

Ormiston Sandwell Community Academy

Lower City Road, Oldbury, B69 2HE

Inspection dates 15–30 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders have made considerable improvements since the last inspection in behaviour and teaching. High expectations of students' behaviour and the quality of their work have generated a climate in which students are enthusiastic learners.
- Rigorous checks on students' learning, well-focused training and targeted support for teachers where it is needed have rapidly improved the quality of teaching. As a result, students' progress has accelerated and is now good.
- Students gain skills, knowledge and understanding through challenging activities that engage their interest. Literacy is taught well across a range of subjects, and students read widely.
- Students respond well to regular marking of their work and use their teachers' guidance effectively to improve it.
- The academy uses lessons, assemblies and form time well to develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. As a result, they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Students feel safe and the academy provides a safe and secure environment in which they can work. Their positive attitudes to learning and good relationships mean that they participate well in lessons.
- Behaviour is good, both in lessons and during social times. Attendance is now above average.
- Governors are well informed. They challenge the Principal and other senior leaders, and hold them to account for the academy's performance.
- The governing body ensures that all statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding, are in place. It provides effective oversight of the academy.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teachers do not always set work that challenges all of the students in a class. There are weaknesses in the teaching of information and communication technology and inconsistencies in the teaching of mathematics.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Teaching is not consistently good and this means that students do not always make as much progress as they could. New courses started in September 2014 have not yet shown they are fully successful in raising standards.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 45 lessons taught by 44 teachers. Seven lessons were observed jointly with a member of the academy’s leadership team. Inspectors visited two assemblies, and saw students learning in mixed-age tutor groups.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, other leaders, class teachers and governors. Inspectors also met with the academy’s careers adviser and a representative of the Ormiston Academies Trust.
- Inspectors met with four groups of students, including three selected at random, and spoke with many others informally. Inspectors listened to students reading.
- Inspectors looked at students’ work in lessons. They scrutinised the books of samples of students in Years 7, 9 and 11 in depth, checking some of them against the teachers’ assessments of attainment and progress. They also looked at the academy’s data on students’ targets and their current attainment and progress.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents. These included: development plans and their evaluations; records of how leaders check on teaching; minutes of governing body meetings; case studies; policies; records showing how the academy supports vulnerable students and checks on their progress; and the academy’s publicity.
- Inspectors took into account the 13 recent responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and the academy’s records of parental surveys. They also considered the 44 responses to a questionnaire completed by staff.
- As part of Ofsted’s quality assurance processes, an Additional Inspector made a visit to the school on 30 April 2015, during which further evidence was gathered.

Inspection team

Martin Spoor, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Patrick Cook	Additional Inspector
Rosemary Myers	Additional Inspector
Helen Booth	Additional Inspector
Frank Knowles	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ormiston Sandwell Community Academy is slightly smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The academy is sponsored by the Ormiston Academies Trust (OAT).
- The academy has a small sixth form, which is part of a consortium with the post-16 centre at George Salter Academy.
- The majority of students are from White British backgrounds, with the others coming from several different ethnic groups. About three in ten of the students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- In Key Stage 4, a very small number of students receive full-time education in alternative provision provided by Sandwell Hospital Service or full- or part-time work-related education organised by the National College for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders. In Key Stages 3 and 4, a very small number of students have taken up full-time placements at the Batmanshill, Oakham and Ruskin House campuses of Sandwell Community School.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- A local leader in education (LLE) from Swanshurst School has recently reviewed the academy's use of the pupil premium, which is additional funding for students who are known to be disadvantaged. The academy's proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- One Vice Principal and one Assistant Principal joined the academy on 1 September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of provision in the sixth form to accelerate students' progress and raise standards further by:
 - ensuring that teaching is sufficiently challenging and consistently good in all subjects so that students make rapid progress
 - checking that the current range of courses provides the most suitable pathways for students to achieve end-of-course success and subsequent places in education, training or employment.
- Make sure that students make consistently good or better progress in all subjects throughout the academy by ensuring that:
 - teaching in information and communication technology is brought up to the quality found in other subjects
 - teaching in mathematics develops students' skills progressively and consistently throughout Years 7 to 11
 - all teachers plan work that challenges the full range of students in each class.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders set high expectations for behaviour and for academic attainment. Careful analysis of students' progress and regular checks on teaching enable them to identify precise areas for improvement. Established teachers report that training helps them to make rapid progress in developing their skills. Leaders are holding teachers to account for the progress of those groups of students whose past achievement has been weaker. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving rapidly and standards throughout the academy are rising quickly. All pupils have equally good opportunities to achieve well.
- Leaders' evaluation of the work of the academy is accurate. There is a common understanding of the reasons for the weak progress in last year's Year 11 that was reflected in the 2014 examination results. As a result, a range of changes have been made that have improved teaching and accelerated pupils' progress. The wide-ranging academy development plan is clearly focused and has challenging targets against which success can be measured. Leaders make sure that judgements about students' work are consistent, and that key assessments are checked by experts from outside the academy.
- The academy trust provides very effective support, and has provided helpful input on the analysis of attainment and progress data. Recent appointments have strengthened the governing body and the trust provides access to specialist advice.
- Subject leaders make a valued contribution to plans for the whole academy, as well as ensuring that developments are effectively implemented in their areas. They are increasingly responsible for checking students' learning and identifying how excellent practice – both in the academy and in other schools – can enhance teaching in their subjects.
- The academy has placed considerable emphasis on improving students' literacy. Staff across a range of subjects now contribute well to the development of writing and speaking skills, and the library promotes reading for information and the reading of fiction for pleasure.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have improved the curriculum by offering a wider and more challenging range of courses in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The academy's internal assessment processes indicate that these are improving standards and accelerating students' progress. Final outcomes will be only clear at the end of this school year.
- The academy promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development strongly through both lessons and form time. British values are promoted effectively and the academy does not tolerate any form of discrimination. As a result, students show good levels of respect for each other. They contribute to the development of the academy, modelling key aspects of the British democratic process.
- The academy complements its formal curriculum with opportunities to take part in performing arts and play in a wide range of sports teams. Students particularly value after-school extension and booster classes as an indication of teachers' concern for their academic progress.
- The academy provides effective and impartial advice and guidance about the next steps in students' education and careers, and organises visits and competitions to raise aspirations. As a result, very few students leave the academy from Key Stage 4 without finding a place in further education, training or employment. Curriculum improvements in Key Stage 4 and students' growing maturity mean that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The academy's arrangements for safeguarding meet all statutory requirements. Staff keep meticulous records, and are able to draw on the sustained involvement of other agencies to help vulnerable students. Leaders have given careful consideration to the particular risks faced in the local area, and taken specific steps to protect the academy community.
- Leaders work effectively with parents, including those who are initially distrustful of education. They check regularly on the academic progress, attendance, behaviour and well-being of students educated off site to

ensure that they are getting the full benefit of this alternative provision.

- The Principal has made the targets set for teachers more demanding by increasing the levels of students' progress she expects to see in their classes. The results are used to make decisions about pay rises.
- Decisions made nearly three years ago about how students were grouped by ability and the choice of optional subjects resulted in disadvantaged students not always keeping up with their classmates. Changes have been made, however, and data provided by the academy, supported by an independent review of the current programme, show that pupil premium funds are now used effectively and that gaps in attainment are closing rapidly.
- Leaders have very successfully worked to improve behaviour, relationships between students and the quality of teaching. They have created an academy in which everyone values learning and celebrates success. Improvements in provision are clear and sustained. Additionally, leaders take a strong stand against any form of discrimination and are promoting equality of opportunity very effectively.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body provides effective oversight of the academy's work. It ensures that governors are properly trained and, through the Principal, gain a well-rounded view of the quality of teaching, students' achievement and how their achievement compares with that in other schools nationally. Governors are concerned about how the pupil premium is spent to close the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and others.
 - Records of meetings of the governing body show that governors ask challenging questions of senior leaders. They have a clear vision for the academy as an organisation that ensures that students make the best possible academic progress.
 - The governing body fulfils all its statutory responsibilities. It has ensured that the academy meets all its obligations to protect students through the rigorous scrutiny of staff during the appointment process, and the monitoring of staff training and the policies that safeguard vulnerable students. It makes sure the academy stays within its budget.
 - Governors manage the pay and performance of the Principal and other staff effectively, making sure that pay increases are awarded only on the basis of teachers' good performance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. They explained to inspectors that the academy has helped them to develop mature attitudes and take responsibility for their own actions. They understand how the clear rules in the academy, such as those about movement around the site, prepare them for respecting the rule of law in adult life.
- Students, including those in the sixth form, approach their learning with commitment, bring the right equipment to class and generally present their work neatly. They collaborate effectively in lessons. Students report that disruption in lessons is very rare.
- The academy keeps careful records of incidents of bad behaviour. These show that there have been very few incidents of a racist nature and students corroborate this. The rate of fixed-term exclusion is falling steadily, and is now below national averages. The academy works well with other schools locally to avoid permanent exclusion, and there has been only a very small number this academic year.
- During the inspection, students were universally polite and helpful. They mirror the courtesy and respect that staff show to them. Their conduct at social times is orderly and responsible, and they respect the academy's facilities.
- In a small minority of lessons that fail to engage students fully, some talk across the teacher and take a little time to respond to the teacher's requests for attention.

- Students' attitudes and behaviour when they attend alternative provision are good. This is because they understand that academy staff and those from other disciplines are working together in their interests.
- Attendance has improved steadily over recent years and is now above average. Rates of persistent absence are low. The attendance of disadvantaged students lags a little behind that of other students in the academy but the gap is closing.
- The academy checks daily on the attendance of students at alternative provision and staff visit them regularly to ensure that they are safe. Their behaviour in the alternative provision is good.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Child protection procedures are robust. Senior staff are aware of the various risks to students' safety, including those related to extremism, and take decisive action when needed. They check all visitors to the site carefully.
- Staff are well trained on how to identify students at risk. The academy has strong links with other agencies and involves them promptly to support vulnerable students. All necessary policies and risk assessments are in place.
- Students say that the site is secure and they feel very safe in the academy. Students are well informed about different types of risk, including those posed by substance abuse and the risks related to the internet.
- Students report that bullying is very rare, and that the academy anticipates any problems and resolves them swiftly if they should occur. Records show no instances of homophobic bullying, for example. Students understand the different types of bullying that can affect them or other students, including cyber bullying, and are confident about talking to staff about their concerns.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teachers plan carefully and ensure that the work challenges students to make good gains in their knowledge, understanding and skills. Activities engage students' interest well and they participate readily, putting forward their own views and listening to other students' contributions. Teachers' good management of lessons ensures that learning is effective and that students make good progress.
- Teachers use questioning to extend students' thinking and to make sure they know what students have learned, adapting the work if necessary. They develop students' skills of analysing and evaluating fiction and non-fiction text well to ensure that students gain a good understanding of the underlying ideas. Teachers use printed and electronic resources most effectively, which helps to capture students' attention and reinforce their learning.
- Teaching in other subjects contributes well to the development of literacy and numeracy. In science and the humanities subjects, for example, teachers set demanding written tasks that ask students to provide reasoned explanations. They help students to structure longer pieces of writing, where necessary. Students are sensitively encouraged to make extended spoken responses, so that they become more articulate and confident. Teachers use subject-specific vocabulary accurately, and insist that students do the same.
- The academy makes good provision for disabled students and those who have special educational needs. A structured reading programme ensures that those who enter the academy with reading difficulties are able to catch up quickly. Leaders communicate clearly the importance of taking account of how individual students learn best. As a result, teachers use a range of approaches to learning to adapt the work they set to match the particular needs of these pupils.
- Teaching assistants are well informed about the purpose of classroom activities, and work skilfully with individuals or small groups of students to ensure that their learning is secure. They ask pertinent

questions and provide alternative ways to enable students to grasp ideas. Homework makes an effective contribution to learning.

- Teachers mark books frequently, providing detailed and relevant guidance to students on how to improve their work. Students respond well, modifying their work with corrections or additional material. Occasionally, students do not meet the expectation that they respond to teachers' prompts or instructions, with the result that some of the impact of the marking is lost.
- Teaching in mathematics is not as consistently good as it is in English and science, except in Year 7 where a revised programme builds up students' skills and understanding progressively over the year. The academy is in the process of revising the mathematics programmes in other year groups to ensure continuity of challenge and faster progress. Teaching in information and communication technology is not as strong as in other subjects because the work is not challenging enough.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' achievement has improved since the last inspection, although the attainment and progress of the students leaving Year 11 dipped from being above average in 2013 to below average in 2014. In that year group, attainment and progress in both English and mathematics were below the national averages. Students' results in science and some other subjects were above average and they made better than average progress in science and modern languages.
- The students in Year 11 who took examinations in 2014 had started at the academy with attainment that was below average. Decisions about course choice and ability groupings made over two years previously, together with changes of staff in both English and mathematics, meant that students did not achieve as well as they should have done in these subjects. On her appointment, the Principal took decisive action to ensure that future year groups would not be affected in this way. As a result, the students in the current Year 11 are on target for much improved results in 2015 in English and mathematics.
- The actions taken by senior leaders extended beyond Year 11, and improved teaching and a more appropriate choice of courses, have meant that students in other years are currently making much better progress. In both Years 10 and 11, students are on target to reach much higher results in GCSE examinations in 2015 and subsequently, including in English and mathematics. Students are making faster progress than the national expectation in Years 7 to 11 in all subjects.
- On average, disadvantaged students in Year 11 left the academy in 2014 with results just less than two grades below other students in English and just over two grades below in mathematics. Compared with other students nationally, they were two grades behind in English and nearly three grades in mathematics. These gaps were wider than those in the previous year. The recent improvements in teaching and support for disadvantaged students mean that those in the current Year 11 are now making the same progress as their classmates and are on target to reach results much closer to those of their classmates. Disadvantaged students in the sixth form achieve as well as their peers.
- After some years of entering students for the same examinations several times in Key Stage 4, the academy entered only a small minority of students for GCSE mathematics and GCSE English Language in the winter of 2013. Early entry restricted students' attainment in their GCSE examinations in 2014 and the academy no longer uses this approach.
- In recent years, boys have not achieved as well as girls. On average, they have not followed as many academic qualifications and their progress has been slower, especially in English. The recent changes to the curriculum and improvements in teaching have meant that their progress is now close to that of girls in English and the gap is narrowing elsewhere.
- Historically, the progress of the most-able students has been similar to that of other students in the academy, but often below that of similar students nationally. However, inspectors' observations in top sets and the work produced by the most-able students indicated that they are now making better progress that broadly matches similar students nationally in English and mathematics.

- The scrutiny of students' work in Years 7, 9 and 11 showed a similar picture. Work in nearly all subjects was consistently well presented, resulting from challenging activities, and demonstrated students' good progress from the start of the year.
- The large majority of students who attend alternative provision make good progress, often from low starting points.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress, especially in English, because well-qualified staff plan carefully to build on what they are already able to do. The progress of students who speak English as an additional language is at least in line with that of other students. Year 7 'catch-up' funding has been spent largely on specialist literacy teaching, and this has been effective in improving the attainment of students with the lowest levels of prior attainment, particularly in reading.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- The sixth form draws its students from Year 11 in the academy. Numbers are rising. Some students follow a purely vocational pathway, a few study only for academic qualifications, and some study a mix of qualifications. They have access to Level 3 courses run at the larger post-16 centre at George Salter Academy. Together, the two institutions offer a reasonable but not extensive range of subjects for study.
- Students' attainment on entry to the sixth form has been considerably lower than the national average. In the past, sixth-form students have often been accepted for courses that were too difficult, which has led to them failing to complete their qualifications. Leaders responded in 2014 by establishing higher entry requirements for Level 3 courses; they await the outcomes of this major change when students achieve their results at the end of the year.
- In 2013, the last validated results at Level 3, attainment and progress on most courses were below average. Data supplied by the academy indicate that standards rose in 2014 but did not reach national levels. Standards among the current students continue to rise but achievement requires improvement because students' progress is not consistently good.
- Students' attitudes towards their learning in the sixth form are good. They enjoy their lessons and appreciate the support they receive from teachers. They spend their time wisely and make good use of the academy's study facilities. They feel entirely safe in the academy and report that there are no instances of oppressive behaviour. They consider that the careers advice they receive prior to joining the sixth form and in preparation for their next steps is detailed and helpful.
- Sixth form students welcome the opportunity to lead on the academy's support for charities, but there are few opportunities for them to learn from a wider involvement with students in younger years. Students reported that there were no clubs or societies specifically for sixth formers.
- Teaching in the sixth form is not as consistently good as that in the main academy. Teachers work hard to overcome a reticence among some sixth-form students to participate fully, so that sometimes the questions they pose do not generate discussion that deepens students' understanding.
- Leadership in the sixth form is increasingly effective. Leaders are now applying the same checks on students' progress and on teaching that are used in the main academy, and this is already improving provision. Attendance has risen sharply, and is now in line with that of the academy as a whole.

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	135979
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	462571

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	890
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	56
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Round
Principal	Marie McMahon
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2013
Telephone number	0121 552 5501
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