

Perry Beeches III the Free School

23 Langley Walk, Ladywood, Birmingham, West Midlands B15 2EF

Inspection dates

25–26 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- After a period of considerable turbulence, leadership and management have been comprehensively reformed to take the school forward with success and confidence.
- Governance has been transformed and now offers highly effective support and challenge to school leaders. Some further clarity is still needed, however, on the extent of the local governing body's newly delegated authority from Perry Beeches The Academy Trust.
- The ethos of high expectations for learning and behaviour is widely shared across staff, pupils and parents, and is a core strength of the school.
- Pupils' above-average rates of attendance, at school and for after-school booster activities, are testament to the value they place on learning.
- Pupils behave well. They conduct themselves courteously around the school site. Pupils feel safe, and are confident in the support they receive when they feel vulnerable.
- The school's strong promotion of the values of tolerance and respect for difference helps to ensure that pupils from a wide range of heritages and backgrounds integrate well.
- Teachers plan purposeful activities and manage classes well to ensure that pupils are focused on learning in lessons.
- The leadership of teaching is a particular strength. Many teachers have been trained within the academy trust and benefit from the regular monitoring and continuing professional development they receive. However, the role of subject leaders in monitoring and improving performance has been limited.
- The school's new assessment system has made a good start in helping ensure that pupils understand how to make progress in their subjects. A small minority of pupils, mainly boys, do not respond to feedback they receive by improving their work. Some differences between subjects in using the new assessments present difficulties for leaders in comparing subject performance.
- Pupils make good progress, especially in English, mathematics and science. Support for pupils' literacy has been strengthened since the last inspection. Improved literacy skills have resulted in better progress across the curriculum. Some differences remain in progress between subjects.
- Effective support for pupils' learning has ensured that disadvantaged pupils generally make better progress than others. Boys make less progress than girls across most year groups.

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?

- Further improve pupils' achievement by:
 - ensuring that boys make at least as much progress as girls
 - reducing variations in pupils' progress between subjects and ensuring that progress in all subjects matches that in the best.
- Embed and refine the school's new assessment system to ensure that:
 - the information it generates allows leaders to make reliable comparisons between subjects for the progress of pupils and classes
 - it is applied with consistent effect by teachers to ensure that all pupils, especially boys, improve their work in response to the feedback they receive in line with the school's policy.
- Further improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - continuing to strengthen the role of middle leadership in monitoring and improving performance within subjects
 - clarifying the extent of delegation of responsibilities to the local governing body from the trust and mechanisms to support governors and school leaders in carrying out new responsibilities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership has gone through a series of difficult transitions since the last inspection. The school has emerged from these changes with leadership structures that are finally fit for purpose and that can readily secure further improvements in provision and outcomes for pupils.
- The new headteacher and his leadership team have been exceptionally effective in maintaining the morale of staff, pupils and parents in spite of the many challenges since the last inspection. Staff are highly cohesive and the school is very well regarded by pupils and parents.
- The leadership of teaching is a key strength underpinning the school's good provision. Many teachers are in the early stages of their careers, and many have been trained very successfully within the academy trust. Newly and recently qualified teachers continue to receive strong support. All teachers benefit from regular and well-focused feedback on their work and a continuous dialogue around improvement. This is supplemented with ready access to additional training and coaching schemes.
- The new headteacher has ensured that school self-evaluation is now transparent and accurate, including by benchmarking performance against good and outstanding schools beyond the academy trust. This allows leaders to identify weaker areas of performance and produce sharply focused plans to address these. By setting out clear lines of responsibility and criteria for success in these plans, leaders can now be held fully accountable for the impact of their work.
- Additional funding is used well to provide comprehensive interventions to boost the progress of pupils who face barriers to their learning. Catch-up funding has been spent on literacy and numeracy support for pupils in Year 7 that has led to rapid gains in their basic skills. Pupil premium funding has enabled disadvantaged pupils to make, in most years, at least as much progress as other pupils. Children looked after in public care are very well supported, their progress and well-being is comprehensively monitored and reviewed.
- The leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been strengthened in the last year; it is now reducing the gaps that remain in these pupils' progress through more comprehensive monitoring of the impact of provision.
- Senior leaders have taken responsibility for managing performance of teachers and other staff, and for monitoring the success of subjects. As the school grows in size and assessment information becomes more reliable, senior leaders recognise that middle leaders will need to play a more prominent role in driving improvements and in reducing gaps between subjects.
- New leaders moved quickly during 2016 to plan and introduce a new curriculum and assessment system that could prepare pupils properly for the new GCSE framework and courses being introduced nationally. This has been a substantial undertaking but is now being used well, on the whole, across the school. It has been well received by pupils and parents. They appreciate its alignment with the new GCSE number grades,

its clear criteria for reaching expected or higher-than-expected standards and the ready means of measuring pupils' progress. The system, however, is new; it is still being refined to ensure that the thresholds of success are consistent between subjects so that meaningful comparisons can be made.

- The curriculum is balanced to achieve strong progress in English and mathematics and to give access to a suitably broad range of academic and applied subjects. Literacy development now permeates the whole curriculum. The focus on literacy skills has successfully driven improvements in progress across the school as pupils become more confident in reading, writing, speaking and listening. The school offers a wide extra-curricular programme to suit a range of interests. The extra-curricular programme includes a comprehensive and well-attended set of booster classes and other interventions designed to improve pupils' progress and support their basic skills. 'Club 8–9' is aimed at promoting the aspirations of those aiming at the highest GCSE grades and is part of a range of interventions to promote the learning of the most able pupils.
- The curriculum and wider school activities, such as assemblies and collapsed days for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), promote themes of equality and diversity very strongly. During this inspection, a powerful assembly commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day led pupils to reflect on and challenge modern-day issues such as the rise in hate crime. Religious education lessons promote thoughtful discussions around faith differences and tolerance. Fundamental British values are promoted strongly and pupils have a good understanding of the importance and principles of democracy. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength; pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Careers education and guidance occupies increasing prominence in the PSHE curriculum as pupils move through the school. Pupils understand the importance of making choices that link to career aspirations. Design and technology and computing subjects make strong links to business and industry in informing pupils' design and evaluation of products. Such provision, along with a strong development of pupils' basic skills of literacy and numeracy, ensures that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective.
- Since the last inspection, members of the local governing body have shown great resilience and determination to establish processes that allow them to properly monitor and evaluate the work of the school and its leaders. This has in the past been a sometimes arduous task.
- Governors are now highly effective in offering both challenge and support to the school's new leadership team. Their monitoring visits to the school are now sharply focused on checking progress against the main areas for improvement highlighted in external evaluations. They have established processes to check systematically the school's progress against its improvement plan targets.
- Governors bring with them a high degree of expertise and experience, including of successful school leadership. They have facilitated effective links with successful local schools outside of the academy trust to bring a wider perspective to comparing

provision and developing the work of the school. As a result, the quality of external support to the school has strengthened markedly.

- New interim leadership of the academy trust has conducted a root-and-branch reform of its practices, including giving greater autonomy to its academies. The full extent of newly delegated responsibilities, and support for local leaders and governors in carrying them out, is yet to be fully confirmed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is highly regarded by pupils and parents. Leaders and staff have an excellent understanding of the circumstances of individual pupils and are swift to respond when pupils show signs of becoming vulnerable. Pupils have very positive relationships with staff and express great confidence in the work staff do to keep them safe. Links with external agencies to safeguard the welfare of pupils are well developed.
- This confidence and trust between staff and pupils is evident in the admirable conduct of pupils when they make their way across Birmingham city centre in class groups for numerous cultural trips and visits and for sports sessions at an indoor sports arena. These activities are fully risk assessed and well managed by staff, but the pupils themselves understand the need to conduct themselves safely and comply scrupulously with this.
- Staff are very well trained to recognise signs of potential harm to pupils and to take appropriate action as required. Policies and procedures are clear and largely comprehensive.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a comprehensive understanding of risks and how to keep themselves safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers plan work assiduously to ensure that pupils make good progress against their targets. As a result, pupils are clear about the purpose of their learning and focus fully on their work throughout their lessons.
- The promotion of pupils' literacy skills has been an increasingly strong feature of teaching and learning across the school since the last inspection. Teachers reinforce the importance of accurate spelling, good writing and regular reading at every opportunity. They encourage pupils to speak and contribute to discussion, although some remain reticent.
- Teachers manage their classes well. They have appropriately high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct. The school's policy for sanctions and rewards is well understood by pupils and they say that teachers apply these with consistency and fairness.
- Teachers' questioning skills are well developed. Teachers ask probing questions to elicit

answers of increasing depth from pupils, thereby developing their analytical and reasoning skills.

- Much effective learning takes place out of the classroom. An extensive programme of booster sessions and independent learning opportunities, as well as subject-related clubs, is on offer after school. Homework has been a focus of improvement during the previous term; it is now well designed to complement and extend the learning in class.
- The school's new assessment system is well used by teachers and pupils to set out very clearly the criteria pupils need to achieve to demonstrate progress. Pupils are given clear and often demanding targets that are regularly reviewed to keep pupils motivated. Pupils generally respond well to the regular and precise feedback they receive from teachers about how to improve their work, in line with the school's policy. However, some pupils' books, more often those of a small minority of boys, show that pupils have not completed work or continue to make the same errors.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have a strong commitment to their learning and want to do well. They work with effort and determination in lessons and in attending after-school sessions to support their progress.
- In many classes, pupils are quite dependent on the teacher's guidance and prompting to contribute their ideas. Debate and discussion around some topics, however, such as those in religious education, show pupils to be thoughtful, reflective, and imbued with values of tolerance and respect.
- The diversity of the school's population is celebrated across the school community as a great strength and pupils from different heritages mix readily and easily together.
- Pupils understand well how to keep themselves safe. They also have great confidence in staff to support their physical and emotional well-being.
- Pupils recognise different forms of bullying and how to guard against it. They say that bullying in the school is very rare indeed.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils typically behave respectfully in lessons, and conduct themselves courteously around the school site. The site management staff speak very positively of the care with which pupils treat the building, and the low incidence of damage and litter. When pupils go off site for trips and visits, their good conduct reflects very well on the school.
- Fixed-term exclusions for poor behaviour have fallen as behaviour has improved. There have been no permanent exclusions in the current academic year.

- Pupils' attendance is above average for all groups and rates of persistent absence are low. Attendance has fallen in the current academic year from previously high levels because a few families have taken unauthorised extended holidays in term time.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress from starting points that overall are below average. Since the oldest pupils are currently in Year 10, there have been no GCSE results to allow direct comparison with national standards. However, pupils' books, along with the schools' own externally moderated assessments, provide clear evidence of the good progress made over time. Boys, however, generally make less progress than girls.
- Pupils' progress is particularly strong in the core subjects of English and mathematics. The mathematics curriculum secures pupils' mastery of numerical skills and concepts, and pupils across the ability range learn to apply these to the solution of increasingly complex problems. Pupils also make strong progress in science, where they particularly enjoy the practical focus of the lessons.
- All subjects, including English, now reinforce pupils' literacy skills and breadth of vocabulary, so that pupils are increasingly confident in reading and writing. The literacy programme has strengthened markedly through the last year and has therefore especially benefited younger pupils who have received its full benefits. Those who join the school with low reading ages make rapid gains as a result of the school's general reading programmes and individually tailored support. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make progress at least in line with others in the school.
- Remaining weaknesses in literacy skills, including for older pupils, partly explain the relatively slower progress made in some subjects, including history, modern foreign languages and performing arts.
- Disadvantaged pupils generally make progress at least in line with and often exceeding that of other pupils in the school, as the pupil premium is well spent on overcoming barriers to their learning. Their books and assessments suggest that their progress compares favourably with that of other pupils nationally.
- The most able pupils, the majority of whom are disadvantaged, respond very well to the high expectations placed on them by teachers and school leaders. Their aspirations are high and support the strong progress they make.
- The progress over time of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities varies in relation to other groups. Reforms in leadership and provision over the last year have, however, ensured that pupils benefit from continuous good teaching in lessons and effective additional interventions. These pupils are therefore now making good progress overall.

School details

Unique reference number	139797
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10018395

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	365
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Martin Bayliss
Headteacher	Andrew Brant
Telephone number	0121 647 2760
Website	www.perrybeechesiii.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@perrybeechesiii.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 May 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Perry Beeches III The Free School is a smaller-than-average secondary school. Currently, pupils on roll are in Years 7 to 10.
- The school is part of Perry Beeches The Academy Trust.
- The large majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and an above-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. Most of these pupils are competent or fluent under the new Proficiency in English five-point scale.

- The large majority of pupils are disadvantaged and eligible for the additional funding of the pupil premium.
- The proportion of pupils who are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- The school has significantly more boys than girls.
- There have been no GCSE results so far to compare with current government floor standards.
- The school does not send any pupils out to alternative provision.
- The school's leadership and that of the academy trust have undergone substantial changes during the last year as a result of investigations into trust-wide financial affairs. The current headteacher took the substantive leadership of the school in September 2016 having joined the school's completely new senior leadership team shortly after the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was initially conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 as a fourth special measures monitoring inspection. During the visit, the inspection became deemed a full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
- Inspectors observed teaching in lessons. Inspectors also made brief visits to other activities, including after-school booster sessions and a sports session off site at an indoor sports arena. Other aspects of the school's work were also scrutinised, including assembly and morning form time.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and school staff, including senior and middle leaders. Inspectors spoke with representatives of the academy trust. Informal discussions also took place with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors took account of 68 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, its safeguarding policies and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

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