

Nechells Primary E-ACT Academy

Eliot Street, Nechells, Birmingham B7 5LB

Inspection dates	9–10 March
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
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment across the school, including in the early years, is too variable. It is not consistently good.
- Outcomes for pupils require improvement. Pupils are beginning to make much better progress in reading, writing and mathematics than in the past. This has not yet been sustained over a long enough period of time and many pupils remain below the standard expected for their age.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are variable because some adults do not have high enough expectations. In addition, some pupils have not yet learned to behave well when they are not directly supervised by an adult.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve and there is a lack of urgency about learning. In some classes, pupils are given tasks that are too easy.
- The use of problem-solving, logic and reasoning skills is underdeveloped.
- Pupils in some classes do not have enough opportunities to practise their writing skills.
- Pupils do not consistently make enough progress in subjects other than mathematics, reading and writing.
- Subject leadership in English is weak. This is as a result of instability in staffing.

The school has the following strengths

- This is an improving school. The executive headteacher is determined to make improvements and is uncompromising in his belief that all pupils must achieve their potential.
- The academy trust and senior leaders are making changes that are improving the quality of teaching. This is helping all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability, to make faster progress than in the past.
- Parents are supportive of the work of the school and recognise that improvements are being made.
- The caring ethos of the school ensures that pupils are very well looked after. Pupils say that they enjoy school life and feel safe. Attendance is improving. The most-vulnerable pupils are particularly well looked after as there are very effective safeguarding procedures in place.
- Members of the raising achievement board, which governs the school, are knowledgeable. They are rigorous in their challenge to ensure that the school is improving.

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?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment across the school and accelerate the progress of all groups of pupils by:
 - ensuring that all adults have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - supporting teachers to use what they know about pupils' skills and abilities to set work that is at the right level of difficulty
 - ensuring that teachers make regular checks during lessons to assess if pupils understand the work they have been given or are ready to move onto something more demanding
 - ensuring that regular errors in the use of grammar are corrected, for example consistent use of the correct tense, to ensure that pupils' writing makes sense
 - teaching pupils to use problem-solving, logic and reasoning skills in mathematics
 - providing pupils with opportunities to practise and apply their writing skills in a range of contexts, including writing longer and more detailed pieces of work.

- Improve provision in the early years by:
 - ensuring that the most-able children in reception class have access to activities that stretch their learning
 - collecting a broad range of evidence of children's writing and number work so that their rate of progress in these areas can be clearly demonstrated
 - continuing to share the effective practice evident in the nursery in the reception class.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the good practice in teaching, learning and assessment evident in the school continues to be shared effectively
 - securing stability in the leadership of English
 - rapidly ensuring that all teaching, learning and assessment is good or better to ensure that pupils catch up with the standards achieved by their peers in other schools
 - ensuring that sufficient time is allocated to enable pupils to make good progress in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics.

- Improve pupils' behaviour by:
 - ensuring that all adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning
 - expecting pupils to listen to adults when they are speaking rather than call out or chat to their classmates
 - helping pupils to make sensible choices about their behaviour when they are not directly supervised by an adult.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders have not yet been successful in securing good teaching across the school.
- Despite improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' improving rates of progress, a significant proportion of pupils in the school remain below the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. This is due to a legacy of underachievement and the fact that many of the improvements seen in the school are recent.
- Leadership of English has been weak. This is as a result of instability in staffing. There have been three different subject leaders in place since September 2015. As a result, there has been a lack of vision and cohesive strategy for improving the teaching of reading and writing.
- The executive headteacher is the driving force behind the improvements that are evident in the school. Since his arrival in June 2015 he has gained the confidence of the parents, staff and pupils and has brought stability to the school. His leadership is characterised by energy, determination and drive. The staff are united behind his vision and demonstrate high levels of commitment to making improvements.
- The relatively recently appointed leaders for early years, mathematics and special educational needs have made a positive start in their roles. They have an accurate view of their subject areas and have a clear vision of what needs to improve. It is too soon to see the full impact of their work.
- Pupil premium funding is being used more effectively to provide targeted support for eligible pupils in order to improve their attendance, social skills, and rates of progress and increase their access to music tuition. The progress of this group of pupils is carefully tracked and analysed.
- Systems are in place for managing teachers' performance. This year's targets focus appropriately on improving the quality of teaching and accelerating pupils' progress. The impact of performance management is not yet fully evident in ensuring consistently good teaching and learning.
- The additional primary school physical education and sports funding is used appropriately to enable pupils to take part in a number of sporting activities and events. Teachers benefit from working with a sports teacher to develop their expertise.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is appropriately catered for. The curriculum includes a suitable range of subjects which is beginning to be enhanced with trips to places of interest and visitors to the school. For example during the topic 'Towers, tunnels and turrets', Year 2 pupils visited Warwick Castle. To support pupils' understanding of respecting others' differences, a visiting theatre company performed 'Elmer'. Pupils have opportunities to attend a range of after-school clubs, including choir, netball and multi-skills.
- Music provision in the school is wide-ranging and effective. It is provided by specialist teachers. Pupils learn to play recorder, guitar, keyboard and woodwind instruments and sing together on a regular basis. However, pupils' progress in other subjects, for example history and geography, is limited in some classes because pupils complete few lessons and little work in these areas.
- Leaders have placed a high priority on teaching pupils about the fundamental British values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, tolerance and respect. As a result, pupils can talk about these with confidence and relate them to experiences in their own lives. This, along with pupils' religious education, is supporting them to be prepared to be adults in a diverse and changing Britain.
- E-ACT provides a high level of support for this school. This has been, and continues to be, effective. Additional financial resources have secured improved outdoor facilities and learning resources for pupils. E-ACT staff have been deployed to provide intensive support for leaders and teachers. For example, the safeguarding and special educational needs leaders in the school have benefited significantly from the coaching, mentoring and accountability systems put in place. E-ACT senior leaders acknowledge that there is still much to do to ensure that the school is judged to be good as quickly as possible and continue to provide intensive support where teaching requires improvement.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The raising achievement board, which has governance responsibility for the school, has been in place since September 2015. Members of the board bring high levels of expertise to the role and are knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the school, including the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They are under no illusion about the work that needs to be done to ensure that outcomes for pupils continue to improve rapidly.
 - The board meets frequently and is well informed about the progress that the school is making.

Members are rigorous in holding the senior leaders to account and make thorough checks for themselves to ensure the information that they receive is accurate.

- Board members check how effectively the pupil premium funding and the sports funding is being spent and the difference it is making to pupils' progress.
- Board members understand the system in place to measure teachers' performance and how this is linked to salary progression.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. As a result of intensive support from the academy sponsor, the safeguarding leader is extremely knowledgeable. He goes above and beyond the statutory requirements in order to keep pupils safe. He is proactive in his work with parents, carers and other agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe from harm. Effective use is made of a range of information, including attendance and behaviour records, to gain an accurate picture of pupils' needs. Staff have a good understanding of the procedures to follow if they are worried about a pupil and their concerns are followed up quickly and recorded in detail. Frequent training is provided for staff on varied aspects of keeping pupils safe, for example on female genital mutilation, forced marriage, child sexual exploitation and the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism. Safeguarding procedures and practices are a strength of this school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement because, although there are many aspects of good teaching in the school, this is not consistently the case across all subjects and classes.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are committed to improving outcomes for pupils and are keen to refine their practice. They work hard and are conscientious. As a result of this, and high levels of support from leaders and the academy sponsor, teaching is improving.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve in a lesson or over a series of lessons. This is because they are not making good enough use of the assessment information that they have about what pupils already know and can do.
- Although teachers plan work at different levels of difficulty for pupils of different abilities, some teachers are not yet skilled in moving pupils on to harder work as soon as they are ready. On occasions, the teacher does not get the level of difficulty right at the beginning of the lesson for the most-able pupils.
- In some classes low-level disruption is evident. This is, in part, because some teachers do not regularly scan the room to check that everyone is busy working. As a result, pupils who have lost concentration or are finding the work too hard or too easy are not noticed quickly enough.
- In mathematics, pupils have too few opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in solving real-life problems or to use logical and reasoning skills. This prevents them from developing a deep and broad understanding of the mathematical concepts they are being taught.
- Pupils' workbooks show that there is an inconsistent approach across the school to correcting errors in grammar and sentence construction. Inspectors identified that pupils in a number of classes regularly use different tenses in their writing, which makes it difficult for the reader to follow.
- In some classes, pupils have few opportunities to write longer, more detailed pieces of work or apply their writing skills in subjects other than English. This limits the progress they make.
- Despite these inconsistencies there are many strengths evident in teaching, learning and assessment. Where pupils are making the fastest progress, for example in Year 6, adults are following the school's agreed policy for marking and feedback. As a result, pupils understand where they have made errors or how they can improve. This leads to improvements in subsequent pieces of work. Questions are used well to tease out pupils' knowledge and understanding and tasks interest and motivate pupils to do well. In addition, teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support different groups and individual pupils.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are warm, caring and positive. Adults know pupils well and go the extra mile to support their emotional development and well-being.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- Pupils are keen and confident to talk about their school. They have noticed that behaviour and learning are improving and that new equipment and outdoor facilities have been made available to them. They speak proudly about this. They are smart in their uniform. They know that adults want them to try their best and learn new things. They can explain the behaviours that support good learning like listening, concentrating and asking questions. Some pupils are not yet able to apply this in their lessons.
- Pupils report that bullying is an increasingly rare occurrence. School records also indicate that this is the case. Pupils understand what constitutes bullying and have every confidence that adults will 'sort it out'. One pupil described a 'zero tolerance' approach to bullying and racist comments from all adults in the school.
- Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe in a range of contexts and circumstances. For example, pupils understand the dangers associated with peer pressure and communicating and researching on the internet. Leaders have provided a number of ways that pupils can raise a worry, for example the online 'sharp system' or the 'bug box' where pupils can report any concerns. Equally, however, all pupils who spoke to inspectors were confident that they could talk to an adult in the school who would help them.
- As a result of effective learning in personal, social, health and economic education and physical education, pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and can talk about the dangers of drugs and alcohol.
- Adults take time to get to know individual pupils and their circumstances well. They are proactive in meeting pupils' social and emotional needs. As a result, the personal development and welfare of disadvantaged pupils, those who demonstrate challenging behaviour and those who may be vulnerable to harm are good.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Some learning is interrupted by low-level disruption. It is characterised by a small number of pupils chatting when the teacher is talking, silliness such as flicking rulers and erasers around and general messing around when an adult is not directly supervising them. This is evident in a number of classrooms. It is this inconsistency which prevents behaviour being good overall.
- Pupils are very well supervised when they move around the building and into the playground. As a result, a calm and orderly environment is generally evident. However, when some pupils are not directly supervised, for example on the stairs or in the corridors, they run, bump into one another and do not maintain self-discipline.
- A new behaviour policy and reward system based on collecting stars has been introduced. Pupils report that this has been helpful and behaviour has improved.
- The school's records and the views of the pupils show that leaders have been successful in improving the behaviour of a number of pupils who find it particularly difficult to behave well. However, pupils also state that fighting and swearing is still an occasional occurrence in the playground. They state that adults always deal with this type of behaviour quickly and fairly. The use of exclusion is appropriate and proportionate and is used as a last resort.
- Good manners and politeness are evident around the school in pupils of all ages. Pupils thank one another instinctively and hold doors open for friends and adults, without being asked. Pupils are friendly and chatty with visitors and are keen to please.
- Parents who shared their views with inspectors had no concerns about poor behaviour or bullying.
- Attendance is improving as a result of comprehensive procedures to follow up on lateness and absence. Leaders have successfully reduced the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- The latest published assessment information does not show an improving trend across the school since it was judged to require special measures. However, evidence from pupils' workbooks and the school's internal tracking information show that the decline in achievement has been stemmed and improvements are evident.
- Outcomes require improvement because not enough pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school. Improvements are evident but inconsistency remains. Progress is accelerating in the nursery, Year 2 and Year 4. Progress is particularly rapid in Year 6.
- There is a significant proportion of pupils who are not at the standard expected for their age. This is

because teaching is not yet consistently good enough, nor has it been sustained over a long enough period of time, to enable pupils to make up for previously lost ground. As a result, pupils are not well enough prepared to begin secondary school. There is still considerable work to be done to ensure that Nechells' pupils catch up with their peers in other schools.

- The progress of pupils in subjects other than mathematics, reading and writing is too slow in some classes. This is because the school has, quite rightly, focused its attention on improving basic literacy and numeracy skills. Music is the exception to this. As a result of specialist teaching, pupils achieve well.
- Disadvantaged pupils, and pupils who have special educational needs or disability, make the same progress, in some cases better progress, than their classmates. The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is closing. However, in the case of disadvantaged pupils, the standard of their work remains below that of all pupils nationally.
- As with other pupils in the school, the progress of the most-able pupils is inconsistent between classes and subjects. This is because some teachers do not know what pupils are capable of and their expectations are too low.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is improving and is increasingly effective. The proportion of pupils on track to reach the required standard at the end of Year 1 has improved since this time last year.
- Pupils develop a positive attitude to reading from an early age. The well-stocked and inviting library plays a big part in this. Older pupils spoke to inspectors enthusiastically about a range of authors they enjoy. These positive attitudes are not yet matched by high levels of achievement in reading.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Early years provision requires improvement because the progress made by children in the reception class does not yet match the good progress seen in the nursery.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development is below that which is typical nationally. Evidence from children's learning journeys show that many children in Reception are not making anything more than expected progress from their starting points. As a result, not all children are fully prepared to start Year 1.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies across the provision. In the nursery, adults are skilled at joining in with children's play and asking timely and precise questions to help children to learn new things. This is improving in reception class but is not yet as precise or focused as in nursery.
- Teachers and teaching assistants make accurate assessments of the children's learning and record these systematically in 'learning journeys'. Parents have the opportunity to see these and add comments. Some assessments are less detailed than others. This makes it unclear what the child has been doing and how this relates to the assessment being made. In addition, there is too little evidence recorded about children's number work and writing to enable adults to make secure assessments about how much progress has been made in these areas of learning.
- Some activities that are planned do not provide opportunities for the most-able children to show what they can do or help them to develop new knowledge and skills.
- The relatively recently appointed early years leader understands the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and has a clear vision of what she wants to achieve. Her coaching and mentoring is bringing about improvements where they are needed and children's progress across the provision is improving.
- Both classrooms are bright, stimulating and well resourced. There are fun spaces for children to learn and play in. A broad range of tasks and activities are made available for children, both indoors and in the outdoor areas, which cover all the required areas of learning.
- Relationships are warm and caring. It is apparent that children feel safe from the independent way they access activities and resources and their confident interactions with the adults. Children understand the rules and routines of the classrooms and are well behaved. Parents are very supportive of the school's work and appreciate the investment in equipment and the improvements made to the outdoor learning areas.

School details

Unique reference number	138396
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10008204

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Wemms
Executive Headteacher	Matthew Flannigan
Telephone number	0121 4642102
Website	www.nechells.bham.sch.uk
Email address	enquiry@nechellse-actacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	29–30 January 2014

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- More than two-thirds of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium funding (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are cared for by the local authority). This is higher than the national average.
- Almost three quarters of pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above the national average.
- Early years provision takes the form of one full-time reception classes and two part-time nursery classes.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- Since the last inspection, there have been a number of changes in headteacher. The current executive headteacher was appointed in June 2015. The Principal was appointed in January 2016.
- Governance of the school has been reorganised. A raising achievement board has replaced the elected governance structure of the school. The board is comprised of members of staff from the sponsor and is chaired by the chief executive of the academy trust.

Information about this inspection

- During the two-day inspection, inspectors observed lessons and conducted 'learning walks' around the school. Several of these were completed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' current workbooks.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils during lessons and at playtimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors also heard a number of pupils read.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders and teachers with responsibilities for subject areas, and representatives from the academy trust including the chair of the raising achievement board, which governs the school.
- Inspectors analysed a range of documents provided by the school, including information relating to pupils' attainment and progress, attendance, safeguarding and the checks leaders make on the quality of teaching.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to be considered. The views of parents were gathered by speaking to parents at the beginning and end of the school day.

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