

# North Birmingham Academy

395 College Road, Erdington, Birmingham B44 0HF

## Inspection dates

3–4 February 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	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Although standards for current pupils have now begun to rise, they had fallen previously. This was because leaders did not act quickly enough on the recommendations made at the last inspection.
- Pupils do not make consistently good progress, including the most-able pupils and those who are disadvantaged.
- Work is not always set at the right level of difficulty, particularly for the most-able pupils and for younger pupils who find mathematics difficult.
- Pupils are not always moved on to harder work when they are ready.
- Inaccuracies in pupils' written English are not always picked up by teachers.
- Teachers' questions are not challenging enough.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to use different mathematical skills to solve problems.
- Learners do not achieve equally well across subjects in the sixth form. Too many learners who retake GCSE mathematics are unsuccessful.
- Leaders have not made sure that literacy and mathematical skills are consistently taught well across different subjects.
- Some younger pupils do not behave as well as they should.
- Some subject leaders are less skilled than others in checking and improving teaching and achievement.
- Leaders have not trained teachers how to meet the specific learning needs of some pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Although improving, the governing body does not hold leaders to account for their plans and actions as well as it should.

### The school has the following strengths

- The school is improving because the relatively recently appointed Principal is positively transforming the culture and ethos of the school.
- Teaching is improving in many subjects and it is good in English, geography, history, drama and information technology.
- Many pupils are making stronger progress than they have in the past, including in the sixth form.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness are improving.
- Safeguarding is a strength of the school and pupils feel safe.

## Full report

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

- Improve teaching and raise achievement in all key stages, particularly for the most-able pupils and those who are disadvantaged, by making sure that:
  - work is well matched to pupils' skills and abilities
  - pupils are moved to more challenging work as soon as they are ready
  - teachers in all subjects insist that pupils' written work contains accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar
  - teachers' questions require pupils to think deeply.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics by:
  - improving the curriculum so that pupils have opportunities to use and apply a range of mathematical skills to solve problems
  - ensuring that work which is set for younger pupils who find mathematics difficult is always at the right level, including those pupils who are disadvantaged.
- Raise achievement in the sixth form by:
  - making sure that learners achieve equally well in all subjects
  - improving outcomes for those learners who retake GCSE mathematics by using other approved qualifications to help learners work towards a good mathematics GCSE grade.
- Strengthen the impact of leaders in improving teaching, outcomes and behaviour by:
  - ensuring that pupils' literacy skills are developed well in all subjects
  - making sure that mathematical skills are accurately taught in subjects other than mathematics, when appropriate
  - accelerating the impact that the training for subject leaders is having by making sure that this group of staff have the skills to check and improve teaching, behaviour and pupils' progress
  - ensuring that all teachers have the skills to meet the specific learning needs of those pupils who speak English as an additional language.

External reviews of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders did not respond quickly enough to the areas for improvement recommended at the last inspection. As a result, pupils completing Year 11 have underachieved for the past two years.
- The improvements that are currently taking place in the school have been implemented relatively recently since the Principal was appointed. As a result, although teaching is improving and pupils in all year groups, including the sixth form, are making better progress than they have in the past, there is still some way to go for these improvements to fully impact on pupils' progress.
- Leaders have not fully secured the necessary improvements for the high proportion of pupils who have weak literacy skills. Although there is some good support for younger pupils, leaders have not made sure that all teachers teach these skills consistently well in all subjects.
- Similarly, although many pupils join the school with low attainment in mathematics, leaders have not made their expectations clear to teachers about how essential mathematical skills should be taught in subjects other than mathematics.
- An important reason why Year 11 pupils have underachieved for the past two years is because the school has entered pupils for GCSE mathematics early. This has been ineffective and leaders have now stopped doing this.
- Leaders have made sure that teachers benefit from regular training opportunities because they are fully aware that pupils' progress is not as good as it should be. Teachers benefit from working with each other to share teaching skills and they value these opportunities as most are committed to strengthening and improving their teaching. This work is starting to have a positive impact in lessons and pupils are making better progress than they have in the past, but leaders need to ensure that this improvement is more consistent and more rapid.
- Some subject leaders are not as skilful as others in checking and improving teaching, achievement and pupils' behaviour. This is an important reason why pupils do not always make good progress. Leaders are aware of this and have recently introduced regular training for this group of staff. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this work, though subject leaders are developing a stronger understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas than they have had in the past.
- In addition to training, leaders have improved the way that they set teachers targets to improve their work which are based on all teachers securing good or better progress for their pupils. This is helping teachers to improve how they plan learning.
- Leaders have not made sure that teachers have the skills to meet the learning needs of some pupils who speak English as an additional language. This is an important reason why this group of pupils, like others, do not always make good progress.
- The majority of pupils at the school are eligible for support from the additional pupil premium funding. These pupils are not making consistently good progress. As a result, the school is not securing good value for money for the significant additional funding which it receives.
- The school offers a good balance of subjects as well as a range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is well planned and the recently introduced 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural' days are helping pupils, including sixth form learners, to learn about other cultures as well as develop an understanding of different religious and cultural values, for example. Regular assembly themes allow pupils to learn about British values such as respect and tolerance for the views of others.
- The curriculum provides pupils with good opportunities to learn about safety matters; all pupils recently benefited from a drama production which helped them to understand the risks associated with knife crime, for example.
- The mathematics curriculum is not planned well enough to help pupils to develop their reasoning skills and apply these to a range of problems.
- Leaders have made some changes to the curriculum this year so that pupils are able to make up some lost ground in their academic work, particularly for those pupils in Year 11. These changes are having a good impact on the progress of many Year 11 pupils, though not all. However, the curriculum does not have as much impact on pupils' academic progress and their personal development and behaviour as it should because it is not always taught well enough.
- Leaders have an accurate and detailed understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, their improvement plans are well focused and they are tackling the most important areas for improvement, most of which match those identified in this inspection.

- The Principal is positively transforming the school culture and ethos. In a relatively short time she has skilfully gained the full respect of staff and pupils and she is raising the expectations and aspirations of all. Staff are committed to improving the school and pupils are increasingly developing high expectations of themselves, both academically and personally.
- **The governance of the school**
  - During the period after the previous inspection and until the Principal joined the school in September 2015, the governing body had been ineffective. It has not held leaders to account well enough and this is an important reason why outcomes have been too low for the past two years.
  - The Principal has worked with key members of the governing body since her arrival at the school and there are signs that governance is improving as a result. Governors are developing the skills to ask probing questions and, consequently, hold school leaders to account better than they have in the past. Although the governing body does not understand the school's weaknesses in sufficient detail, it is developing a stronger understanding through the coaching that the Principal is providing and through regular, fortnightly meetings.
  - Governors have some understanding of where teaching is strong and where there are weaknesses. They also know about the progress that different groups of pupils are making but they do not monitor the impact on eligible pupils of the additional pupil premium funding in enough detail.
  - The governing body has appropriate procedures for making decisions about whether teachers should receive pay rises in relation to meeting targets.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding is a strength of the school. All staff are appropriately vetted and trained as required. Pupils feel safe and they have many opportunities to learn about keeping safe through assemblies and visiting speakers, for example. The school works with a police liaison officer as well as with other agencies to make sure pupils are safe. There are robust procedures for reporting any concerns that staff have if a pupil may be showing signs of being at risk.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement because there is too much variability between and within subjects. As a result, pupils do not always make good progress.
- Teachers do not all set work for pupils which is well matched to their skills and abilities because they do not always use the assessment information that they have to plan work more accurately. In particular, younger pupils who are in lower-ability groups in mathematics too often receive work which is too difficult.
- Pupils do not always benefit from having work which is challenging enough, particularly the most-able pupils. This means that these pupils are not able to demonstrate the high levels of understanding, skill and knowledge that they are capable of.
- Some of the most-able pupils, as well as others, told inspectors that they often have to 'wait for more work'. Inspectors' observations confirm this. This is because many of these pupils finish their work quickly and some teachers do not check pupils' work regularly enough in lessons.
- Teachers who teach subjects other than English do not always insist that pupils' work contains accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. This means that some pupils continue to make the same errors and the quality of their written work in different subjects is not as good as it could be. However, teachers in history and geography regularly check the accuracy of pupils' writing which, as a result, is often accurate.
- There is too much variability in the way that teachers in different subjects help pupils to develop their reading, writing and communication skills. Teachers do not always pay sufficient attention to teaching these essential skills, when appropriate.
- The teaching of mathematical skills in subjects other than mathematics is inconsistent and sometimes it is not good enough. For example, in some science lessons, pupils draw graphs without any labels or write answers to mathematical questions relating to the science which do not contain mathematical units. Teachers do not routinely address these errors.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their thinking in sufficient depth because the questions that teachers ask are often superficial and only require short responses.
- Teaching for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is not always good because some teachers do not plan learning which is accurately matched to particular pupils' learning needs, especially with respect to literacy.

- Teaching for some pupils who speak English as an additional language is too variable. This is because some of these pupils do not receive the specific support that they need to improve their English, particularly those who have weak language skills.
- Teaching is improving and pupils are beginning to benefit from more good and better teaching. It is usually good in English, history, geography, drama and information technology.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** requires improvement

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Younger pupils, in particular, do not always value learning and some pupils of all ages lack confidence in themselves, both academically and personally.
- A minority of pupils lack the motivation to succeed, particularly when teaching is not strong enough. However, as a result of the Principal's focus on improving the culture and ethos of the school, many pupils are increasingly developing a greater sense of personal responsibility for their own learning because staff model this well.
- Pupils are developing their understanding of the importance of physical and emotional well-being because sporting activities and school assemblies promote these. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural theme days promote reflection and provide opportunities for pupils to explore moral issues, for example. Although improving, the impact of this work is variable as some pupils do not always apply their learning and understanding from these activities to their everyday behaviour.
- Pupils value the personal and emotional support which is available to them, when needed, in the 'access to learning' centre. Pupils benefit from being able to talk to a member of staff about any concerns that they may have. One pupil told inspectors, 'It gets us ready for learning.'
- Pupils are developing higher aspirations for themselves. For example, several told inspectors that they are aiming to achieve grades and levels which are above their targets.
- Pupils understand safety matters very well because the school places an appropriately high level of importance on this aspect of its work. Pupils are taught how to keep safe, including when working online. They have an understanding of the different forms in which bullying can occur and are confident that staff deal with bullying incidents effectively, even though incidents are rare. Assemblies and visiting speakers ensure that pupils are appropriately aware of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- A minority of pupils do not always behave well in lessons. Sometimes learning does not always proceed quickly enough because of low-level disruption, particularly in Key Stage 3 classes. Pupils sometimes lose concentration and waste time, especially when teaching is not strong enough.
- Some pupils do not demonstrate strong attitudes to learning. In these circumstances, pupils do not regularly try their best and do not show a good level of determination to succeed. However, this is improving and many pupils work hard and are keen to achieve their best.
- Behaviour at social times is usually good because there is a good level of supervision from staff. However, not all pupils behave as well as they should when moving between lessons. Pupils told inspectors that there is sometimes too much pushing during lesson changeover and inspectors agree.
- Exclusions are reducing, including the proportion of pupils who receive more than one exclusion. However, they are higher for pupils who have special educational needs or disability.
- Attendance is improving and it is above average. The proportion of pupils who persistently miss school is also improving.

## **Outcomes for pupils** require improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because pupils who are currently at the school do not make consistently good progress across year groups and subjects. This is because teaching is not consistently strong.

- Since the previous inspection, the proportion of Year 11 pupils achieving five or more good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, has been well below average each year. The school has made some changes to the Year 11 curriculum this year so that pupils are able to spend more time studying GCSE English and mathematics and can make up lost ground. As a result, these pupils are making stronger progress than has been the position in previous years.
- The difference between the proportion of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school and nationally achieving five good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, widened in 2015. The gap has been too wide for the past two years between those disadvantaged pupils achieving a good GCSE grade in mathematics and others nationally. In 2015, disadvantaged pupils achieved one and a half grades lower than others nationally in mathematics. In English the gap narrowed, although disadvantaged pupils achieved two thirds of a grade lower than others nationally in this subject.
- Disadvantaged pupils of all abilities who are currently in the school are not making consistently good progress. This is also the position for all other groups of pupils, including those from some ethnic heritages and those who are from White British backgrounds.
- The progress of the relatively high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is variable and very much dependent on the level of spoken and written English that pupils have. The progress of those pupils who have weaker language skills is not as strong as it should be because not all teachers have the skills to accurately meet the specific learning needs of some of these pupils.
- Pupils in Years 7 and 8 who find mathematics difficult are not making enough progress because work is often too challenging. Some of these pupils lose concentration and do not always engage in the learning when this is the position.
- A high proportion of pupils join the school with attainment which is well below average in English and mathematics. For many, this is a barrier to them making strong progress, particularly as they are not helped to develop their English and mathematics skills consistently well across all subjects, when it is appropriate.
- Many of the most-able pupils do not make the rapid progress that they are capable of. Pupils are not routinely offered appropriately high levels of challenge which make them think deeply. In 2015, few of these pupils achieved the highest GCSE grades.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are starting to catch up with others, although progress is not as strong in older year groups as it is in Years 7 and 8. This is because younger pupils who join the school with attainment below that which is expected in English and mathematics receive good support to catch up through the additionally funded catch-up programme. Pupils make stronger progress in English than they do in mathematics, however.
- As a result of the significant impact that the Principal is having in improving aspirations, outcomes across all year groups and the vast majority of subjects are improving. This is because teaching is improving and pupils are developing a stronger appetite for success than they have in the past.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because teaching is not consistently strong and there is too much variability between subjects in learners' outcomes.
- In recent years, leaders have not ensured that learners have been following appropriate courses which are well matched to individual learners' skills and career aspirations. As a result, some have had to change their courses at the end of Year 12 and stay at the school until Year 14. Others have not continued into Year 13 which means that retention rates have been too low. However, this has improved significantly and learners are now following courses which are better suited to their needs. This is because leaders have made sure that learners have better support through the use of careers advice. Consequently, the current retention rate from Year 12 to Year 13 is above average.
- Outcomes require improvement because they are not consistently good in both academic and vocational courses. In 2015, although attainment improved in Year 13 in terms of the proportion of learners who attained A\* to E grades and A\* to B grades, the overall progress that learners made in both academic and vocational subjects was below average. The progress that Year 12 learners made in 2015 was also below average.
- Outcomes for those learners who retake GCSE mathematics are not as strong as they should be. This is because many of these learners achieved low GCSE grades in Year 11 and they are not ready to work

towards a GCSE grade C. Outcomes for those who retake GCSE English are similar to what is found nationally.

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement because the progress that learners are currently making is inconsistent, although it is improving. Learners do not benefit from consistently high expectations from teachers because sometimes activities are not challenging enough. At other times, work is not always well matched to the wide range of ability that exists in some classes. Some sixth form learners, like many in younger year groups, do not have sufficiently well-developed literacy skills and this is not always taken into account by teachers.
- The work that sixth form leaders do to promote learners' personal development and welfare is good. Learners value the wide range of additional activities that they take part in, including the work experience programme, charity events which sixth form learners organise and opportunities to support younger pupils, for example. Learners understand safety matters very well because they are taught about these in assemblies. They also have a good understanding of the importance of staying healthy, both emotionally and physically.
- Behaviour is good. Learners are strong role models for younger pupils and the vast majority take their learning seriously and show good attitudes to learning.
- All learners progress to higher education or employment with training.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136032
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10009285

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	982
<b>Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	145
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Vicky Waldron
<b>Principal</b>	Catherine Davies
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 373 1647
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.nbacademy.org.uk">www.nbacademy.org.uk</a>
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5–6 February 2014

## Information about this school

- North Birmingham Academy is an average-sized secondary school. It is sponsored by E-ACT.
- Almost two thirds of the pupils are of minority ethnic heritage, which is well above average.
- Just under one third of pupils speak English as an additional language, which is twice as high as the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is well above average.
- The pupil premium, which is additional government funding given to schools for children who are looked after and those known to be eligible for free school meals, provides support for just over two thirds of pupils. This is much higher than the national average.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- No pupils attend off-site provision.
- The Principal joined the school in September 2015. Many new teachers joined the school in January 2016.



## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 44 lessons, 14 of which were jointly observed with senior leaders. The inspection team made several short visits to other lessons to check on the progress and behaviour of different groups of pupils. Inspectors also looked at a wide range of work in pupils' books.
- Meetings were held with four groups of pupils from all year groups. Other meetings were held with members of the governing body and with senior leaders and staff, including those responsible for leading subjects. The lead inspector met with three representatives from the sponsor.
- Inspectors analysed the 12 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. They also analysed 38 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire as well as responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including those relating to the monitoring of teaching and the targets set for teachers to improve their work. They also looked at records relating to attendance, behaviour, bullying and safeguarding and the school's development plan. In addition, inspectors analysed a wide range of information on pupils' performance.

## Inspection team

Richard Sutton, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Patrick Amieli	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Lockett	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector

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