

West Walsall E-ACT Academy

Primley Avenue, Walsall, West Midlands WS2 9UA

Inspection dates	9–10 March 2016
Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The academy's ability to improve has been hindered by instability within leadership at all levels and within the teaching staff.
- Since the previous section 5 inspection, leaders and governors have been too slow in bringing about the necessary changes to improve the quality of teaching, behaviour and the progress pupils make. New senior leaders have begun to make improvements but the impact is not yet seen.
- Over time, governors have failed to hold leaders to account for ensuring that wide-ranging weaknesses in the quality of education are tackled effectively.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate. Expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are too low and learning lacks pace and challenge.
- Behaviour is inadequate. Low-level disruption is frequent and hampers the learning of others.
- Pupils' outcomes are inadequate because too few pupils make the progress expected of them by the end of key stage 4.
- The progress of pupils currently in key stages 3 and 4 is also inadequate and improving too slowly. The academy has been consistently below the government's minimum expectations for academic performance.
- The gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally remain wide and show little sign of closing.
- Teachers do not meet the learning needs of pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities. As a result, their progress is inadequate.
- The 16 to 19 provision requires improvement because outcomes in academic subjects are not yet good.

The school has the following strengths

- The regional education director and the new co-principal have a clear and ambitious vision. They are moving swiftly to establish a clear direction to get the academy back on track.
- Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for within the academy.
- Senior leaders have accurately identified the weaknesses within the academy and have begun to take steps to address them.
- In the sixth form, leaders are having a positive impact on teaching and outcomes. Learners achieve well in vocational courses.

Full report

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards by:
 - raising expectations of teachers to ensure that they believe pupils are capable of more-challenging work
 - taking full account of pupils' current knowledge, skills and understanding when planning lessons so that all groups of pupils are challenged to do and achieve their best
 - collecting accurate information about the progress of pupils in key stage 3
 - developing pupils' resilience and confidence, especially in key stage 3
 - accurately identifying and meeting the learning needs of pupils who have special educational needs or disability, and disadvantaged pupils, so that they make at least good progress
 - continuing to improve achievement in the sixth form by ensuring that learners make sufficient progress in lessons, particularly in academic courses.

- Improve the behaviour of pupils by:
 - eliminating low-level disruption through consistent implementation of the academy's behaviour management systems so that pupils are clear about expectations and are not prevented from learning
 - developing systematic and coherent structures for the analysis of pupils' behaviour so that it can be monitored over time and the effectiveness of strategies to improve behaviour can be fully evaluated
 - further developing strategies to improve the attendance of those disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs or disability who are regularly absent.

- Improve leadership and management so that they have a sustained impact on pupils' outcomes, by making sure that leaders:
 - tackle the remaining weak teaching within the academy
 - ensure that all middle leaders, including those who are new, have appropriate expertise in monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and check that these skills are being used effectively to improve outcomes
 - ensure that the academy is fully staffed with suitably qualified teachers
 - ensure that the academy's curriculum provides pupils, particularly those in key stage 3, with more opportunities to prepare for life in modern Britain
 - quickly develop a clear and effective role for academy ambassadors within the new governance arrangements of the academy.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Leaders and governors have not responded quickly enough to the recommendations of the previous inspection to ensure that necessary improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement have taken place. New senior leaders have made changes, but they are too recent for the impact to be evident. As a result, pupils' achievement remains below national figures in a wide range of subjects.
- Turbulence in leadership in the academy has resulted from many changes to the senior leadership team. All current senior leaders are keen to use their skills to improve outcomes for pupils. However, some staff have found the many changes of senior staff hard to cope with and have become confused by the different messages they have been given. This has affected morale and caused some division in opinion about the work of different leaders.
- Senior leaders have reviewed and implemented changes to systems to check the quality of teaching. There has been, and still remains, variation in the quality of teaching across the academy. These variations result from low expectations of pupils, inconsistent application of academy policies and teaching that lacks the necessary expertise.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils behave well. They collect information about pupils' behaviour over time but do not analyse this information carefully enough in order to identify and respond to patterns and trends. While pupils feel safe in school, poor behaviour in lessons is having a significant negative impact on pupils' learning.
- Leaders have identified that assessment has not been accurate in the past. Working with E-ACT and a range of support external to the academy, leaders now check assessments thoroughly and regularly. As a result, current assessments and predictions in key stage 4 are based on more secure evidence. However, information about pupils' progress in key stage 3 remains inaccurate.
- Support and challenge from E-ACT has not been effective in the past. However, recent actions to recruit and support new senior and middle leaders have had a positive impact and improvements are starting to take shape. However, it is early days and there is still much more to be done.
- Leaders have not ensured that the particular learning needs of pupils who have special educational needs or disability are identified correctly. As a result, teachers do not set work at the right level for their pupils. Consequently, too few make the progress expected of them and many pupils do not achieve as highly as they should.
- Middle leaders currently have insufficient expertise and there has been impermanence in these posts. As a result, middle leadership has had limited impact on school improvement. Where leadership skills have been developed and middle leaders are in post, strategies are being put in place to start to improve the quality of teaching. Many of these changes are recent, so their impact on raising pupils' achievement cannot yet be seen.
- Pupil premium funding has not been used effectively to promote the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. A very recent review of pupil premium funding has identified helpful and focused next steps. There are early signs of renewed vision and direction for the use of this additional funding, but at the moment these have been too recent to have an impact.
- Leaders now have a better understanding of the quality of teaching and this has started to inform the coaching and training that leaders have planned for teachers. Staff now receive bespoke training that meets their individual needs. However, not all teachers apply what they have learned from their training with consistency or sufficient rigour. The impact of training has been hampered further by the lack of permanent and suitably qualified teaching staff.
- The newly appointed co-principal has moved swiftly to plan a new curriculum to ensure breadth, balance and effective preparation for life in modern Britain. A number of changes have already been made. These have included ensuring that pupils in Year 9 have opted for courses that suit their needs and aspirations.
- Guidance to help pupils make the right choices for future careers is well embedded for older pupils. However, careers education and guidance is not yet provided for pupils lower down the academy, and it should be.
- The new co-principal and his senior colleagues have a clear view of the failings within the academy and what must be done to bring about rapid improvements.
- It is strongly recommended that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

■ The governance of the school

- Previously, governors have relied too much on information provided by leaders to understand the academy's strengths and weaknesses while it has been subject to special measures. Much of the information given to governors was inaccurate and presented an unrealistic view of the performance of the academy. As a result, governors have not had a proper understanding of the academy or how underperformance was being tackled, so have not held leaders to account with sufficient rigour.
- The academy's sponsor has radically changed the structure of governance to address the previous weaknesses. E-ACT's regional director has now taken on direct responsibility as chair of the raising achievement board (governing body) and has a clear understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses.
- Academy ambassadors, recently appointed by E-ACT's raising achievement board, are not fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. As a result, they are not yet able to support the academy effectively.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All teachers receive appropriate and up-to-date training in safeguarding. The senior leader with responsibility for safeguarding supports staff and pupils effectively when safeguarding concerns arise. Teachers are aware of their responsibilities and the actions they should take to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils within the academy. All staff have had received training to understand and spot the signs of radicalisation and extremism. Older pupils have a better understanding of this matter than younger pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable across the academy; some is good and some is inadequate. Teaching has not ensured that pupils make the progress they should.
- Some teachers do not provide sufficient challenge or have high enough expectations for the progress of pupils. For example, inspectors observed pupils who were repeating the same mathematical method and answering questions which they had already mastered. In several lessons, pupils who had finished their work had to wait for others to catch up before moving on.
- Teachers do not often encourage younger pupils to work things out for themselves. An over-reliance on the teachers to solve problems results in lack of resilience in pupils, especially at key stage 3.
- Teachers do not have a good understanding of the special educational needs of pupils in their classes. They do not provide appropriate support or set work at the right level of difficulty. Consequently, this group of pupils are making inadequate progress.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils is not always accurate, particularly at key stage 3. This means that teachers do not set work which matches pupils' different levels of understanding or skills. The accuracy of assessment information in key stage 4, however, has improved. This is as a result of leaders' actions in checking the standard of pupils' work in preparation for GCSE examinations. The same rigour and validity that have resulted from this support have not yet had an impact on improving the academy's assessment information at key stage 3.
- The academy's marking policy is helping the most-able pupils to improve their work. However, it is not so successful for the less-able pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability. For these pupils, there is not enough guidance about what they need to do next.
- Where learning is purposeful, there are positive relationships between teachers and pupils, and teachers establish routines to support learning well. This gives pupils the confidence to ask questions and to seek support.
- Teachers recognise that their training is now linked more clearly to the academy's improvement priorities. In addition, bespoke training and support are linked to the needs of individual teachers and this is starting to improve their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils' attitudes to their learning are not consistently positive. Some pupils do not take enough pride in their work and written work is poorly presented. Pupils, especially in key stage 3, lack the skills and

perseverance that would help them to become successful learners. For example, they are over-reliant on their teachers when they first encounter difficulty with their work.

- Pupils receive personal, social and health education through dedicated curriculum lessons. This programme is designed by the academy to ensure coverage and development of a wide range of appropriate topics. For example, older pupils' understanding of extremism is supported through regular effective assemblies and learning. However, while younger pupils are also aware of the risks presented by extremism, their understanding is less well developed than that of older pupils in the academy.
- Independent information, advice and guidance about careers and next steps are focused on the end of key stage 4 and the 16 to 19 study programme. Currently, there is no clear programme of visits, speakers and opportunities to inspire and encourage pupils in key stage 3. Leaders have identified this and are planning to put appropriate provision in place.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They told inspectors that they felt safe when in the academy. Parents and staff share the same positive views about pupils' safety. Pupils are clear about what constitutes bullying and racism. Academy records indicate that incidences of bullying and racism are low, and pupils confirm this. However, academy records suggest that incidents that do occur are not always followed up as robustly as they could be.
- Pupils are well cared for and the most-vulnerable pupils are supported through the good links that exist with external agencies.
- Pupils are proud of their academy and are smart in their appearance. The academy's environment is well cared for and is generally litter-free.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Leaders do not have a realistic view of behaviour within the academy and are not able to evaluate the impact of actions taken to improve it.
- Pupils say they are concerned about disruption to their lessons. A number of staff also expressed concerns about standards of behaviour. Similar concerns are expressed by parents. Inspection evidence confirms these views. However, some pupils and learners in the sixth form feel that behaviour is beginning to improve under the new co-principal's leadership.
- Some pupils are boisterous and noisy when moving between lessons and during social times. In areas that are supervised, pupils are more orderly. Some pupils are late to lessons, despite recent raised levels of supervision and increased sanctions.
- Teachers have recently started to implement a new behaviour policy, although pupils say it is not applied consistently. Pupils noted that teachers who are not permanent members of staff do not follow the academy's behaviour policy. They also say that the conduct of some pupils in their lessons disrupts the learning of others.
- Some pupils display negative attitudes to learning, which contributes significantly to their underachievement. At times, pupils do not respond to teachers' instructions to improve their behaviour and continue to misbehave. A few speak disrespectfully to adults in the academy. Some pupils chat about matters unrelated to their work and teachers can be too tolerant of this behaviour.
- The use of the academy's new inclusion unit has led to a decrease in the number of pupils excluded for a fixed period of time. However, the number of pupils who are permanently excluded from the academy is high.
- The academy keeps logs of all behavioural incidents. However, leaders do not evaluate the information they collect in order to target resources, improve behaviour and help measure the impact of their actions on groups of pupils.
- Senior leaders regularly monitor the behaviour of the small number of pupils educated elsewhere. There are good links with the provider of off-site provision and procedures are in place to ensure that pupils are safe and attend regularly. The use of alternative provision has improved attendance and strengthened the personal development, behaviour and welfare of those pupils who participate.
- The overall attendance of pupils is similar to the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability has improved over time, but they are still regularly absent from the academy more often than their peers.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- There is a legacy of poor progress made by pupils within the academy. In 2015, less than one third of pupils gained five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics. This was a decline from the previous year. This represents inadequate progress overall given the starting points of these pupils. The academy's own predictions for the grades pupils were capable of achieving in the GCSE examinations in 2015 were overgenerous and proved to be inaccurate.
- The proportion of pupils in the academy making the expected rate of progress in English in 2015 was similar to that of all pupils nationally. There was an improvement in the proportion of pupils achieving the progress expected of them in mathematics in 2015, but this was still below the national figure. Achievement in mathematics has not improved quickly enough.
- Weak results in other subject areas, such as science and humanities, contributed to the inadequate overall outcomes for Year 11 pupils in 2015.
- Progress of the most-able pupils at the academy increased at GCSE in 2015, but the proportion attaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, was below the national average. Fewer pupils gained the highest grades at GCSE than similar pupils nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make inadequate progress in English and mathematics and across a range of other subjects. In 2015, in both English and mathematics, the gaps between the progress made by pupils who have special educational needs or disability and other pupils in the academy were wider than the gaps seen nationally. Leaders have reviewed the provision of additional support for pupils who have special educational needs or disability. Consequently, arrangements to support better progress are starting to be put in place, but have not had time to have a full impact on pupils.
- Improved teaching in a range of subjects across the academy at key stage 4 is beginning to improve outcomes for pupils. There are marked strengths in pupils' progress in English, history and art. Academy leaders' predictions for 2016 suggest that new staffing arrangements are starting to have a positive effect on outcomes in mathematics and science. Inspection evidence, including inspectors' checks on the work in pupils' books, confirms that progress is starting to accelerate in these subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils, who are supported by additional funding from the pupil premium, make inadequate progress. There are no wide gaps between the achievement of these pupils and their peers in the academy, but this is because all pupils make inadequate progress. However, wide progress gaps exist between disadvantaged pupils in the academy and other pupils nationally.
- Progress in key stage 3 is inadequate because the quality of teaching is inadequate. The academy's own information about the progress and attainment of pupils currently in key stage 3 is unreliable. Pupils' work seen in books and lessons during the inspection confirms that rates of progress are too variable. This is often because of vacancies, absences and frequent changes of staff.
- The very small number of pupils who complete their education at a different location make reasonable progress. They achieve qualifications that allow them to move on to the next stage of their education.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- The progress leader for post-16 provision sets high expectations around attendance, conduct and work for learners in the sixth form. Although this leadership is having a positive impact on teaching and outcomes, achievement in the sixth form is not yet good.
- Attainment and progress for learners on vocational courses are similar to that of all learners nationally. Overall rates of progress in academic subjects are below the national average. However, attainment in academic courses has risen from being well below the national average in 2014 to being broadly in line in 2015. Academy monitoring information of learners currently in the sixth form predicts further improvement in outcomes for learners on academic courses this year.
- The quality of teaching requires improvement, as the progress of learners in some subjects is not good enough, particularly in the academic courses. In some instances, the pace of learning remains too slow and there is insufficient challenge for learners, especially the most able. Where learning is most effective, teachers use their strong subject knowledge and information about learners' starting points to plan work at the right level of difficulty. They provide feedback that enables learners to improve their work and develop their understanding further.
- The number of learners who stay on after Year 12 has previously been well below the national average.

This is partly because learners were recruited to courses that were not suitable for them. Learners now receive advice and guidance regarding the courses that are appropriate to them. As a result, more learners say that they intend to continue in the sixth form after Year 12.

- There are a number of learners currently in the sixth form who did not achieve a good grade in GCSE English and mathematics. The programme provided for those learners is taught well by subject specialists. As a result, some learners have secured a grade C or above in GCSE English and mathematics already this year and leaders ensure that other learners continue to prepare for these qualifications.
- Learners have opportunities to take on a good range of responsibilities and to participate in extra-curricular activities. For example, leadership and employability skills are developed through taking on roles such as prefect or peer mentor for younger pupils in the academy.
- Sixth-form learners said that they feel safe. Behaviour in the sixth form is better than elsewhere in the academy.
- Careers education, information, advice and guidance have a positive impact on learners' destinations when leaving the sixth form. Opportunities to visit careers fairs, universities and to take part in mock interviews raise aspirations and successfully prepare learners for their next steps. Last year, the proportion of learners that entered higher education, employment or training was greater than the national figure.

School details

Unique reference number	138374
Local authority	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10008203

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	622
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	84
Appropriate authority	E-ACT board of trustees
Chair	Mr Michael Wemms
Co-Principal	Mr Q Riaz
Telephone number	01922 272 0741
Website	www.wwea.org.uk
Email address	info@wwea.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 January 2014

Information about this school

- West Walsall E-ACT Academy is sponsored by E-ACT. The academy is just below average size and has a sixth form.
- Four out of five pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, of which over half are from Pakistani backgrounds. Three in five pupils in the academy speak English as an additional language.
- Just over 60% of pupils in the academy are supported by pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported by the academy is above average.
- A very small number of pupils access all of their education with Impact Education and Training Ltd, an alternative provider.
- In 2015, the academy failed to meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of key stage 4.
- The academy staff includes 13 colleagues who have recently joined the staff, including members of the leadership team. In addition, there have been recent changes in areas of responsibility held by some colleagues. Next term 11 more staff will join the academy; they have already been recruited
- The organisation of governance at the academy has very recently been restructured. E-ACT's regional education director has taken on the responsibilities of the chair of the local governing body.

- The previous principal left in November 2015 and a co-principal was appointed to lead the academy in January 2016. During the period of transition an interim principal has been in place. The academy also has an executive principal who started in October 2015, who was appointed regional education director in January 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 38 lessons; seven of these observations were carried out with members of the academy's senior leadership team. Lessons visited covered a wide range of subjects and year groups. Inspectors visited a withdrawal room where pupils work when they are removed from lessons. Inspectors observed assemblies. Pupils' behaviour between lessons, at break and lunchtimes was also observed by inspectors.
- Pupils' work was reviewed by inspectors in lessons and a work scrutiny was conducted.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, teaching staff, representatives of the multi-academy trust and academy ambassadors.
- Inspectors evaluated the 16 responses from parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors took into account the views of members of staff through 53 responses to the inspection questionnaire.
- Pupils met formally with inspectors on three separate occasions. Inspectors also conducted many informal discussions with pupils during lessons and in social times.
- Inspectors reviewed documentation from a variety of sources, including: the academy's improvement plans, operational updates, academy policies, academy information about outcomes, teaching and behaviour and minutes from meetings of the raising achievement board.

Inspection team

Rob Hackfath, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sally Noble	Ofsted Inspector
Graham Tyrer	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Topping	Ofsted Inspector

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