

Baxter College

Habberley Road, Kidderminster, DY11 5PQ

Inspection dates 2–3 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- The Principal, leaders' and governors' evaluation of the academy's strengths and weaknesses is inaccurate and over generous. This has prevented them from tackling issues of students' under-achievement and weak teaching.
- Students' achievement is too low; too few students make the progress they should, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged students do not make as much progress as their peers and the gap between other students nationally continues to widen: there is little sign of this improving.
- Leaders and governors have not used information about students' achievement to inform their judgement about the quality of teaching. As a result, teachers do not receive the appropriate support they need to improve the progress that students make in lessons.
- Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve is too low. Information about what students can and cannot do is not used well enough by teachers to provide students with challenging learning activities.
- Senior leaders do not routinely evaluate the impact of the academy's work to improve the achievement, attendance and behaviour of different groups of students.
- Governors rely too heavily on the information given to them by the Principal and senior leaders. They have not provided enough challenge or scrutiny of the judgements that school leaders make.
- Despite recent improvements in students' attendance the academy's overall attendance remains below the national average.
- The sixth form requires improvement as students studying AS-levels do not make as much progress as other students studying vocational and A-level courses.
- Students' attitudes to learning are not consistently positive; although students say that they feel safe in the academy, poor behaviour in some lessons distracts them from their learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching in science is strong; for the last two years achievement in science has been above the national average.
- Sixth form students are good role models for younger students in the academy.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching, students’ learning and behaviour in 34 lessons across a range of subjects, including some joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. In addition to this inspectors also observed an assembly, tutor times, breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised students’ books and folders during lessons.
- In addition to speaking to students informally around the building, inspectors spoke to four groups of students, including a group of students studying in the sixth form.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Principal, other senior leaders, subject leaders and the Chair of the Governing Body.
- A variety of information was analysed about students’ progress, attendance and behaviour. A range of documents were also viewed by inspectors including the academy’s self-evaluation, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records relating to the safeguarding of students.
- Questionnaire responses were received and considered from 68 members of staff, and 36 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Helen Reeves, Lead inspector	Seconded Inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional Inspector
Kate Hooper	Additional Inspector
Annetta Minard	Additional Inspector

Full report

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

Information about this school

- Baxter College is an average-sized secondary school.
- Baxter College converted to become an academy on 1 September 2012. When its predecessor school, Baxter College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be a good school.
- The majority of students attending the academy are White British.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is well above the national average.
- An above average proportion of students are supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free meals and those who are looked after).
- There are currently 17 students who attend courses away from the academy at Continu Plus Academy, The Bridge, Archway Academy and medical Education Team.
- The academy has 141 students in the sixth form; some provision is shared with Wolverley Church of England Secondary School.
- The academy does not meet the government's current floor standards. These are the minimum standards expected for pupils' learning and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement so that all groups of students, especially disadvantaged students, make good or better progress by:
 - ensuring that rigorous tracking of students' progress across all subjects, including the sixth form identifies underachievement quickly so that prompt action is taken to bring about improvement
 - carefully monitoring the impact of interventions put in place to close the gaps in the achievement of disadvantaged students
 - ensuring all students can access a broad and relevant curriculum that does not limit their future aspirations
 - insisting that teachers seize every opportunity when planning lessons to develop students' skills and confidence in reading, writing and number work.
- Strengthen the leadership of the academy by:
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels develop an accurate understanding of the academy by introducing more rigorous processes of quality assurance
 - making sure that the academy development planning is based on accurate evaluations of the academy's effectiveness, reflects the priorities of the academy's work and includes measurable criteria by which success can be judged
 - ensuring that information about students' achievement is routinely used to evaluate the quality of teaching
 - ensuring senior leaders and subject leaders evaluate collated information about achievement, behaviour and attendance to assess the impact of the academy's actions
 - ensuring that the spending of the pupil premium funding has a direct impact on disadvantaged students' achievement and attendance.
- Strengthen the governance of the academy by:
 - ensuring that governors use a range of sources of information to inform their understanding of the performance of the academy
 - ensuring that governors use this information to hold the Principal and senior leaders accountable for the

outcomes of all groups of students, particularly disadvantaged students.

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in English and mathematics, so that the progress and attainment of all students, especially disadvantaged students, improves rapidly by:
 - implementing a comprehensive programme of training that develops teachers’ skills and confidence in the classroom to impact positively on the progress students make
 - providing training for teachers to guarantee that the assessment of students’ work is accurate
 - ensuring that teachers use information about students’ progress from assessments and regular marking to plan lessons at the right level of difficulty for the different groups of students
 - raising teachers’ expectations of what students can achieve by ensuring that the activities teachers plan are interesting and challenging, so that students are motivated to learn and stretched by their learning activities
 - making sure that students are clear about the next steps they need to take to improve their progress as a result of effective marking and feedback.

- Further improve the attendance of all groups of students including those attending courses away from school to at least the national average.

An external review of governance, and of the academy’s use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leaders' self-evaluation of the academy's strengths and weaknesses is over generous. Leaders and governors have failed to identify and tackle key areas of weakness in students' progress, the quality of teaching and leadership across the school. Written plans for improvement do not focus sharply enough on the identified weaknesses, detailed actions, or robust evaluation of impact.
- The academy's system for monitoring the quality of teaching is not effective in driving improvements. Leaders, including subject leaders, do not use information about students' achievement to make judgements about the quality of teaching; consequently these judgements are over generous. Too much emphasis has been placed on the observation of teaching.
- Leaders have very recently revised the system for judging the quality of teaching to include an evaluation of the work in students' books and the progress students make over time. This system is in its infancy. Where leaders have provided a range of training opportunities and support for individual teachers they have not evaluated its impact.
- Leaders have a thorough understanding of the many complex issues and challenges facing some of their students and their families. They ensure that an extensive range of resources are available to support their needs. Families and students benefit greatly from this level of care; however, the intensive nature of this support weakens leaders' focus and drive for academic excellence.
- Relationships between staff and students and students and their classmates are good. The academy fosters a culture of mutual respect, and tackles any unpleasantness between students well.
- Leadership at subject level is too variable. Leadership of mathematics and English is inadequate. In 2014, examination predictions provided by some subject leaders were over generous; students achieved much lower grades than they were expecting.
- Leaders do not routinely provide sharp analysis and evaluation of the abundance of information in the academy about achievement, behaviour, intervention work and the quality of teaching. Leaders are unable to quantify the impact of their work.
- The use of pupil premium funding has not been effective in closing gaps between disadvantaged students and others in the academy. Governors have not held leaders to account for the continuing decline in the achievement of this group.
- A focus on the importance of attendance has led to an improvement since the school converted to become an academy. A team of support staff work in a very focused way to support students and improve the attendance of individuals.
- The curriculum for the majority of students is broad and balanced. However, some students do not have the opportunity to study humanities or a language in Year 7 and some older students only study two GCSE courses alongside a range of vocational courses. As a result this limits the opportunity for some students to study courses that challenge and interest them. Leaders are currently reviewing this curriculum model.
- A suitable programme is in place across the whole academy, including the sixth form, to ensure that students are involved in a range of activities and events to promote their moral development, discuss different values and be able to reflect on and question the complex society in which they live. As a result, they are prepared effectively for life in modern Britain.
- Not all students receive sufficient advice and guidance to support them in making informed choices about the subjects they will study during Key Stage 4. In the sixth form, the quality of the advice and guidance students' receive is much more effective.

- Leaders have created a culture within the academy where students of different ethnic backgrounds get on well together and the few racist incidents are carefully logged and dealt with.
- Leaders are in regular contact with providers to check on the progress, attendance and behaviour of students who study courses away from the academy.
- The academy's arrangements for safeguarding students meet requirements.
- Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is inadequate. Governors have not understood how poorly students within the academy achieve compared to national standards. They have failed to act swiftly to address low standards of achievement, weak teaching and ineffective leadership and management since becoming an academy.
 - They are too reliant on the information provided by the Principal and other senior leaders and do not sufficiently challenge or interrogate the views of the academy.
 - Governors have not been consistent in their decisions regarding teachers' and leaders' pay awards.
 - Governors are very loyal and supportive of the academy. They have recently completed a skills audit and undertaken training to review the academy's processes regarding evaluating pupil premium spend and managing staff performance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement.
- In some lessons, particularly when teaching is less effective, students become distracted and do not concentrate on completing their work.
- Some students move sluggishly between lessons and some students do not follow the rules about uniform; these behaviours are not consistently challenged by staff.
- Students are polite and welcoming and told inspectors that they enjoy coming to the academy.
- The academy keeps records of incidents of poor behaviour and exclusions over time. These records demonstrate that fixed term exclusions and internal exclusions are reducing gradually. However, the level of permanent exclusions over the last two years remains high.
- Leaders do not sufficiently evaluate all of the information they collate about behaviour to look for patterns and trends of particular groups of students to minimise the number of occasions when students are excluded from their lessons.
- The behaviour of sixth form students around the building and in lessons is good. Some sixth formers support younger students with their learning; they are very good role models.
- The behaviour of students following courses away from the academy is checked regularly and staff from the academy make regular visits to see students. The academy and the providers work together to resolve any issues as quickly as possible.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement.
- The importance of good regular attendance is clearly communicated around the academy, through the academy's newsletter, display boards in corridors, rewards and the weekly intervention meeting in each year group. Attendance has improved since the school became an academy, including in the sixth form;

however, it remains below the national average.

- Disadvantaged students and disabled students and those who have special educational needs attend the academy less regularly than other groups of pupils. Attendance of students studying courses away from the academy is well below average; leaders are working closely with these students and their placements to address these issues.
- Students, including in the sixth form say that they understand how to keep themselves safe on the internet, and that they have taken part in activities to explore the importance of healthy relationships, the dangers of drugs and alcohol, and issues surrounding the use of social media. Year 10 'Community Ambassadors' deliver assemblies to students in Key Stage 3 about these issues.
- Students say that they feel safe in the academy. They benefit from positive relationships with their peers and members of staff. Members of staff deal with incidents of bullying quickly and appropriately.
- Parents are very positive about the care and support that their children receive from the academy. Students have access to a nurse, and key staff in the academy provide invaluable support to more vulnerable students and their families.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Weak teaching over time has contributed significantly to students not making the progress they should, particularly in English and mathematics. The quality of teaching across the academy is inconsistent; there is not enough good teaching.
- Teachers do not use information about students' progress to plan challenging activities that match the different abilities of students. From observations in lessons and the work in students' books over time, activities lack challenge; some teachers' expectations of what students can achieve is too low and students are allowed to complete work at a slow pace or choose to leave work incomplete.
- The quality of presentation in books varies across subjects. In some books diagrams and notes are scruffy, handwriting is poor and graffiti is not challenged by the teacher. However, in art and science the work produced by some students is of a much better quality.
- The quality of marking and feedback that students receive is inconsistent. Not all students are clear what they need to do in order to improve their work.
- In some lessons students are given time to reflect on their learning with a question at the end of a piece of work that provides further challenge. This helps students understand what they need to do to improve their work but this approach is not used consistently across the academy.
- The development of students' basic skills and confidence with reading, writing and numbers is a priority for the academy. Tutors support students to complete targeted maths questions and silent reading in form time, and teachers have taken part in training sessions to include the development of literacy when planning lessons. Examples of good practice were observed, for example, in food technology and a Year 7 science lesson. However, in many lessons opportunities to develop these basis skills were missed.
- Encouraging students to read for enjoyment has a much higher profile at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. Younger students talked enthusiastically about the different books they are reading but this was less evident when talking to older students.
- Where teaching is stronger students are encouraged to develop resilience and independence before asking for help; teachers drive the pace of learning to keep students motivated and on task generating high levels of interest; teachers ask questions to probe and further develop students' learning.

The achievement of pupils**is inadequate**

- Students join the academy with basic skills in English and mathematics that are well below the national average. They do not make the progress they should in English and mathematics when compared to other students nationally. Progress in mathematics has been significantly below average since the school became an academy.
- In 2014 just over a third of students and a quarter of disadvantaged students achieved five GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics. These results were well below the national average and much lower than the academy had predicted. The academy's tracking information for 2015 shows a slight increase in this headline measure but a decline in the proportion of disadvantaged students achieving five GCSE grades A* to C with English and mathematics.
- In 2014 the proportion of students making expected progress in English and mathematics declined to well below the national average.
- The gaps in the standards reached in GCSE English and mathematics between disadvantaged students and other students nationally have widened in English to just under two grades. The very wide gap in mathematics has narrowed slightly but still remains over two and a half grades difference.
- Since becoming an academy, students' achievement in science GCSE has improved and remained above the national average as a result of better teaching and effective marking and feedback.
- Current information about students' achievement across Key Stage 3 suggests that, despite some improvement in Year 7, the progress of others students in both Year 8 and Year 9 is too slow.
- The academy has a small proportion of students who are most able (those who gained a Level 5 or above at Key Stage 2). Although these students generally make the progress expected of them, few students make more than expected progress because they are not sufficiently stretched and challenged in lessons.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make inadequate progress; the academy's records indicate that the current progress of these students is not improving. Leaders have not evaluated the support they provide to try to address this.
- The academy no longer enters students early for GCSE examinations.
- Students who attend courses away from the academy are on track to complete their courses and all of the students have secured a place to continue their education or training in September. Records indicate that two thirds of the group are on track to make expected progress in English and mathematics.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used to support those students with low attainment on entry, to provide an intensive programme of study to develop basic literacy and numeracy skills. There is evidence that this programme has had a positive impact on the reading ages and numeracy skills of these students.

The sixth form provision**requires improvement**

- The sixth form offers a range of vocational and academic subjects and some of this provision is shared with a local school. Fewer students than seen nationally enter the sixth form with GCSE grades at A* - B.
- Since becoming an academy, the progress students make in A-level subjects has improved and is broadly in line with national expectations. However, progress at AS-level is not improving at the same rate.
- Students are enthusiastic about their learning as a result of stronger teaching. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and carefully plan assessment activities. Students are aware of their target grades and are actively encouraged and supported to develop more independence.

- Sixth form attendance has slightly increased over the last in year in line with the rest of the academy but remains below the national average.
- Students yet to achieve a grade C or above in English and or mathematics receive weekly lessons to prepare to re-sit these examinations. The academy's records indicate more students will achieve this qualification in English than they will in mathematics.
- Inspectors were provided with a considerable amount of information and documentation about the academy's sixth form provision. Systems and processes by which leaders evaluate and respond to this information are not in place, therefore the leadership and management of the sixth form requires improvement.
- Students feel safe and enjoy learning in an environment where behaviour is mature and promotes a positive atmosphere during lessons and in social time. An extensive network of support and comprehensive advice and guidance is provided. As a result all students continue in education, training or employment.
- A programme is in place during tutorial time to develop students' personal and social skills; they explore issues around health education and global events. All students complete a work experience placement in Year 12. Students enjoy the many opportunities to get involved with mentoring younger students, leading various committees and recently running a mock election. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities including many sports, arts and the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

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	138660
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	461832

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1013
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Jacqui Winter-Dwyers
Principal	David Seddon
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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