pupils' work is not always marked, so errors and misconceptions are not noticed. In addition, pupils are not consistently receiving the feedback they need to celebrate their successes and help them to know how to improve. Some work is not well presented and is incomplete.
- The work of teaching assistants is not always planned for, so their effectiveness in supporting learning is sometimes undermined. Where it is planned for, teaching assistants are often very effective in supporting pupils with their learning.
- Small numbers of pupils at the three main sites are on part-time timetables. Teaching does not always ensure that they can keep up when they miss work.
- There is some good and outstanding teaching at all three centres. Teachers are often skilled at eliciting thoughtful responses from pupils who lack confidence, getting them to work at a good pace and helping them to interact with their peers. The best classrooms are vibrant and have a range of learning prompts such as subject specific vocabulary, though this is not consistent.
- In all the hospital centres, thoughtful teaching helps pupils to maintain a sense of normality and achievement during their stay. Staff plan carefully to meet the range of needs and cater well for the full range of ages and subjects.
- The best teaching in the hospitals is highly innovative. For example, at the Children's Hospital during the inspection a full science lesson took place in an isolation room, including experiments, even though staff had to wear gowns and gloves.
- Good links are made and maintained with pupils' main schools, which allows their learning to be continued. This is particularly valuable for children who have repeated stays in hospital and are at their own schools in between. At Heartlands, pupils are welcomed back with mobile display boards which show their work from their last stay.
- Hospital routines, such as cleaning or making beds nearby, sometimes disrupt pupils' learning when they are being taught on the wards.
- At the Children's Hospital, the academy has access to an outdoor area for supervised play but there is not enough provision for outdoor learning for the youngest children. This does not give them the opportunity to learn outdoors frequently as they would if they were at school.
- Teaching at the specialist centres is tailored to pupils' needs, though pupils do not all have access to full time education or as close as their medical conditions allow. This can mean that teachers have to try to cover a wide range of material in preparation for examinations in a limited time.

- Some excellent practice exists to help pupils to be fully involved in assessing their own work and ensuring that marking is effective. At The Willows, for example, pupils were asked to comment on the usefulness of teachers' marking. As a result, teachers were asked to 'write neater' and 'don't write on a slant as this is difficult to read'. Teachers had taken full note of this and marking had become more effective as a result.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In 2014, the vast majority of the 57 Key Stage 4 pupils who were taught at one of the three main teaching centres, Pathways or the home tuition service attained five or more GCSEs at grades A* to G. Twenty five percent gained five GCSEs at grades A* to C. Not all pupils attained a GCSE grade in mathematics and English.
- The academy's assessment of current Year 10 pupils shows that around 70% are on track to attain five or more GCSE grades at A* to G.
- There is wide variation in the progress made by Key Stage 4 pupils in English and mathematics across the different centres during their time at the academy. Pupils at Parkway made much better progress in English than in mathematics in 2014, whereas at Northfield progress was stronger in mathematics than in English. Current progress in mathematics for Year 10 pupils is weak.
- The academy supports many other pupils during Key Stage 4, both in the hospitals and the specialist centres, and many take their GCSE examinations while at James Brindley. However, their results are sent to their main schools and James Brindley does not collect this information. The academy therefore does not know how well these pupils achieve.
- Pupils at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 who attend one of the three main teaching centres are making steady and often good progress across the curriculum, though there are variations from subject to subject.
- The academy's assessment information is not broken down well enough to show how well pupils who attend Pathways achieve.
- Pupils at the hospital and specialist centres, including very young children and post-16 students, benefit from the intensive teaching they receive when they are well enough. Their achievements include: completing and sometimes excelling in GCSE and A-level examinations; gaining functional skills qualifications; keeping up with their school work so that they can easily reintegrate to their main school without falling behind; and re-learning skills, such as reading and writing, that have been lost through illness or new disabilities.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium and those who have special educational needs achieve as well as their peers.
- The most-able pupils generally achieve well. Sometimes therapeutic or medical interventions rightly need to take priority over academic study for a while in order to help them to recover.

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	139526
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	449945

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	563
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Claire Marshall
Principal	Nicky Penny (Principal) John Bradshaw (Interim Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0121 666 6409
Fax number	0121 666 6409
Email address	bradshawj@jamesbrindley.bham.sch.uk

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