

Willenhall E-ACT Academy

Furzebank Way, Willenhall, Walsall, WV12 4BD

Inspection dates 3–4 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Too few students reach the expected standards in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Teaching does not consistently support students to make good progress. Work is not planned well enough to stretch the most able students.
- Students do not consistently demonstrate positive attitudes to learning, particularly where teaching is weaker. They can become distracted, behave poorly and do not work hard enough.
- Students do not attend the academy regularly enough. The attendance of disadvantaged students is particularly low and impacts on their progress at school.
- The majority of leaders are new to the academy. As a result, improved systems and processes have only just begun to have an impact on students' achievement, behaviour and attendance.
- The sixth form requires improvement because students do not make good progress across a range of academic and vocational courses.
- The existing curriculum, including in the sixth form, does not meet the needs of all students, restricting opportunities for students to follow an appropriate and engaging range of subjects. Improvements are in place for younger students.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders, including governors and trustees, have a compelling vision for the academy that is shared by all staff. Leaders have high expectations for all students.
- Improvements in teaching, assessment tracking and behaviour management have led to considerable improvements in progress for current students.
- Students are kept safe because leaders have successfully created a culture where everyone understands and fulfils their responsibility and cares about the students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils’ learning in 47 lessons or parts of lessons. Sixteen of these were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the Principal and other senior and middle leaders, students, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the sponsor and an E-ACT system leader who is providing support to the academy.
- There were not enough responses on Ofsted’s on-line questionnaire, Parent View, to inform the inspection, but the academy provided evidence of its own consultation activities with parents.
- Inspectors also considered the academy’s own questionnaires for pupils, and 83 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of academy documents and information, including records of students’ achievement, students’ books, quality assurance records and records of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors also looked at students’ work in a range of subjects.

Inspection team

Deborah James, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Simon Mosley	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Alun Williams	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Sheila Ann Boyle	Additional Inspector
Colin Lower	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- Willenhall E-ACT Academy is much larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- At close to 50%, the proportion of disadvantaged students, for whom the academy receives the pupil premium (additional funding for particular groups, which in this academy applies to students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is high compared to the national average.
- The great majority of the students at the academy are of White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, at 15%, is slightly lower than the national average.
- A small number of students in Year 10 and Year 11 attend off-site courses provided by Incomm Training which take place at Walsall College.
- The academy is currently receiving support from the Principal at Heartlands E-ACT Academy who is a National Leader of Education and from staff at Wood Green Academy.
- The academy does not meet the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students by the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to ensure all students, including in the sixth form, make at least good progress from their starting points by:
 - planning lessons that are pitched at the right level for students and provide challenging opportunities to support students, including the most able, in making more rapid progress
 - providing activities that sustain students' interest and motivation to ensure the full engagement of students in all lessons
 - by sharing the best practice that exists in the academy.
- Ensure leaders at all levels have a full impact on the work of the academy by:
 - providing training for middle leaders to help them to support their team members and hold them to account
 - providing staff with targeted coaching and mentoring programmes
 - reviewing existing attendance procedures to ensure that all groups of students, and particularly disadvantaged students, attend the academy regularly
 - sustaining the focus on improving behaviour to ensure students do not miss lessons due to their poor behaviour
 - closely monitor the effectiveness of the changes made to the curriculum to ensure students are fully prepared to move to the next stage of their learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management **require improvement**

- The Principal, senior leaders, governors and sponsor share a common vision for the school. However, these good intentions have yet to embed in the work of the academy and produce markedly improved outcomes for students. They expect every student at the academy to reach the highest possible standard of academic achievement. Leaders recognise that the academy has a duty to support students' wider personal, social and spiritual development through a range of visits and activities called the 'Willenhall Passport'.
- Pastoral and subject leaders share the ambitious vision of senior leaders and approach their work with enthusiasm and commitment. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development across the academy. The majority of subject leaders are new to their roles and have not fully developed the skills required to hold their team members to account. The improvements they have started to put in place are at an early stage and have not yet had time to bring about the necessary changes to ensure teaching and achievement are consistently good. There are not enough opportunities for staff to be individually coached when weaknesses in teaching are identified and to observe the good practice that exists in the academy.
- Pastoral leaders work well with support staff and the impact of their work is evident in improving behaviour and attendance.
- Leaders have recently made changes to the academy's curriculum at both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form and it now better meets the needs of students. There is an emphasis on literacy and numeracy and students currently in Year 9 have more choices, allowing them to select subjects that they will be successful in and enjoy.
- Students have some opportunities to reflect on what makes them British, both in lessons and through activities in assemblies and form time. They are encouraged to be tolerant, respect others and value democracy. This was evident in the behaviour of students around the academy and in their positive responses to opportunities to participate in the wider work of the academy. For example, almost all the students in a sixth form assembly were keen to be involved in a volunteering and citizenship project over the summer holidays.
- Students are now well placed to make decisions about subject choices and future career paths because of the academy's improved programme of careers advice and guidance that starts in Year 7 and runs through to Year 13. Tutors of Year 11 classes keep an eye on what students intend to do and make sure that they receive personal advice and guidance in planning their next steps. As a result, all students who left Year 11 last year moved on to sixth form, a college course or to other training.
- Systems to check on teachers' performance focus on ensuring that students make better progress as a result of improved teaching. Objectives for staff are closely linked to the national Teachers' Standards and progress up pay scales is closely linked to the progress students make.
- The academy has a structured plan to spend pupil premium funding. However, the planned activities are not all tightly focused on meeting the needs of disadvantaged students. A new senior leader has recently taken responsibility for this area and has put in place actions to help measure the impact of current spending. Some of the recent improvements in attendance and achievement can be clearly linked to actions funded through the pupil premium.
- Equal opportunity policies are kept up to date by senior leaders and shared with governors. The few recorded incidents of discrimination are regularly reported to governors, and students were very aware of the effective action that the academy took over any perceived discriminatory behaviour.
- Leaders carefully monitor the attendance, behaviour and progress of the small number of students who study for part of the week at Walsall College. They particularly focus on making sure that these students get the right qualifications that will mean they leave the academy and go on to an appropriate post-16 course. Last year all these students successfully moved on to college courses or apprenticeships.
- The academy's arrangements for safeguarding its students are very effective and meet statutory requirements. Leaders have made sure that all staff are committed to keeping their students safe and, as a result, students are safe and feel safe.
- E-ACT provides effective support to the academy through support from an experienced Principal and links with partner schools. It has driven the restructuring of governance and provided the Principal with considerable support in reorganising the senior leadership team. The effective support from Heartlands E-ACT Academy has provided well-targeted intervention for underperforming departments through the deployment of successful teachers, in particular in mathematics and modern foreign languages.
- **The governance of the school:**

- Governance has improved considerably since the last inspection and provides effective leadership of the academy. Following the recommended review of governance, the governing body has been restructured and governors' skills matched more closely to the needs of the academy. This enables the governors to better challenge senior leaders.
- Governors understand academy performance and how well students achieve. They have been fully involved in the writing of the academy's self-evaluation and development plan.
- They oversee procedures to manage the performance of teachers and ensure that effective teachers are rewarded and, when necessary, others do not progress up the pay scales.
- Identified link governors carry out regular checks of safeguarding procedures and have recently started to review how well the pupil premium funding is spent.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement.
- In a few lessons, students become inattentive, chatty, and make little effort with their work. This happens when the work set is not at the right level or is dull and repetitive.
- In the majority of lessons, students listen well, work hard, and take pride in what they are doing. This is because teachers plan learning that takes account of what they already know and can do. For example, in Year 11 business studies controlled assessment lessons, students worked very hard for several hours because they were keen to achieve well and the teacher had provided an interesting and challenging task.
- At lunch time, morning break and between lessons, students behave sensibly. They are considerate, polite, friendly and cheerful. Some younger students say that they find moving around the narrow corridors difficult when they are full of older students. Senior leaders have responded to this by increasing the number of staff on duty to help manage movement around the academy.
- Behaviour in the academy has improved over the last year because leaders have introduced stricter rules that are more consistently enforced. Students and staff recognise that behaviour has got better, but also believe that there is room for further improvement. Some students say that behaviour is poorer when supply teachers teach them.
- The number of students who are excluded for a fixed time has reduced. This is because behaviour has improved and leaders have developed a number of alternatives to exclusion. However, leaders know that too much lesson time is still lost by students because they are removed from their normal classes.
- A small number of students study for part of the week at Walsall College. The behaviour and attendance of these students are in line with the behaviour and attendance of their peers at the academy, so still require further improvement. Staff at the academy closely monitor this and make sure that any problems are addressed rapidly.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Staff care deeply about students in the academy. As a result, they go 'above and beyond' their statutory responsibilities to keep them safe. For example, the checking of new staff and supply teachers is thorough and carefully documented and goes well beyond what is legally required.
- Students' attendance is improving because leaders have put in place a number of measures, such as attendance panels for parents of students who do not come to school regularly enough and praise and rewards for those with good attendance. However, overall attendance is still below national figures and it is even lower for disadvantaged students and disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Leaders know that this is an area where further improvement is required and are increasing the rigour of their activities.
- Bullying is rare in the academy. Students have a good understanding about most types of bullying and what to do if they, or someone else, are being bullied. Students have confidence in staff to deal with bullying when it occurs.
- Students, including those in the sixth form, know how to keep themselves safe online because of the clear guidance given to them in assemblies, tutor times and from visiting speakers. They understand the importance of safe and healthy relationships and have had assemblies about the dangers of extremism and radicalisation.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent and not enough of it is good. Consequently, students, including the most able, disadvantaged students and disabled students and those who have special educational needs, do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Work is not always well matched to the abilities of the students. Sometimes it is too hard for them but, at other times, it is too easy. As a result of this, the learning falters and students become less interested. This leads to slow progress.
- In some lessons, students, including the most able, are happy to sit and wait for the teacher to help them, rather than work things out for themselves.
- The quality of marking varies within subjects, but it has got better during the course of the year. At best, for example in English, it provides students with clear advice on how to develop their skills and understanding.
- Students have well developed skills in assessing their own work. They are supported by a range of resources, for example bookmarks with key words on them, to help them check and improve the quality of their written work. This is evident across a range of subjects.
- Many teachers use questions effectively to help students gain a deeper understanding of topics being covered. Appropriate questions are usually targeted at particular students to allow them to think carefully about their work and this improves their learning.
- Teaching assistants help disabled students and those who have special educational needs to understand set tasks by giving them additional information and guiding them towards what is expected of them.
- In the last year, reading has been given a much higher profile within the academy and this is evident in improved reading levels for Years 7 and 8 students. All students are expected to read during tutor time and younger students have a weekly taught reading programme. The government's catch-up funding is used to give students who are behind the average reading age extra help through a programme of regular additional support. Communication and writing skills are developed effectively in many subjects. There are fewer planned opportunities for students to develop their skills in mathematics.
- Teaching makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students work extremely well with each other, consider what is right and wrong, explore different cultures and take part in sporting activities in lessons and outside of the classroom.
- Students enjoy good relationships with other students and adults and respond well to good teaching.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- In 2014, only 39% of students gained five or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, at their first attempt. Some students took examinations on more than one occasion and, when these are included, overall attainment was higher and broadly in line with the previous year's performance, but still well below the national average.
- Not enough students made the progress expected in English and mathematics in 2014. This was particularly evident in the progress made by boys in English. Since then, the English department has initiated a range of activities aimed at improving the engagement of boys. These are beginning to have an impact and the academy's current progress data indicate that boys are making better progress and attaining standards more closely in line with boys nationally.
- In 2014, disadvantaged students made less progress and attained lower standards than their peers. In English, disadvantaged students were one and a half grades below other pupils nationally and half a grade below other students in the school. In mathematics, the gap with students nationally was a just over a grade and the gap with other students in the school was three quarters of a grade. Current data, following a targeted intervention programme for disadvantaged students in Year 11, indicate that these gaps are closing in English and mathematics.
- In 2014, disabled students and those who have special educational needs did less well than other students at the school in English and mathematics GCSEs. Since then, a well-structured programme of intervention and support has been put in place, including better use being made of teaching assistants. As a result, the academy's current data show evidence of improvement in this situation, particularly in mathematics.
- The most able students in the academy are generally making the expected levels of progress, but too few make better than expected progress. In lessons, teachers do not always plan activities that provide enough challenge to stretch these students.
- There is evidence of more rapid progress for current students in lessons and in books. Work is increasingly pitched at an appropriate level and the majority of students work hard and want to do well.

- Around half of the current Year 11 students sat their English or mathematics GCSE early at the end of Year 10. Many of these students were successful in gaining a grade C or above, raising confidence and encouraging them to have another attempt to improve their grade further. Others were demotivated by their poor performance and the academy has decided not to use early entry with current Year 10 students.
- The majority of students attending courses at Walsall College are reaching their expected outcomes across a range of good quality work-related courses. Some have already gained qualifications.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- The academy meets the minimum standards for Key Stage 5, but students do not make enough progress in a number of academic and vocational subjects. For some students this is because teaching does not consistently ensure they can do as well as possible. Other students are underachieving because they are taking courses that are not well matched to their ability and interests.
- Sixth form teachers have strong subject knowledge and are effective in supporting their students to develop resilience and the wider skills that they will need for future life.
- Students in the sixth form behave well and understand fully how to keep themselves safe. They attend regularly but currently play a limited role in the wider life of the academy.
- Leaders have improved the systems to track progress and some students are able to catch up following a period of underachievement because of the effective intervention and support they receive.
- Leaders have accurately identified areas for improvement in the sixth form and have taken prompt action. For example, students who do not already have a GCSE at grade C in English or mathematics are now being better supported to achieve these qualifications. Historic weaknesses in curriculum design have been addressed in the option choices for the next academic year.
- Students are given impartial careers guidance and support, including opportunities to develop employability skills. As a result, the proportion of students who move from Year 12 to Year 13 is in line with national figures and all students move on to appropriate education or employment when they leave the academy.

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	137706
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	454098

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	1,431
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Boneham
Headteacher	Tomas Ashley
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 September 2013
Telephone number	01902368221
Fax number	01902634253
Email address	postbox@willenhalle-actacademy.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2015

