

Grace Academy Coventry

Wigston Road, Coventry CV2 2RH

Inspection dates

27–28 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an academy that requires improvement

- Although standards improved in examinations in 2015, too few pupils reached the key benchmark of five or more good GCSEs, including English and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching does not consistently support pupils in making good progress. In some lessons, teachers do not capture pupils' interest or challenge them to think hard. This is particularly the case in science but also evident in mathematics and geography.
- Assessment of pupils' attainment and progress, particularly at Key Stage 3, lacks rigour and means that teachers have an inaccurate view of current pupil performance.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils on entry to the academy are too low. Teachers do not have enough understanding of the skills that many pupils have developed in primary schools.
- Pupils do not always demonstrate a positive attitude to their learning. In some lessons they are slow to get started or fail to work hard in completing the tasks set.
- The sixth form requires improvement because learners experience variation in the quality of teaching and do not always make good progress in their courses.
- Senior leaders have an overly optimistic view of the academy's current performance. They have focused disproportionately on the improvements that have already been made rather than the considerable challenges that still need to be addressed.

The academy has the following strengths

- Pupils are making good progress in English in Key Stage 4 as a result of good teaching and well-targeted interventions.
- Many staff in the academy care deeply for the well-being of the pupils and the spiritual, moral and social development of pupils is given a high profile.
- Senior leaders have been effective in moving the academy out of special measures, leading improvements in teaching and behaviour that have led to higher achievement for pupils.

Full report

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all pupils make consistently good progress, including in the sixth form, by:
 - extending the range of approaches used by teachers to ensure that pupils are engaged and motivated by their work and remain on task throughout the lesson
 - making better use of assessment information, particularly for pupils entering the academy in Year 7, to plan lessons that are challenging and build on the skills they already have
 - helping pupils to take greater responsibility for successfully completing their own work
 - ensuring that all pupils understand how well they are doing and know what they must do to get better.

- Improve standards of achievement in science through:
 - taking urgent action to improve the quality of teaching by using existing good practice and external support, including support to improve the management of behaviour
 - putting in place targeted intervention programmes for those pupils that have fallen behind.

- Ensure leaders sustain the pace of improvement evident over the last two years, by:
 - making sure that assessment information for Key Stage 3 is accurate and moderated with external organisations so that it supports leaders in the early identification of areas of underperformance
 - providing senior and middle leaders with easily understood summary assessment information that enables them to compare pupils' performance in the academy with national standards and provides a more realistic view of the academy's effectiveness
 - reviewing the academy improvement priorities to ensure that actions rapidly address areas of underperformance and it is clear who is responsible for their successful completion.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- A new, enthusiastic but inexperienced leadership team is now in place at the academy. They have been effective in bringing about some improvements to teaching, assessment and behaviour that have led to better pupil achievement. However, their evaluation of the academy's performance as 'good' is over-generous and not supported by the evidence of pupils' achievement in the 2015 examinations and current pupil performance.
 - The academy improvement plan does highlight key areas for further work but actions are too broad and led by a number of senior leaders. This makes it more difficult for governors and the trust to hold individuals to account for their impact on pupil outcomes.
 - Senior leaders struggle to recruit high-quality teachers to the academy. Pupils and parents complain of frequent changes of teacher and an over-reliance on temporary supply staff in some areas of the curriculum, particularly in science. Senior leaders are working creatively and proactively to resolve this, but it remains a major barrier to ensuring good teaching and learning.
 - There are effective programmes in place to develop and support new teachers and trainees. New staff feel that they receive good advice and guidance on how to improve through effective mentoring support.
 - Year 11 assessment information from mock examinations is carefully moderated with other schools so that senior leaders have confidence in the accuracy of this information. In other year groups there is no systematic approach to ensuring standards are equivalent and understood by all teachers. As a result, the quality of assessment information used and produced by teachers varies considerably across classes and creates an inaccurate overview of current performance.
 - Assessment information is gathered systematically using a commercial package. It provides an instant summary of current performance and allows for very detailed analysis of the performance of different groups and classes. However, senior leaders and heads of department struggle to identify the key trends and issues among such a wealth of assessment information, particularly when looking at comparisons with national data to identify areas of underachievement.
 - The curriculum is coherent and places a considerable emphasis on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. At Key Stage 3, additional literacy and phonics (the sounds that letters make) lessons are provided for pupils with weaker literacy skills. At Key Stage 4, pupils follow a pathway designed around their abilities and interests. In 2015, only 16% of pupils opted to study a modern foreign language. This has increased to about a third of pupils this year.
 - There are a number of extra curricular activities available to pupils to enhance their curriculum. The majority of activities focus on physical education and sport, although older pupils value the opportunity to attend a number of revision and catch-up sessions.
- **The governance of the academy**
- The academy interim board has been in place for just over a year and its members have rapidly developed a good understanding of the detail of the academy's performance. Board members are frequent visitors to the academy and have access to a range of additional links and resources to support improvement work.
 - Responsibilities for key areas of the academy's work are shared between the board and the trust. This has been managed effectively and all parties are able to articulate their current accountabilities.
 - A new performance management procedure is in place with the trust taking responsibility for ensuring equity in expected performance across all trust academies. More rigorous targets are now in place for teachers and are linked to the progress made by pupils. Trustees ensure that pay progression is linked to effective performance.
 - Board members oversee the actions currently taken by the academy to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and are aware that the information on the website does not provide enough information on current spending.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pastoral staff are committed to providing support to their most vulnerable pupils. Concerns are reported in a timely way to appropriate bodies.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- In the least effective teaching, learning activities are undemanding or repetitive and can lead to poor behaviour. This was particularly evident in science where pupils were expected to copy information from the board or a textbook for extended periods, becoming bored and disengaged as a result.
- Too little teaching challenges pupils to think hard about their work and so limits pupils making rapid progress. Questioning is often used to check understanding but is used less frequently to develop deeper understanding of a topic.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers use their strong subject knowledge to generate a real enthusiasm for learning. For example, in a Year 9 music lesson the teacher's enthusiasm was highly effective in getting all pupils to fully participate in singing during the lesson. In many lessons, pupils are given good opportunities to collaborate together and assess the work of their peers.
- Most marking follows the academy policy. Highly effective examples of marking were seen, particularly in English, providing good support for pupils' progression. At other times the process was very superficial and made little difference to a pupils' understanding of what they needed to do to improve.
- The development of literacy skills has been an effective focus of the academy's work over the last year. Reading schemes in Key Stage 3 ensure all pupils are reading regularly and teachers and librarians can track their reading progress. In some English lessons, pupils were expected to read challenging texts with a high level of reading demand.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Many pupils are confident learners who are proud of the academy and would recommend it to others. However, this is not a consistent picture and a number of pupils spoke to inspectors about their desire to change schools.
- Pupils value the academy's focus on their wider personal development and enjoy the timetabled 'values' days that focus on some particularly challenging areas. For example, during the inspection all Year 10 pupils took part in a 'building healthy relationships' day, participating in drama workshops and discussions on marriage, teen pregnancies and relationships.
- Assemblies provide further reinforcement of the academy's culture and values. In a Year 8 assembly, pupils behaved impeccably whilst listening to their peers deliver a moving assembly on the National Holocaust Day theme of not standing by while others are persecuted.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in the academy. They agree that bullying is rare and when it occurs is dealt with quickly and fairly. However, the majority of parents who responded to the Ofsted online survey indicated that they did not believe the academy dealt effectively with bullying. Senior leaders understand they have more to do to ensure parents are kept fully informed about the work of the academy.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are generally good and pupils value those staff who give them additional help and support.
- Pupils are aware that their teachers provide good role models for them by challenging stereotypes and the use of derogatory language.
- Leaders ensure that the attendance and well-being of pupils who are educated in alternative provision are carefully tracked and monitored.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- There is a well-defined system of rewards and sanctions in place which the pupils understand and appreciate. However, in some subject areas the guidance is not consistently applied by teachers, allowing unacceptable behaviour to continue and disturb the learning of others.
- Most pupils respond quickly and appropriately to teachers' instructions but a small number of pupils are openly defiant at times, particularly where teaching is less engaging and they have become bored or find the work too easy.
- Overall attendance is broadly in line with the national average but too many pupils are persistently absent from the academy. This situation is slowly improving as a result of targeted intervention and support for

families.

- Although most pupils arrive at the academy on time there is considerable lateness to lessons, with pupils dawdling along corridors and too little intervention from staff and senior leaders to hurry them up.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- In 2015, the proportion of pupils who made the expected levels of progress in mathematics from their starting points was significantly below national averages.
- In 2015, very few pupils made more than the expected progress in English or mathematics. Senior leaders have raised expectations of how much progress current pupils should make, but there is little evidence yet that increasing the target has had an impact on pupils' work.
- Pupils do not make good progress in science and in 2015 standards were well below national levels. There have been some improvements for current pupils but standards are still too low and current Year 11 pupils will require considerable additional support to reach their expected grades.
- There was a large gap between the performance of boys and girls in 2015, with boys performing well below the girls. This gap has closed for current pupils although there were notable differences in the attitude to learning of boys in some lessons, with boys being less engaged in their learning.
- Attainment and progress measures for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs fell for the three years up to 2015. The appointment of two new special educational needs coordinators who have made better arrangements for the support of these pupils has halted the decline for current pupils, who are making progress in line with their peers.
- Examination results in 2015 demonstrated some significant improvements on the previous year and the academy is no longer below floor standards. The average attainment of pupils improved in a number of subjects including English, mathematics, history and modern foreign languages.
- Current pupils in Year 11 are making good progress in English and mathematics as a result of carefully moderated assessment with additional intervention and support for those pupils who have fallen behind. This progress is not as consistent in other year groups, particularly in Key Stage 3, where assessment procedures are less rigorous and intervention occurs less frequently.
- In 2015, disadvantaged pupils made less progress in English and mathematics than other pupils, both in the academy and nationally. Although these differences are large there has been improvement since 2014 and current disadvantaged pupils are expected to close the gap further this year as a result of targeted intervention funded through the pupil premium.
- Intervention programmes, including focused support for reading, have been effective in supporting a small group of lower ability disadvantaged pupils to make better progress from their starting points than others in their cohort.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- Sixth form leaders are not fully aware of the processes in place to moderate and standardise learners' work. As a result, their predictions of future performance are insecure and limit effective targeting of additional support and intervention.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form varies. Learners recognise that teaching is most effective when teachers have strong subject knowledge.
- The academy has identified that current learners on vocational courses are making less progress than expected and have put in place parental meetings, targeted support and addition computer learning packages to improve this situation.
- Attendance at GCSE retake classes is too low. This limits learners' development of key literacy and numeracy skills.
- In 2015, learners made similar progress to pupils nationally in academic and vocational courses although there was considerable variation across subjects.
- Leaders have taken effective action to encourage more learners to join the sixth form and better advice and guidance for these learners ensures they are on appropriate courses. Retention rates have risen considerably over the last two years and all sixth form leavers in 2015 went onto further study, training or work on leaving the academy.

- Learners behave well in the sixth form and are good role models for younger pupils. They appreciate the opportunity to undertake a period of work experience in Year 12 and recognise its value in developing their wider skills.

School details

Unique reference number	135335
Local authority	Coventry
Inspection number	10008200

This inspection 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 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	751
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	86
Appropriate authority	Academy interim board
Chair	Christine Staley
Principal	Colin Boxall
Telephone number	02476 589000
Website	coventry.graceacademy.org.uk/
Email address	coventry@graceacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	29–30 January 2014

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is above average.
- Grace Academy Coventry is one of three secondary schools in the Grace Academy Trust.
- The academy is currently being supported by Sponne Academy and receives some additional help from a number of schools and academies in the West Midlands.
- A small group of Year 11 pupils receive alternative educational provision at the Whitmore Annex.
- The proportion of pupils who receive special educational needs support is smaller than average.
- In 2015, the school met the national floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all year groups and looked at the work in pupils' books. They talked to pupils and reviewed information held by the school about pupils' progress.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, newly qualified teachers, members of the academy interim board and the chief executive of the Grace Trust.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of academy documentation including safeguarding records, self-evaluation summaries, the academy improvement plan and current assessment information.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 39 parents on the online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Deborah James, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Russell Hinton	Ofsted Inspector
Gwendoline Onyons	Ofsted Inspector
Graham Tyrer	Ofsted Inspector

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