

# Abraham Darby Academy

Iron Bridge Road, Madeley, Telford, TF7 5HX

**Inspection dates** 9–10 June 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- The Principal, senior leaders and governors provide effective leadership and, as a result, the academy continues to improve.
- Leaders, including governors, have successfully created an ethos of ambition, high expectations and aspiration throughout the academy and this is understood and valued by staff, students and parents.
- Leaders know the academy very well, including its strengths and weaknesses. They are successfully tackling weaknesses with rigour.
- Leaders have introduced routines and policies that are implemented with consistent effect by staff and are well understood by students.
- Students make good progress and achieve well in many subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged students are making good progress because of the high-quality help and support they receive.
- The academy's considerable efforts to improve students' literacy are very effective.
- The academy's promotion of students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education, through its taught curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities, is excellent.
- Teaching is good at Key Stages 3 and 4. Teachers and other staff have high expectations and are very committed to getting the best from every student.
- Teachers' marking of work is of a high quality, consistently following the academy's policy. It is regular and helps students to make progress.
- Actions to make sure that students are kept safe in the academy are good. Most students feel safe, and their parents recognise this.
- Students behave well in lessons, as they move around the academy and at break and lunchtime. They are polite, friendly and show respect for each other, adults and the academy building. They are confident, calm and caring.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students in the small sixth form do not make good progress. Recent improvements in leadership are just beginning to show an impact.
- Attendance is below the national average and is not improving quickly enough.
- Results in some subjects, including science and history, are not as good as those in English and mathematics.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 36 lessons; 8 of these were carried out with members of the academy’s senior leadership team. Inspectors also observed an assembly, and visited the academy’s ‘Adapt’ centre where some students spend part of their week. They also observed students’ behaviour between lessons, at break and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at students’ work in lessons.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, governors and representatives of the academy sponsor.
- Inspectors considered 75 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire as well as the school’s own survey of parents’ views, a letter that a parent sent to the lead inspector and a telephone conversation with a parent.
- Inspectors considered 73 staff questionnaire responses.
- Formal meetings were held with four groups of students and numerous informal discussions with students also took place.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed including the school’s self-evaluation and plans, school policies, school data about achievement, teaching and behaviour, and minutes of governing body meetings.

## Inspection team

Alun Williams, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Teresa Roche	Additional Inspector
Patrick Walsh	Additional Inspector
Sukhbir Farar	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Abraham Darby is an average-sized secondary school with a small but growing sixth form.
- The current Principal took up his post in September 2014, as did two Vice Principals.
- Most students are of White British heritage and a very small minority of students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for those who are looked after by the local authority) is well above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students or those who have special educational needs is close to the national average.
- The academy meets the current floor standards, which set out the government's minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Since its last inspection in 2011, the academy has grown by more than 200 students.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 take vocational courses off site, provided by Nova Training, Arthog Outreach and Telford Drive.
- Abraham Darby Academy is federated with Adams Grammar School, Newport. Both schools are part of the Haberdashers' Adams' Federation, they share a single governing body and are sponsored by the Haberdashers' Company.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' achievement in the sixth form by ensuring that:
  - all students are taking courses that are appropriate for their academic ability
  - all teachers are skilled and effective in teaching sixth form courses, particularly in assessing students' work
  - the good practice in tracking students' achievement and intervention to support their progress, that is already evident at Key Stages 3 and 4, extends to the sixth form.
- Improve attendance, at least to the national average, by carefully evaluating all current interventions to find out which strategies are, or are not working, so that future actions can be planned to have maximum impact.
- Ensure that standards and the quality of teaching in all subjects, especially science and history, match the high standards already achieved in English and mathematics, by ensuring that all teachers plan lessons that consistently challenge and stretch students.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The Principal, supported by senior leaders, has a clear and compelling vision of aspiration and ambition for all of Abraham Darby's students. An ethos of high expectations permeates everything that the academy does and creates an environment where students work hard, behave well and develop into rounded young people.
- Leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the academy's strengths and weaknesses because they carefully examine detailed information that they have collected about all of its activities. Leaders use this analysis to draw up clear and specific plans to quickly address any areas that need to be improved. Leaders have recognised the academy's relative weaknesses in the sixth form, attendance and in some subjects and have put plans in place that are beginning to secure improvements.
- Leaders have produced simple and straightforward policies and expectations that all understand. As a result, there is a high degree of consistency of approach from staff throughout the academy, and students are very clear about what the academy expects from them. For example, the basic expectations of students is summarised by the acronym 'NUHOPE' (Nice to others, Uniform, Homework, On task, Punctual and Equipment.) All students know this acronym very well.
- Over time, achievement at Key Stages 3 and 4 has improved because teaching has improved. Leaders know where teaching is strong and where it needs to improve further. Weaker areas are tackled through setting appropriate targets and providing tailored training for teachers. For example, leaders have identified weaknesses in sixth form teaching and have provided specific training to improve this.
- The rapidly improving achievement of disadvantaged students, who make up almost a half of the student body, is a strength of the academy. This is because leaders have used the pupil premium to put into place a range of carefully researched strategies intended to maximise these students' progress. In addition to this, leaders forensically analyse the impact of each strategy to find out what is, and is not working and then use this information to refine the strategies that they are using.
- The academy's subject leaders and pastoral leaders form an effective and hard-working team. They share the Principal's vision for the academy and there is a very high degree of consistency of approach among them, because they understand their role and are committed to carrying it out to the best of their ability.
- The academy's curriculum is in the process of changing, in response to government policy, so that students take more GCSE courses. Leaders have carefully and appropriately planned these changes over a three-year period. The curriculum remains broad and balanced, providing students with a wide range of courses that interest and enthuse them, and the clear focus on literacy and numeracy ensures that students complete Key Stage 4 very well equipped with basic skills.
- The curriculum is also successful in preparing students for life in modern Britain. Weekly 'Insight' lessons, supplemented by activities outside lesson time, help students understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens of modern Britain. As a result, students are respectful of differences and understand democracy and the rule of law. Students also develop into caring individuals, one of the academy's explicit aims. This is exemplified in students' response to the recent earthquakes in Nepal, where the academy has a close link to the Jeewan children's' home. Students across the academy have come together to organise a Saturday festival, 'Jeewan a Rock', to raise funds for the home.
- Most students enthusiastically take part in the wide array of extra-curricular opportunities that supplements the academy's formal, taught curriculum. A panel of Year 10 students, when asked about extra-curricular clubs commented that 'there are loads: something for everyone.' Leaders carefully plan these opportunities to raise aspirations and broaden horizons, with the quantity and quality of musical and sporting opportunities being particularly impressive.
- Leaders ensure that all students have the same opportunities to take part in all aspects of school life. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.

- Leadership of the sixth form is now strong. Weaknesses have been identified by leaders in teaching, assessment, checking on students' progress and providing extra help for students who need it. These weaknesses are now being addressed and some improvement is already evident. Leaders have also improved the guidance given to students as they enter the sixth form to make sure that they are taking courses in which they can be successful.
- The academy receives effective support from the Haberdashers' Adams' Federation Trust. Most recently, the trust has provided support for the academy, from Adams' Grammar School, to improve teaching in the sixth form.
- Leaders carefully monitor the attendance, behaviour and progress of the small number of students who study off site for a part of the week. These checks, together with the students' interest in their courses, lead to good achievement.
- Students are able to make informed choices about their next steps when they leave the academy because of the well-planned programme of careers education, advice and guidance that runs from Year 7 through to Year 13. However, some students have been allowed to take sixth form courses that were not well-matched to their ability and have not been as successful as they should as a result.
- Safeguarding arrangements are robust and there is a culture of care and of keeping students safe across the academy. Policies and procedures are strong, understood by all staff and consistently put into practice.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is very effective. It is a committed group of individuals, who share the Principal's vision and bring significant expertise to the academy.
  - Governors are well informed about all aspects of the academy, including achievement and the quality of teaching. They ask searching questions of leaders because they have an excellent understanding of the data they receive about the academy's performance.
  - Governors are fully involved in managing the performance of the academy's staff. They ensure that all staff are set challenging targets, that underperformance is tackled promptly and that good teaching is rewarded.
  - Governors carry out all statutory duties required of them with diligence and professionalism.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is good. They are polite, courteous and respectful towards each other and adults both in lessons and at other times during the day. The academy's aim is that students should be 'confident, calm and caring' and they are. Students, staff and a very large majority of parents also confirm this view.
- In lessons, most students are keen and eager to learn. They settle quickly, are well prepared, listen attentively when others are speaking and follow teachers' instructions. They maintain their concentration well for the entire 85 minutes of the academy's lessons. Students confirm that disruption of lessons is very rare because of the consistent use of systems that leaders have put in place to deal with any problems when they arise.
- Most students manage their own behaviour well. They treat the building with care and respect; there is very little litter and no graffiti in evidence. The academy does not use bells to the mark the start or end of lessons, but students are still punctual to lessons, even straight after morning break and lunchtime.
- A small number of students, who consistently struggle to cope in normal lessons, spend some or all of their week in the 'Adapt' centre. Here they receive extra help, individually or in small groups, and continue to learn well and make progress as a result. Because of this provision and other well-planned strategies, the number of fixed-term exclusions from the academy, historically higher than average, has now fallen

considerably.

- Staff closely monitor the attendance and behaviour of students who spend part of their week studying away from the academy. These students attend their courses regularly, are kept safe and behave well.

### Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Almost all students feel safe and are safe in the academy. Most parents who responded to the online Parent View survey agreed that their children feel safe and are well looked after at the academy.
- Students, parents and the school's records indicate that bullying is rare and that any that occurs is dealt with effectively. The overwhelming majority of students spoken to during the inspection confirmed their confidence in staff to deal quickly and appropriately with any bullying they, or anyone else, might experience.
- Students know how to keep themselves safe. A well-planned programme, delivered through assemblies and the academy's weekly 'Insight' lessons helps students to understand and deal with a variety of risks including online dangers and those associated with extremist views. As a result, students are mature, articulate and well able to keep themselves safe.
- Despite some improvement in 2014, attendance remains below the national average. A renewed focus and new strategies this year have yet to yield a consistent improvement in attendance. The strategies have not been in operation long enough yet for leaders to be able to properly evaluate the impact that each one is having.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Good teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 has led to good progress and achievement for all groups of students in the academy including the most able, disabled students or those with special educational needs and disadvantaged students. This is the case in most subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and generally very high expectations of their students. As a result, teachers in most subjects carefully plan activities that successfully challenge and engage students and help them to learn, without flagging, for the entire 85 minutes of a lesson. However in a few subjects, including science and history, teachers do not plan lessons that stretch and challenge students and, as a result, students do not have to think deeply or work hard and therefore do not make enough progress.
- Teachers' marking and feedback to students is of a consistently high standard. Marking is regular, detailed and helps students to improve their work.
- The teaching of literacy across the whole academy is well planned and very effective. Students are encouraged to read widely and often in many ways, including twice-weekly reading sessions in tutor time and the provision of a vibrant and well-used library. Exercise books contain spelling grids and students use dictionaries routinely in many lessons. As a result, written work in students' books, across many subjects, is substantial and of a high quality.
- The teaching of mathematics is good and is evident in strong GCSE mathematics results. A whole-academy approach to numeracy has, rightly, been much less of a priority for leaders but is now developing and is beginning to be evident in some areas outside mathematics. For example, students used their numeracy skills well to scale ingredients in a recipe in a Year 9 hospitality and catering lesson.
- Teachers have been successful in encouraging students to be able to work well independently as well as in groups or as a whole class. Inspectors saw several examples of students working maturely by themselves or in small groups, in the many break-out spaces outside classrooms.
- In many lessons, teachers use questions skilfully to help students to refine their thinking and deepen their

understanding of the topic being studied. However, in some lessons teachers are too quick to accept brief, sometimes one-word answers from students.

- Teaching assistants provide effective additional support for disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- At Key Stages 3 and 4, teachers' accurate assessment of students' work helps leaders and teachers know when a student is falling behind, so extra support can be given to get them back on track. However, in the sixth form, some teachers have not accurately checked students' progress, and so leaders and teachers have not always given extra help when it was needed.
- In subjects where leaders are focussing additional support to improve teaching, such as science and history, some improvement is already evident. For example, new leadership of history is beginning to see teachers planning lessons that make students think more deeply and work hard, and therefore make more rapid progress. This is especially evident in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.
- Teaching in the sixth form requires improvement because, over time, not all teachers have had good enough skills to make sure that sixth form students make good progress in their subjects. In particular, not all teachers have accurately checked on students' progress and provided them with extra help when they fall behind.

### **The achievement of pupils is good**

- Students in the academy took GCSEs in English and mathematics in November 2013 and again in May 2014. While attainment in the first entry in November was below average, by the summer their attainment had improved markedly to exceed the national average in both English and mathematics. In this case, students had not been disadvantaged by early entry.
- Students make good progress in their time at the academy. In their GCSE results from the summer of 2014, the proportions making expected progress in English and mathematics exceeded the national average.
- Students join the academy with standards below those expected of their age and achieve strong results in several subjects in addition to English and mathematics, including business studies, sport and geography.
- When considering their best GCSE English and mathematics results, disadvantaged students are making similar progress to non-disadvantaged students nationally. This is because of the high-quality support that they receive while in the academy. Disadvantaged students are still attaining less well than their peers because they start with lower attainment on entry to the academy, but this gap is closing. In English, the gap between disadvantaged students and others, both in school and nationally, had reduced to approximately half a GCSE grade in 2014. In mathematics, taking into account students' best GCSE mathematics result, these gaps had also reduced to half a grade.
- The most-able students in the academy make similar, good progress to other students. In mathematics, the academy's policy of entering students early for GCSE exams meant that 22 students who achieved A\* grades in November 2013 were then able to take a higher-level mathematics course to prepare them for A level.
- Disabled students and those with special education needs also make good progress because they are taught well, receive extra help in lessons and effective individual support when they need it.
- There are some subjects, including science and history, in which students have not achieved as well as they should, over recent years. Leaders have recognised this and have taken action to raise standards in these areas. The academy's own data predict that there will be improvement in 2015.
- Students' achievement in the sixth form is not as good as elsewhere in the academy and students do not



make enough progress. This is partly because some students have taken courses that are too difficult for them. In addition, checks on students' progress have not been accurate enough and have therefore not resulted in effective help for students who are falling behind.

- The small number of students who study vocational courses for part of their week away from the academy achieve well. They take courses that interest and motivate them and all achieve appropriate qualifications as a result.

### **The sixth form provision**

### **requires improvement**

- Over time, students in the sixth form have not made good progress from their starting points, especially on AS level and A level courses. Achievement has been better on vocational courses. Some students have failed subjects because they have taken courses that were not well matched to their level of ability.
- Teaching in the sixth form is now improving. Over time, some teachers have lacked the expertise required to accurately assess the work of sixth form students and therefore have not known when a student is falling behind. Such students have then not received the help and support that would have helped them catch up and be more successful in their course.
- Relatively new leadership of the sixth form has accurately identified its weaknesses and has put into place carefully-planned strategies to address them. For example, leaders have brought in external expertise from Adams Grammar School to train teachers. A 'progress manager' has been appointed this year to oversee sixth form data, to identify students who need extra support and to ensure that they make better progress as a result. The academy's own data, supported by external validation by Adams' Grammar School staff, indicates that 2015 will see some improvement in achievement, with further improvement in 2016.
- The few students who join the sixth form not having already passed both English and mathematics GCSEs with grade A\* to C are effectively helped to achieve these qualifications.
- Behaviour and safety in the sixth form are both good. Sixth form students are excellent role models for younger students in the academy. Attendance in the sixth form has improved and is now above the national average.
- Students in the sixth form benefit from a good range of activities that supplement their academic subjects, including opportunities with local companies that help them prepare for the world of work. Sixth-form students are fully involved in the life of academy, mentoring younger students; helping others with their reading; taking part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and leading a number of fund-raising initiatives.
- Almost all students who leave the sixth form move on to further study, work or training and an increasing number are going on to university.



## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135582
<b>Local authority</b>	Telford and Wrekin
<b>Inspection number</b>	461835

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1001
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	111
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Anthony Cann
<b>Principal</b>	Lee Hadley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 May 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01952 386000
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