

Harborne Academy

Harborne Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 3JL

Inspection dates

24–25 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
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 an inadequate school

- Leaders have been too slow in securing improvements to the quality of teaching, achievement and pupils' behaviour. Consequently, these are still not yet good.
- Governors have been too slow to challenge leaders about the pace of improvement in the school.
- Leaders have been too generous in their view of the quality of teaching. As a result, they have not targeted extra support at areas that need it most.
- Outcomes in some subjects, including English, science and French, are too low and are not improving quickly enough.
- The most able pupils do not make sufficient progress because teachers do not expect them to work hard and think deeply.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' progress have not proved to be accurate in recent years.
- Teachers do not systematically check that pupils understand the tasks they are completing in lessons.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of the quantity and quality of work that pupils produce in a lesson, especially of their extended writing.
- Teachers' questioning in lessons does not help to deepen pupils' understanding of their work. They are too ready to accept very brief answers from pupils.
- Some pupils do not behave well in some lessons. They 'shout out' and do not listen to the teacher.
- The sixth form requires improvement because students have not made consistently good progress since the previous inspection. Outcomes in 2015 were low.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils make good progress in some subjects, including mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress and gaps between their attainment and that of others have closed.
- Most pupils are articulate and self-assured. They are confident and happy to read out loud or contribute to discussions.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Bullying is rare and pupils trust adults to deal with any that occurs.
- The curriculum contributes well to pupils' personal development.
- The sixth form is improving. Students' personal development is good and their academic progress is improving.

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.

Inspectors have no objection to leaders appointing newly qualified teachers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that all pupils, especially the most able, make consistently good progress in all subjects by ensuring that teachers:
 - have high expectations of the quantity and quality of work that pupils produce in lessons
 - ask questions that make pupils think deeply and then insist on full and detailed answers
 - routinely check pupils' understanding in lessons and then tackle pupils' misconceptions
 - consistently apply the school's behaviour policy and do not tolerate low-level disruption.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management so that teaching, behaviour and outcomes rapidly improve by ensuring that:
 - leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching across the school
 - leaders target training at individuals, subjects and aspects of teaching where it is most needed
 - staff consistently implement school policies, including its behaviour policy and its marking and feedback policy
 - teachers have the skills to accurately assess pupils' attainment
 - governors have sufficient skill and knowledge so that they robustly hold leaders to account for the school's performance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Leaders have not secured rapid enough improvement since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes remain too variable, especially in English and for the most able pupils. The amount of low-level disruption in lessons has increased over this time.
- Although leaders do check on the quality of teaching, they have been too slow to identify weaknesses and then to tackle them. Extra support and training has not been well targeted at those areas and individuals where it is most needed.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment, in many subjects, have not been accurate in recent years. Consequently, leaders can neither be confident in teachers' forecasts, nor be confident that they have targeted extra help at pupils who need it most. Leaders have taken steps this year to validate teachers' assessments, but it is too soon to know whether these have been successful.
- Senior leaders have plans in place to tackle weakness and there has been improvement in some areas since the previous inspection, for example in the teaching of mathematics and in the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. However, in other areas, improvement has been too slow in coming.
- The headteacher, supported by senior leaders and governors, has a clear vision for improving the school and this is shared by pupils, parents and staff. All staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire agreed that they understood the school's goals. Most parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, agreed that the school is well led and managed.
- The school's curriculum contains an appropriate range of subjects that engage and interest pupils. Leaders constantly look for ways to improve the curriculum and changes are planned for next year to enhance religious education, personal, social and health education and to give more time for the teaching of science. A 'skills school' in Years 7 and 8, with an English focus and operating for the equivalent of two days per week, is proving effective in improving pupils' writing skills.
- A wide range of extra-curricular clubs, which include sport, music and academic activities, supplements the formal, taught, curriculum. Other opportunities, such as work experience and educational visits, help pupils to develop broader skills and self-confidence.
- The school's work to promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, liberty, respect and tolerance is effective. Pupils who spoke with inspectors explained their understanding of the European Union referendum. They also told inspectors, maturely, about different world religions, and the importance of respecting the views of others.
- Leaders spend the pupil premium wisely. It is well targeted at the needs of disadvantaged pupils and provides a wide variety of support for them. As a result, these pupils often make better progress than their peers and gaps between their attainment and that of other pupils in the school have closed.
- Effective leadership in the sixth form is leading to improving achievement and provision. Decisive action following disappointing AS-level results in 2015 has led to students making better progress on courses that are well matched to their ability and interests.
- The school works closely with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Bartley Green Teaching School and the Oaks Collegiate of Schools and these relationships are all contributing positively to school improvement. Leaders also receive effective support from Entrust Education Services.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have not acted quickly enough in holding leaders to account for the school's performance. Increased challenge is evident following the examination results of 2015, but this has come too late to secure rapid improvement in teaching and outcomes.
 - Governors carry out their statutory duties diligently. They check on safeguarding procedures; they carefully monitor the spending and impact of the pupil premium; and they ensure that the school's arrangements for managing teachers' performance meet statutory requirements.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Policies and procedures are fit for purpose and all staff are well trained and, as a result, are vigilant to potential dangers. Pupils feel safe, and are safe, in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils, especially the most able. They are too tolerant of poorly presented work or work of poorer quality than pupils are capable of producing. This is particularly evident where pupils are completing extended writing, when teachers are too ready to accept untidy or brief work.
- Teachers do not question pupils skilfully in order to deepen their understanding of their work. Questions invite brief, often one-word, answers from pupils who could give much fuller responses. As a result, pupils, especially the most able, are not challenged to think deeply and they make slow progress.
- Teachers do not apply the school's marking and feedback policy consistently. Some teachers give detailed feedback, in line with the policy, that helps pupils improve their work. However, other teachers give little, or cursory and unhelpful, feedback that does not assist pupils in knowing how to improve.
- In lessons, teachers are too slow to check that pupils understand the work they are doing. As a result, teachers do not spot when a pupil is struggling or has misunderstood the task. They therefore do not step in quickly enough to help. Because of this, some pupils make slower progress than they should.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment have been over-generous in recent years. Consequently, leaders have expected better examination results than pupils have actually achieved.
- There are examples of better teaching across the school, for example in mathematics. Here, expectations are higher, questioning is well focused, teachers tackle misconceptions and give pupils high-quality feedback. Consequently, pupils make good progress.
- When given the opportunity, pupils are confident speakers. Inspectors observed pupils maturely expressing their views during discussions and reading fluently to their classmates.
- Teaching in the sixth form is better than in the rest of the school. Teachers use their subject knowledge well to plan interesting activities for small classes of well-motivated students. Students' progress is improving as a result.

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 generally polite, courteous, smart and proud of their school. When given the opportunity, pupils are confident and articulate.
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities that the school offers helps pupils to develop into self-confident young people. Effective careers guidance helps to prepare them for their next steps when they leave Harborne.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe from a range of potential dangers, including those that might arise when using the internet or from people with radical views. The school's records confirm pupils' views that bullying is rare and that staff deal well with any incidents that occur. Most parents who responded to Parent View confirmed that their child is happy, feels safe and is well looked after in school.
- The small number of pupils who spend part of their week studying away from the school attend regularly and behave well because they enjoy their courses.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- A small but significant minority of pupils do not behave well in too many lessons, especially where the teachers do not have high enough expectations. When this is the case, pupils shout out and do not listen to their teacher. Some teachers tolerate this low-level disruption and do not consistently use the school's behaviour policy.
- Pupils usually behave well around the school site at break and lunchtime. Some pupils are boisterous as they move around the school between lessons, but for the most part staff manage this well.
- Attendance is consistently close to, but a little below, the national average for secondary schools.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions of pupils has steadily reduced over recent years. Most parents and members of staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire agreed that pupils are well behaved.

Pupils told inspectors that behaviour had improved recently.

- Behaviour in the sixth form is good. Students are keen and eager to do well. They are attentive in class and well-focused on their studies.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because they are not consistently good across all subjects and groups of pupils. Pupils' attainment is consistently below average in most subjects. They make much less progress in English, science and French than in mathematics.
- The most able pupils make slower progress than they should in most subjects. This is because teachers do not expect high enough standards from them. This is not the case in mathematics, where the proportions of pupils making and exceeding expected progress were in line with the national figure in 2015.
- Outcomes in the sixth form were very low in 2015, with students failing more than 40% of the AS levels that they took. As a result, many students changed their courses and their current progress is better.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress and achieve similar or better standards than other pupils in most subjects, including English and mathematics. This is because the pupil premium grant has been well targeted at helping them.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making increasingly good progress as leaders introduce new systems and ways of working. These pupils now make similar progress to their peers. The 'skills school' in Years 7 and 8 is having a positive impact on progress, especially on pupils' writing.
- Pupils make consistently strong progress from their starting points in mathematics. This is because teachers have high expectations of pupils.
- The small number of pupils who study away from the school for part of the week achieve well. Their courses interest and enthuse them and help to prepare them for life after school.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- The sixth form requires improvement because students' outcomes are not consistently good. The school's assessment information indicates that, following course changes, current students are making much better progress this year. However, leaders did not foresee last year's disappointing outcomes because teachers had predicted far better results. Scrutiny of students' work confirms that standards in the sixth form are rising, but leaders cannot be confident about the rate of improvement.
- Following the disappointing results in 2015, leaders took rapid action to ensure that students were taking courses appropriate to their ability and interests. Because of this review of sixth-form provision, study programmes are now well planned, appropriate and personalised. Students have a wide choice of options, including academic and vocational options that suit their ability, interests and aptitude.
- The taught curriculum is supplemented by a variety of additional opportunities and experiences that help students to develop their confidence, communication and employability skills. All students take part in valuable work experience and several help to support younger pupils in the main school. The high-quality tutorial programme helps students understand how to stay safe and develop a mature understanding of current affairs.
- Careers advice and guidance in the sixth form is good. Leaders ensure that students have access to a wide range of independent advice that helps students to make positive choices about what they will do when they leave the sixth form.
- All students who start the sixth form without a GCSE grade C or above in English or mathematics are required to follow a course to improve their standard, and they are largely successful in doing so.

School details

Unique reference number	136213
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10009748
This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.	
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	649
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Dennant
Headteacher	Christopher Hilton
Telephone number	0121 4642737
Website	www.harborneacademy.co.uk
Email address	enquiry@harborneacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 April 2014

Information about this school

- Harborne Academy is much smaller than most secondary schools.
- Pupils are from a diverse range of backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and/or who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is more than twice the national average. This is additional funding for children looked after and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The school has a small sixth form which opened in September 2014.
- The school works in partnership with the Oaks Collegiate to offer alternative provision to a small number of pupils.
- The school works closely with the University Hospital, Birmingham, which supports several health and science courses across the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons; some of these visits to lessons were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and their attitudes to, and opinions about, the school. They observed pupils at break and lunchtimes and as they moved around the school.
- A wide range of documents were scrutinised, including information relating to attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, pupils' progress and the checks made on the quality of teaching.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and other leaders.
- Separate discussions were held with a group of governors and with representatives of the school's sponsor, Birmingham Metropolitan College.
- Inspectors evaluated 11 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors took account of 22 responses received to a staff inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

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