

# Park Hall Academy

Water Orton Road, Castle Bromwich, Birmingham, B36 9HF

## Inspection dates

22–23 September 2015

## Overall effectiveness

**Requires improvement**

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Attainment is improving, but too few students make the progress they should in English, mathematics and some other subjects, especially at Key Stage 4.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good enough to make sure all students catch up quickly to make up for the inadequate teaching they have experienced previously.
- In some lessons, students spend too much time correcting or improving earlier work. As a result, they have less time to deepen their understanding or to learn something new.
- Some teachers do not plan work carefully enough so that it is set at the right level of difficulty for everyone. Sometimes the work set for students is too hard and they are moved on too quickly before they have understood what is expected. Other times, students spend too long on basic tasks.
- Too many students are excluded, or withdrawn from lessons, due to unacceptable behaviour. This means they are not given sufficient help to manage their own behaviour.
- Attendance is below average.

### The school has the following strengths

- The academy is improving rapidly because leaders and governors quickly identify any weaknesses and take decisive action to improve these areas.
- Students have the opportunity to study a better range of courses that meet their needs and interests than at the previous inspection.
- Sixth form students do well because of the effective leadership and, as a result, they are very well prepared for further education and future employment.
- All students, including those who attend study or training away from the academy, are kept safe and are well cared for.
- Effective support is provided for disadvantaged students and those who find reading difficult, to help them to catch up with other students.
- A strong commitment to improving the literacy skills of all students is evident across all subjects.

## 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 so that students make good or better progress by making sure teachers:
  - use teaching time effectively to develop students' knowledge, skills and understanding
  - plan activities that recognise students' individual starting points so that work set is neither too hard nor too easy
  - planning of lessons is given the same importance as maintaining the high-quality marking practice
  - set homework that links with the work of the lesson, and check the quality and completion of the homework.
  
- Build on the improvements made by senior leaders to improve students' behaviour and attendance, as well as reduce the numbers of students who are excluded from the academy by:
  - making sure students receive the support they need to help them to manage their own behaviour
  - reducing absence further so that more students miss fewer lessons and attendance rises swiftly to above average levels.
  
- Review the way information on student progress is presented to leaders and governors, especially for all subjects at Key Stage 3, so that they can:
  - see if all students are making better progress over the year
  - identify any subjects where disabled students and those with special educational needs, and disadvantaged students, are making less progress than other students and intervene quickly to improve this.
  
- Work with a greater range of external providers to:
  - identify good practice seen elsewhere that can be used to improve the academy further
  - provide a critical review of the work of the academy
  - provide the headteacher and other senior leaders with opportunities to work alongside other successful leaders to see and share best practice.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher is securing rapid improvements to the academy and his leadership is making a significant difference. He is passionate and ambitious and is working with staff to make sure that the educational experience of all students in the academy is the best available. He has done this through a determination to improve teaching and learning in the school.
- Senior leaders are committed to the headteacher's vision. They are focused on improving students' attitudes to learning and providing teachers with the necessary skills to ensure that their practice improves students' progress. At the same time, they make sure students are well cared for, feel safe, enjoy coming to the academy and leave with the qualifications they need to be successful in further education, employment or training.
- The academy has been very well supported by the sponsor school and this support has brought about rapid improvements to a number of subjects, most recently in mathematics, science and physical education. Most of the leaders and teaching staff seconded from the partner school have now become permanent members of staff in the academy.
- Although students are not yet achieving the standards they should, based upon their ability, achievement is improving. Leaders are improving the quality of teaching and have taken decisive action to eradicate weak or inadequate teaching. Permanent teachers have now replaced the previously large number of supply and temporary teachers working in the academy, which is providing greater consistency for students. Fourteen new teachers started in September 2015.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to improve attainment and progress for disadvantaged students. As a result, they are starting to catch up when compared with other students nationally, although the gaps within the academy are proving harder to close.
- The literacy strategy, used well at Key Stage 3, is now being extended to Key Stage 4 and all students, including those who are disadvantaged, are being supported to improve their literacy skills. The Year 7 catch-up funding is helping students to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Teachers are ambitious and highly supportive of the headteacher and senior leaders. They told inspectors how much they value the excellent work done to help them improve their skills in the classroom. Teachers are involved in their own training and development and freely share their ideas with colleagues and provide support to help them overcome difficulties.
- Leaders, including governors, know the academy well. Regular checks on all aspects of the work of the academy take place and leaders use these checks to identify quickly where there are weaknesses and devise plans to overcome them. Action plans are detailed and reviewed regularly to make sure key steps take place when they should and with the desired outcomes.
- Students have a much better range of courses to meet their needs and interests following a thorough review of the curriculum. The number of work-related courses has been considerably reduced and students are now able to study more academic courses. Students in Year 7 are now receiving their entitlement to study a modern foreign language. In time, more students will therefore have the opportunity to be successful in the English Baccalaureate.
- The newly designed citizenship course for all students, including those in the sixth form, combines religious and personal, social and health education effectively. This course provides many opportunities for students to deepen their understanding of British values and appreciate the different faiths and cultures of others. As a result, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective.
- Students participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities including the cookery club and Shakespeare rehearsals, in addition to sport and other clubs that provide a range of creative activities.
- High expectations are set for students, and senior leaders make sure students arrive at the academy well prepared to learn. Checks on uniform, homework and equipment take place routinely every morning as senior leaders, including the headteacher, meet and greet students as they arrive.
- These high expectations extend to behaviour, punctuality and attendance, although some students are having difficulty adjusting to these expectations. In response, the academy now has its own educational welfare officer (EWO) who is starting to work more closely with families.
- Academy leaders have been proactive in introducing new systems to track progress across the academy without using National Curriculum levels. Although at an early stage of development, this system has made it easier for staff and leaders to check if students are improving and are on track to make the

progress they should be compared with students nationally.

- Leaders and teachers understand the need to keep students safe while they are in the academy. Safeguarding procedures meet the statutory requirements and are effective. All staff have recently received 'Prevent' training to ensure that they are aware of the threats posed by extremist views and radicalisation.
- As they were disappointed by the low response from parents to Parent View, academy leaders commissioned their own survey to gather the views of parents and carers. Parents who responded were overwhelmingly positive and highly supportive of the academy.
- Regular reviews are carried out by a range of external consultants and regular visits are made by the school improvement partner, who works across the academy and the partner school. Reports following these visits are sometimes overly positive and do not always provide objective evaluations of the progress made and areas still to be improved.
- Senior leaders have rightly focused on the most important priorities for improvement that have led to immediate improvements to teaching, behaviour and outcomes for students. A fresh, and more critical, look at the work of the academy is now required to drive further improvements. Leaders are not yet working with enough providers to identify good practice seen elsewhere that can be used to improve the academy further or to provide opportunities for leaders to work alongside other successful leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - works proactively as, following the recent transition to a multi-academy trust, governors commissioned their own review of governance and the use and impact of the pupil premium. Advice was acted upon immediately and governors carried out an effective audit of their skills to improve the way records of meetings are kept.
  - is effective because governors are suitably skilled and records of all governors' training events help to check that their training is up to date. Governors have recently attended training in the national 'Prevent' programme.
  - is increasingly effective in holding leaders to account for the academy's performance. Governors are aware of the key challenges that lie ahead, most noticeably to reduce the deficit budget without impacting on the progress of students.
  - is highly knowledgeable about teaching in the academy. Governors are aware of the inconsistencies that exist in some subjects and the problems associated with a high turnover of staff. They understand that the 14 new teachers in the academy will require additional support through induction as they develop their practice to meet the needs of students in the academy.
  - has consistently supported the headteacher as he has made rapid improvements to teaching. This has resulted in a large number of teachers realising that the academy, or teaching, is not the right choice for them and they have been assisted in moving on.
  - uses information about the quality of teaching well to make decisions about pay progression and ensure that the best teachers are rewarded. Leaders are more confident about using information about the progress made by students to inform their judgements on the quality of teaching.
  - regularly reviews the academy's action plans to make sure it stays on its trajectory of improvement. Governors, rightly, challenge leaders when deadlines for actions set against the high standards they demand are not met.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Too few students make the progress they should, particularly across Key Stage 4 in English and mathematics. Teaching in these subjects is not yet consistently good enough to make sure students catch up quickly. Gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding remain, which have occurred as a result of inadequate teaching in the past.
- Many students are not used to having the same teacher for any length of time due to the high staff turnover and previously large numbers of supply or temporary teachers working in the academy. This has had a negative impact on students' attitudes to learning, as well as progress.
- A programme of support and induction is provided for the 14 new teachers who have just started in September. However, it is too early to judge the effectiveness of this group until they have settled into their new posts and leaders have identified any further support that may be required.

- Students told inspectors that teaching is getting better. However, they say there are still some teachers who do not set homework regularly and some who do not check it when it has been completed. One student pointed out there was little point in doing the homework set in one subject because the teacher never marks it.
- Although training has taken place to make teachers aware of the need to develop mastery in mathematics, especially at Key Stage 3, some teachers move on too quickly before students have mastered a topic. As a result, Key Stage 4 students lack some of the basic knowledge and skills they need to make them more successful in tackling new work in mathematics.
- A whole-academy focus on literacy has made sure there is a consistent approach towards correcting errors and improving spelling and punctuation. However, sometimes this activity takes up too much time and, as a result, students do not have enough time to devote to learning new work in the subject.
- In Year 9 science lessons, teachers were seen asking students to redraft a piece of work on natural selection. This was not sufficiently challenging for some students. Similarly, in other science lessons students do not always have enough opportunity to apply their learning to a different situation to deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- The quality of teaching across the academy is improving as leaders work to support teachers in developing their practice. All teachers attend the Wednesday morning training and development sessions and are proud and enthusiastic to share their practice with others.
- Effective teaching, leading to students making good progress, was seen in performing arts, history, geography, and in the sixth form. Teachers' careful planning ensured that activities built on previous learning and resources were chosen to provide challenge and maintain students' interest.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge well in questioning students to find out what they know. Probing questions are used to good effect to encourage students to think more critically about their work. This is most effective when teachers give students the chance to gather their ideas and think about their response first.
- Students in AS-level science enthused about their opportunities to 'flip learning', where they prepare a topic and teach the others in the group. This is an activity they particularly enjoy which enlivens their learning.
- Although it is early in the year, students have completed a reasonable quantity of work which is marked regularly and assessed accurately by teachers. This is checked by subject and senior leaders and action taken where leaders' high expectations are not being met.
- Students show pride in their work, which is very well presented. Checks by senior staff to see if students have the correct equipment as they arrive are having a positive impact. Inspectors saw diagrams consistently being drawn in pencil, rulers used and students using highlighter pens to draw attention to key pieces of information in their writing. There was strong evidence that good study skills were being developed.

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

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Students are safe both in the academy and when they attend off-site study and training. The improved curriculum provides a range of opportunities to ensure that students know how to keep themselves safe.
- During a tutor period, and in citizenship lessons, students were seen taking part in a discussion about the importance of laws in this country, diversity and the protection of rights. An understanding of British values was developed well and students listened and took part with interest and enthusiasm.
- Students have many opportunities to learn about different faiths and cultures through the study of religious education and citizenship. Students who met with inspectors talked enthusiastically about a presentation in assembly from a Sikh community leader and a Buddhist nun who told them about meditation. Inspection evidence confirms that appropriate checks on the suitability of these speakers was carried out by academy leaders.
- Personal, social and health education themes are covered through the citizenship programme and, as a result, students are taught how to stay healthy and to keep themselves safe when using the internet and computers.
- Students told inspectors about the work they have done on racism, homophobic bullying, extremism and

radicalisation. They also demonstrated empathy for other cultures when explaining how they had raised money for charities including Water Aid and to support relief work for victims of Ebola.

- A strategy for delivering impartial careers advice and guidance is in place for all students in the academy from Year 8. Students find out about how to make informed choices, improving work and employability skills. Key Stage 4 and sixth form students learn about apprenticeships and other options available to them, outside the academy's own sixth form.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Exclusions are high. Five or six students are permanently excluded each year; a figure which is four times the national average. The proportion of students who are excluded more than once is well above that seen nationally. Exclusion does not appear to be a sufficient deterrent or make students want to improve their behaviour. Students need further support in helping them to manage their own behaviour.
- Academy leaders withdraw students from lessons when their behaviour prevents others from learning. Students work in the 'behaviour for learning' room or, for more serious misbehaviour, in the 'isolation room'. They are well supervised while withdrawn from their lessons but do not have access to specialist teachers and are expected to continue on their own with work missed from the lesson. Students working in these rooms told inspectors they do not like being sent there.
- High standards of behaviour are expected by leaders who have recently 'raised the bar' and students are now given two opportunities to stop the inappropriate behaviour before they are withdrawn from lessons, rather than three.
- Behaviour at break and lunchtimes, and when leaving lessons at the end of the day was, on occasion, boisterous but never dangerous.
- Students told inspectors there are some incidents of bullying. This was confirmed in the academy's behaviour records, which also make reference to a very small number of incidents of racial abuse.
- Students conduct themselves exceptionally well in lessons. They display high levels of cooperation and usually respond quickly to requests or instructions from teachers.
- Key Stage 4 students told inspectors that behaviour is improving. They reported that it is now very different from how it was at the time of the last inspection, due to the impact of the new headteacher.
- Students wear their uniform with pride and demonstrate a smart appearance around the academy. This is encouraged through morning checks on uniform and by a consistent approach by all staff to giving reminders.
- Attendance is improving quickly and was just below average for the academic year 2014/15. The proportion of students who are persistently absent is reducing, although this figure remains above average. The academy now employs its own truancy officer and EWO who, through more regular home visits working with families causing concern, are expected to help encourage students to miss fewer lessons.
- The academy's information shows that disadvantaged students are more likely to be absent than others. Some of the pupil premium funding is being used to help these students by providing rewards for good attendance.

## Outcomes for pupils

## require improvement

- Attainment across the academy is improving rapidly but examination results show that it is still below the national average. In 2015, almost half of all Year 11 students achieved five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE. Nevertheless, far too many students do not make the progress they should from their starting points in English, mathematics and some other subjects.
- In 2015, only about half of the Year 11 cohort made their expected progress in English and mathematics from Key Stage 2, which is well below that seen nationally. Nevertheless, this is a marked improvement on the 2014 results, when only a third of the cohort that year made steady progress. Not enough students make good progress, particularly at Key Stage 4.
- Academy leaders provided information that shows the improving trend in outcomes is set to continue for current Year 11. However, Year 10 have presented additional challenges as they have so much ground to make up as a result of receiving much weaker teaching in the past. Teachers find they constantly need to review basic knowledge and skills that should have been taught at the beginning of Key Stage 3, but



students have not learnt this work.

- Students are starting to benefit from much better teaching. More accurate checks on students' progress is helping teachers, leaders and governors to have a better understanding of students' achievements across the academy. Attainment for current students in Years 8 and 9 is rising consistently at each monitoring point.
- Progress at Key Stage 3 is inconsistent. On the one hand, students appear to make steady progress over the year in English and mathematics with about two thirds of each year group making the progress that is expected of them. But when it comes to a test or examination, their results reflect much slower rates of progress. Only about half of the students in each year group are indicated to have made the progress they should in their end-of-year examinations in English and mathematics.
- Although students learn well in history, geography and performing arts across the academy, there are still inconsistencies in science and physical education. Academy leaders have acted swiftly to improve these areas and new leaders are now in post and developing strategies to improve teaching in these subjects.
- The gaps in attainment and progress between disadvantaged students in the academy and others nationally narrowed considerably in 2015. In English, disadvantaged students were about a third of a GCSE grade behind others and just over a whole GCSE grade behind in mathematics. Gaps with other students nationally were slightly wider. Disadvantaged students make similar progress in English to others in the academy; however, there is a much wider gap in mathematics.
- Strategies used to make sure disadvantaged students catch up with others are starting to make a difference. Students are benefiting from the extra 'period 6' lessons at the end of the academy day. Here they take up the opportunity of using the free transport available for them to attend after-school or holiday revision sessions.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make very similar progress to all students in their year group in English and mathematics. Inspectors met with a group of these students who said they like the support they receive from learning support assistants in lessons, but wanted more support in practical subjects like information technology. They say occasionally the learning support assistants try to help too much and it can sometimes be annoying when students want to have a go at work on their own.
- Inspectors met with a group of the most-able students in Year 9 who talked about how they are challenged in their work in lessons, particularly in mathematics, English, history and technology where they are sometimes given harder or different work to do. In some subjects where they are not grouped by ability they say the work can sometimes be too easy.
- Students who take part in study or training away from the academy make good progress because they are studying a course at an appropriate level for their ability. Effective arrangements are in place to make sure they are able to catch up with work in the very few lessons missed while attending this alternative provision.
- The academy focus on literacy is supporting students well to improve their literacy skills and reading. This, together with numeracy intervention, is helping students to develop the key skills they need for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Students told inspectors how much they like their accelerated reader programme and are motivated by the star system of rewards, which is encouraging them to read more books. They like the way books are organised in the library so that they can easily find books which are appropriate for them.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used effectively to help students recover in English and mathematics. About two thirds of students in 2014/15 managed to catch up as a result of this support, and reached similar levels to their peers. Students benefited from a study skills programme and additional support in English and mathematics.
- Sixth form outcomes are improving as a result of much stronger teaching. Students make good progress in science and mathematics and inspectors saw evidence of students tackling challenging concepts well in government and politics.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The academy has a much improved sixth form. The 16 to 19 interim minimum standards (which set the government's minimum expectations for sixth form study) are met, as are all requirements of the 16 to 19 study programme.
- Historically, AS-level outcomes have been less strong than A-level and work-based courses. This has changed and results are at least in line with national figures, with progress also improving. Students

achieve their core aims.

- Leaders of the sixth form have high expectations of students. There are robust systems for tracking students' progress which show a picture of improving outcomes and which alert teachers about concerns when students are falling behind.
- Students have good opportunities to study a broad range of courses at level 3, including work-related courses in a number of subjects.
- Work experience is compulsory for all students in Year 12 and this contributes effectively to their learning. Students on work-related courses benefit greatly from work experience placements which extend and enhance their understanding of their particular courses.
- Students have many opportunities to take part in a range of enrichment activities. They know how to stay safe and keep themselves healthy because lessons and assemblies effectively support their personal development and welfare.
- Those responsible for giving guidance to sixth form students make sure that careers guidance is highly effective in helping students to secure places at university, college or apprenticeships. A key focus in Year 13 has been to make sure all students leave with the necessary skills to gain and sustain employment.
- Very few students have been successful in re-take GCSE English and mathematics courses in the past because they were not taught enough in these subjects. The time provided has now increased substantially and students are taught by subject specialists. Where students need to re-take both subjects, they can decide which examination to sit first. Students are very well supported as they develop their understanding, enhanced by being placed in a tutor group led by an English or mathematics teacher.
- In the past, only about three quarters of students who completed Year 12 went on to complete Year 13. This retention rate is lower than that typically seen nationally. Sixth form leaders are improving retention by using information about where students have gone, and what they are doing, after they have left the academy, to improve the curriculum and careers guidance.
- Attendance in the sixth form is lower than the average attendance in the main academy; this does not reflect the highly positive attitudes to the academy that students shared with inspectors. Sixth form leaders quickly identified absence patterns and found that some students do not arrive for the first period in the academy day when they have a study period. Leaders are now taking decisive action to change student timetables, in addition to adopting other strategies to improve attendance.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135971
<b>Local authority</b>	Solihull
<b>Inspection number</b>	10004236

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,199
<b>Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	130
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Wendy Jarema
<b>Headteacher</b>	Damian Burgess
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 748 0400
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.parkhallschool.org.uk">www.parkhallschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:post@parkhall.org">post@parkhall.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	28–29 November 2013

## Information about this school

- Park Hall Academy was judged inadequate at its last inspection and was placed in special measures.
- Park Hall Academy became an academy in 2009 and is sponsored by the Arden Academy Trust. The academy receives support from Arden School, which was judged outstanding in 2008. The Trust restructured to a multi-academy trust in April 2015.
- The interim headteacher was appointed to the permanent position in January 2015. There has been a significant turnover of staff, including senior and other leaders, teachers and support staff. A further 14 new teachers started in September 2015.
- The academy is larger than average and growing in size as more students join each year.
- Over three quarters of students are from White British backgrounds with a small number from a range of other cultures. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- About a quarter of students have disabilities or special educational needs, which is well above average.
- One in five students are eligible for pupil premium funding (government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are in local authority care), which is above average.
- A small number of students are eligible for support from the Year 7 catch-up funding (government funding for students who did not achieve the expected Level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2).
- Students attend off-site study or training for a range of work-related courses at Unity Trust, Magnet Centre and Triple Crown, and at Francesco's Academy in Arden School, for hairdressing.
- The academy meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 30 lessons, including five that were observed jointly with senior leaders. Short visits were also made to form time, physical education lessons and to observe literacy across a range of subjects.
- Inspectors observed students at breaks and lunchtimes. An inspector also visited the behaviour for learning room and the isolation room where students were working following withdrawal from their lessons.
- Inspectors met formally with four groups of students and also spoke with students during social times as well as in lessons.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, executive principal of the Arden Academy Trust, senior leaders and other leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor. In addition, a consultant who has recently carried out a review of careers education was interviewed.
- In addition to the 59 parents and carers who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire, the inspection team also considered a letter and follow-up telephone call from a parent and an email from another parent. Inspectors also took account of the academy's own commissioned survey on the views of parents.
- The views of 43 staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire were analysed.
- A variety of other information was scrutinised about examination results, students' progress, their attendance and behaviour and other aspects of students' personal development and achievement. The inspection team also viewed a range of documents including reports written following external reviews, a sample of student reports written to parents and records related to keeping students safe.

## Inspection team

Denah Jones, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alun Williams	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nigel Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Graham Tyrer	Ofsted Inspector

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