

St George's Academy

St George's Community Hub, Great Hampton Row, Birmingham, B19 3JG

Inspection dates 13–14 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The Principal and staff have high expectations of themselves and students. This is helping students to raise their aspirations for what they can achieve in education and in life.
- The academy is effective in helping students to improve their behaviour. Students show respect to adults and are usually attentive in lessons. Most students get along well with one another.
- Most students achieve well. Effective teaching is helping many students to fill gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding which have arisen due to previous disruption in their education. All students in Key Stage 4 are studying eight GCSEs.
- Teaching is good. Teachers know their subjects well. Their explanations are clear and this helps students to make good progress.
- Students are taught an appropriate range of subjects. The curriculum is adapted effectively to meet the needs and abilities of different students.
- Leaders have been successful in driving improvements in teaching and in students' achievement.
- A strong focus on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development prepares students well for life in modern Britain and for their future.
- Parents are confident that their children are safe and well looked after at the academy. Safeguarding arrangements are effective both at St George's and at alternative providers.
- Governors know the academy well and hold leaders and teachers to account for their work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding and so students do not always make rapid progress.
- Teachers' marking does not always help students to improve their work.
- Although leaders and governors keep a careful watch on the achievement of individual students, they do not analyse and use information about the progress of different groups well enough.
- Although improving, attendance is below average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 14 parts of lessons.
- One inspector visited students attending off-site provision.
- Discussions were held with a small group of students and inspectors spoke to students in lessons and around the academy.
- Inspectors considered the views of the 12 parents who had completed the online survey, Parent View. They also spoke to six parents by telephone and read an email from another parent about their views of the academy.
- Meetings were held with the Principal and other school leaders and with the staff responsible for overseeing attendance and behaviour records. Inspectors also met with two governors including the Chair of the Governing Body and the Executive Director of the Titan Partnership Trust.
- Inspectors took account of the views of the 21 staff who completed questionnaires.
- The inspection team also looked at a wide range of information about the academy's work. This included the academy's website, a range of policies and procedures, information about the academy's work in keeping students safe, information about students' achievement and attendance and records of incidents of poor behaviour. Inspectors also reviewed the academy's self-evaluation and improvement plans and records of governors' meetings. In addition, inspectors looked at work in students' books.

Inspection team

Morag Kophamel, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Glen Goddard

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St George's Academy was established in September 2013 as an alternative-provision free school by the Titan Partnership Trust. The partnership includes eleven secondary schools in the Birmingham area.
- The academy admits students in Years 9, 10 and 11 who have been excluded, are at risk of permanent exclusion or who have become disengaged from learning. Many students have experienced disruption to their education or have refused to attend school in the past.
- Some students stay at St George's for just a few weeks while others complete Key Stage 4 at the academy.
- There are 110 places at the academy. Currently there are 102 students; 30 are registered on the roll of the academy and 72 are dual-registered. All have full-time provision.
- Students currently on roll come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. A very small number speak English as an additional language but none are in the early stages of learning English.
- Around 80% of students are boys.
- About a third of students are eligible for support through the pupil premium. This is above average. However, the current partnership arrangements mean that the academy does not receive the funding for those students who are dual-registered. The pupil premium is additional funding provided to the school based on the number of pupils looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of students identified as having a disability or special educational needs is above average.
- The academy uses six alternative providers for a small number of students: Flexible Learning, City United, Imedia, Values Academy, Nacro and South and City College.
- Students take part in a range of activities away from the academy that are designed to promote their personal and social skills.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding so that all students make rapid progress and make up for previous underachievement by:
 - ensuring that all teachers set work which is at the right level of difficulty, particularly for the most-able students
 - using the excellent practice in questioning that exists within the academy to ensure that all teachers ask questions which make students think deeply and explain their answers
 - making sure that teachers' marking is more consistently providing students with feedback which helps them to improve their work
 - working with students and families to improve attendance.
- Ensure that leaders and governors make use of their good information about individual students' progress so that they can better evaluate the achievement of different groups to target their plans for improvement more precisely.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal has successfully established a culture of high expectations for both staff and students. Leaders, governors and staff are united in their determination to fulfil the academy's vision by 'giving new direction' to students so that they are well prepared for the next steps in their lives. Parents and students recognise the positive impact that the academy has had on students' behaviour and on their attitudes to learning. Staff say that they are proud to work at the academy and are confident in the leadership of the Principal.
- Leaders and governors have driven improvements in teaching and in students' achievement since the academy opened in September 2013. They are keenly aware that there is more work to do, for example in improving attendance and in moving teaching closer to outstanding, so that all students make rapid progress and make up for previous underachievement.
- The curriculum is effective. It includes a suitable range of subjects so that students can gain up to eight GCSE qualifications. Timetables are carefully tailored to meet the needs of different students. For example, some students have extra lessons or one-to-one support in subjects which they find difficult.
- Every opportunity is taken to help students develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and skills. As a result, students make good progress in these important areas of learning. For example, in a religious education lesson Year 10 students made thoughtful comments about the sanctity of life. In Year 9, students make visits to important buildings in Birmingham such as the library and town hall so that they develop an appreciation of the cultural heritage of their city.
- The promotion of fundamental British values such as respect, tolerance and equality is threaded through the curriculum and through everyday life at St George's. Staff have had appropriate training which enables them to tackle incisively any inappropriate or discriminatory views expressed by students.
- Staff are vigilant with regard to safeguarding. They are alert to indicators of possible abuse or radicalisation and make prompt and appropriate referrals to the local authority and the police.
- Leaders have put effective systems in place so that a nominated member of staff makes frequent visits to students attending alternative provision to check on their safety, attendance, behaviour and achievement.
- Subject leaders and other leaders, such as the co-ordinator for special educational needs, are developing their skills in evaluating teaching and learning. They know students well and have introduced well-considered initiatives to improve students' progress including the current focus on improving reading ages. These leaders say that they are very well supported and challenged by the Principal.
- The Principal and governors have ensured that the small amount of pupil premium funding received by the academy is spent wisely to support the progress and well-being of eligible students. For example, some students receive one-to-one teaching which is helping them to prepare for their GCSE examinations.
- Senior leaders and governors have ensured that all staff have access to good quality training and professional development. This includes opportunities to work regularly with colleagues from a local outstanding school. Teachers value this training as they are keen to improve their own performance.
- Students appreciate the good guidance they are given to help them make informed choices about the next steps in their education or training. For example, they have opportunities to visit different colleges and learn about the courses on offer. As a result of this good advice and their improved achievement, many students talk positively about their increased aspirations for the future.
- Leaders have detailed information and a sound understanding of the progress and attainment of each student from their different starting points. However, during the inspection they were not readily able to

provide a succinct summary or analysis of the progress being made by different cohorts and groups.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance is effective overall. Governors have a good range of skills and expertise. Governors with educational expertise make regular visits to the academy and make checks on the quality of teaching by visiting lessons and looking at the work in books. As a result, governors have an accurate understanding of current strengths and areas for development.
- Governors hold leaders and teachers to account for their work. They ensure that underperformance is tackled and make certain that only those teachers who have met their targets are rewarded with a pay rise.
- Governors regularly review the information provided by the Principal about the progress and attainment of individual students. They ask questions about what is being done to support any student who is underachieving. They have a clear understanding of how well Year 11 students are doing in relation to predicted outcomes for GCSE. However, governors do not check that all groups of students are making good progress across the academy.
- Governors have ensured that the academy's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Many students, particularly those who attend regularly, have made rapid improvements in their behaviour since joining the academy. The academy's records show that the number of incidents of unacceptable behaviour has reduced considerably over the time that the academy has been open. Most students co-operate well with one another and listen with respect to different points of view. The behaviour of students attending alternative provision is also good.
- The large majority of students listen well to their teachers and apply themselves well to their work in class. Many were keen to talk to inspectors about what they were learning and were proud to show examples of their work. Just occasionally there is some chatting or silliness, particularly when teaching does not interest students or when resources are not readily accessible.
- Almost all of the parents who spoke to inspectors or who completed Parent View were very positive about behaviour at St George's. Several commented on the significant improvements they have noticed in their child's behaviour and in their attitudes to school and learning.
- Adults in school set high standards for students' conduct and have a consistent approach to managing any inappropriate behaviour. This means that students are clear about what is expected of them and understand the rewards which can be earned and the sanctions which may be applied. For example, students know that if they are late back to lessons after lunch they will have to pay back any missed time and complete any missed work by staying behind after other students have gone home.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say they feel safe at the academy and at alternative provision placements. They say that bullying is rare and they trust staff to sort out any incidents quickly. Students know that racist or homophobic language is unacceptable.
- Adults in the academy help students to understand some of the risks that they may face. As a result, students know a range of ways that they can keep themselves safe, including on the internet.
- A nominated member of staff makes frequent visits to students attending alternative provision and ensures that appropriate arrangements are in place to keep students safe.
- Attendance has improved considerably and the number of students who are persistently absent has significantly reduced. However, attendance remains low in comparison to secondary schools nationally.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- Teachers have high expectations for students' behaviour, attention and achievement in lessons. They are calm and patient with students and encourage them to participate actively in lessons. As a result, most students willingly answer questions or contribute ideas even when they are uncertain about whether they are right. This is building students' confidence and developing their ability to cope with making mistakes.
- All teachers are qualified and have expertise in the subjects they are teaching. This means that teachers' explanations are clear and accurate. For example, in mathematics lessons, the teacher used well chosen examples to demonstrate the methods being taught so that students quickly understood what they had to do and made good progress.
- Teaching assistants provide unobtrusive but effective support to students in lessons. They are clear about their role and make sure that their responses and explanations are consistent with those of the teacher. As a result, students know exactly what is expected of them.
- Some teachers are particularly skilled in questioning. They encourage students to explain their thinking or provide evidence to support their views and this helps them to make good progress. For example, in a Year 9 reading lesson, the teacher's questioning successfully developed students' ability to use inference. This very effective practice is not consistent across the academy.
- Teachers know students very well. They regularly assess each student's progress so that they are clear about what students need to learn next. Most teachers set work which is well matched to students' different starting points. However, occasionally the most-able students are given work which is too easy and so they do not make the rapid progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers' marking in students' books has improved in recent months and there are examples of teachers giving helpful feedback to students. In some classes these comments are helping students to make corrections or to make their next piece of work more successful. For example, in English books, teachers' comments show students how to use more advanced punctuation or vocabulary in their writing. However, other comments focus on students' effort or behaviour in the lesson and do not explain clearly how students should improve their work.

The achievement of pupils**is good**

- The great majority of students join the academy with levels of attainment that are well below those typical for their age. Many have considerable gaps in their knowledge and understanding because of disruptions to their education in the past. Almost all have reading ages which are well below their chronological age. When they join the academy, many students are disillusioned with learning.
- As a result of effective teaching, positive relationships and high expectations the majority of students quickly settle in at the academy and re-focus on their learning. Many are making up for lost ground and are making good progress.
- A determined focus on reading is having a positive impact on students' interest in books and on their reading ability. Year 9 and 10 students follow a carefully structured programme and read regularly in school. As a result, many students are narrowing the gap between their reading age and their chronological age.
- In 2014, around a quarter of Year 11 students gained 5 GCSE passes including English and mathematics. This year, examination results are predicted to improve considerably. All Key Stage 4 students are studying eight GCSE subjects and two thirds of Year 11 students are on track to gain five GCSE passes including English and mathematics. The academy does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- Inspectors' analysis of the academy's assessments showed that there are no major variations in the achievement of different groups of students.

- The progress of disadvantaged students is very similar to that of their classmates in English and mathematics.
- Students with disabilities or special educational needs receive targeted support which enables them to fully participate in lessons and in other activities. As a result, this group of students is making very similar good progress to the others.
- Staff make regular checks on students attending alternative provision. Information from these visits indicates that most of these students make good progress.
- In 2014, all of the students who left the academy at the end of Year 11 went on to employment, training or further study.
- The most-able students do not all make rapid progress because teaching does not always challenge them enough.
- The poor attendance of some students has a detrimental impact on their progress.

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	139731
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	450046

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

Type of school	Alternative Provision
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	13–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	102
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicola Walters
Principal	Nicola Hutchison
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0121 296 2277
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