

Four Dwellings Academy

Dwellings Lane, Quinton, Birmingham B32 1RJ

Inspection dates

16–17 May 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	Requires Improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders' ambition and focus have galvanised staff. Strong and committed teamwork have secured improvements to the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils. Consequently, the quality of education provided by the school is now good overall and well placed to improve further.
- This school is a highly inclusive and united community where all are welcome. Leaders at all levels, teachers and support staff have high aspirations for pupils.
- High-quality leadership, consistently good teaching and effective pastoral systems support pupils well. As a result, from a low starting point, pupils who left Year 11 in 2016 made considerable progress, which placed the school's performance in the top 10% nationally.
- Although improving, the progress made by the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils is not yet as good as that of their peers nationally with similar starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their different starting points across most subjects. This is because leaders carefully focus on addressing barriers to pupils' learning.
- Progress in English is significantly above the national average. This is due to good leadership, teaching and assessment.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is improving from a low base. Leaders are taking steps to ensure that outcomes improve further but have not yet developed a coherent approach to promoting numeracy across a range of subjects.
- Pupils' attendance has been above national average for several years and continues to rise. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities had poor attendance previously. This has improved recently, although their rate of attendance is still below that of their classmates.
- The school's curriculum is now broad and balanced. Pupils value the support they receive in making option choices at key stage 4 and decisions about their further education.
- Governors know the school well, are resolute in their support and offer appropriate challenge.
- Pupil's conduct is sensible and mature. They are welcoming to visitors and treat the school environment with respect.
- The school is a safe environment. Leaders make pupils' welfare their highest priority.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders should improve standards in mathematics by:
 - developing an effective whole-school numeracy strategy to support pupils.
- Improve the progress of most-able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan tasks to move pupils on to more difficult work as soon as they are able
 - pupils are questioned and consistently challenged to think in depth about topics.
- Leaders and pastoral staff should continue to address and improve the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Board members rightly describe the school as 'improving', 'self-evaluative' and one in which the headteacher's vision is widely shared. There is a culture of collective ambition. Leaders have a clear focus upon improving current and future standards. The changes introduced over recent years, have been substantial, effective and sustainable.
- Leaders' planning is precise, measurable and accurate. This has allowed them to accurately identify the most important future priorities. These include a consolidation of recent improvements in outcomes, concentration upon the most able pupils, raising standards in mathematics and further increasing the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders at all levels and teachers are focused on achieving these objectives. All those who responded to Ofsted's staff questionnaire agreed that the school's aims are clear.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is good. Senior and middle leaders carefully monitor teachers' performance. For example, leaders regularly undertake work scrutinies, learning walks and lesson observations. As a result, there is clarity of expectations and a consistency of practice which supports pupils' progress.
- Leaders ensure that performance management is related to the school's development plan and use it to identify any remaining weaknesses in teaching. Professional development focuses upon whole-school objectives, such as improving stretch and challenge for the most able pupils. Leaders also offer bespoke training which includes preparation for middle or senior leadership. Staff are very positive about the impact of professional development on their practice and preparation for possible future promotion.
- Newly qualified teachers feel very well supported by their subject leaders and senior staff. All staff who completed Ofsted's questionnaire believe the school is well led and managed.
- Pupil premium and catch-up funding are used effectively. The provision of successful interventions and enrichment opportunities means that disadvantaged pupils have made good progress over time and Year 7 pupils in need of support are rapidly catching up with their classmates.
- Members of the board closely oversee the spending of extra funding to make sure it is providing good value for money. This includes funding for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities who make good progress across the school.
- Up to this academic year, there was not a wide curriculum on offer for all pupils. This has changed and many pupils in Year 11, and even more in Year 10, study a full science course, history and/or geography. Additionally, most pupils in Years 7 and 8 now study a modern foreign language. These improvements have occurred because leaders have addressed previous legacies of poor teaching and difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff which in the past limited the curriculum they could offer pupils.
- A range of extra-curricular activities is offered, including library club, homework club and various opportunities to participate in sport. Some of these take place before and

after school, as well as during lunchtimes. For example, inspectors visited a well-attended film club and heard pupils enjoying playing in the music club.

- Pupils told inspectors that there are lots of activities to encourage reading, including a book club. They particularly like the competitions which are delivered through the tutor programme in assemblies and in English lessons. Pupils told inspectors their teachers are 'promoting a love of reading'. There are, however, no programmes to develop numeracy beyond mathematics lessons.
- Leaders, through a well-planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, and within the taught curriculum, have ensured that pupils develop the qualifications, skills and attitudes required to make positive contributions as citizens of modern Britain.
- Leaders also provide opportunities for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. These are reflected in interesting displays around the school, for example, displays of pupils' art work, and reading recommendations, plus displays celebrating sporting success and promoting British values as well as those with a focus upon future careers.
- The trust has provided effective support for school leaders. This includes commissioning reviews focused on areas such as safeguarding, special educational needs and the quality of careers advice. Additionally, the provision of high-quality support in mathematics has been welcomed by leaders.

Governance of the school

- Governance is highly effective.
- The Academies Enterprise Trust delegates powers to a management board. Members of the board know the school very well and share leaders' ambition, drive and self-critical approach.
- They accurately judge that improvements are becoming embedded and there is capacity across the school for these to continue.
- A number of board members are educational professionals and bring both experience and realism to their role. All board members receive training and are knowledgeable about key issues, including safeguarding, performance management and school finances.
- Board members hold leaders to account appropriately. Minutes of governors' meetings show they ask relevant questions of leaders. Safeguarding is discussed in all meetings.
- Board members visit the school regularly and the trust ensures a range of monitoring activities take place. Consequently, they have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture across the school. All those who responded to the Ofsted staff questionnaire agreed that pupils are safe at school. Arrangements for

recruitment and safeguarding training are very secure. Pupils' safety is the school's main priority. Pupils are safe and feel safe. They know how to keep safe and who to approach if they have a problem. Leaders have robust systems in place and foster good relationships with other agencies should any matter raised require further investigation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have shown a determined and systematic approach to developing teaching. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good.
- Teachers know pupils well, including their strengths and what they need to do to improve. All teachers make effective use of 'pupil profiles' which are drawn up in consultation with pupils and their parents. Information within profiles is used by teachers when they are planning lessons and assessing pupils' work. Teachers also use their good subject knowledge to shape interesting tasks.
- Strong teaching is characterised by positive relationships between pupils and teachers. Teachers usually have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and how hard they need to work. This leads to a purposeful learning environment where pupils make good progress.
- A consistent approach to teaching and learning has been pivotal in driving up standards within the school, contributing to increasingly good outcomes.
- Inspectors noted that the word 'resilience' is used by teachers in many lessons. This is in line with leaders' emphasis upon developing this among pupils. Pupils can explain what it means to be a resilient learner, including the importance of completing work.
- Homework is set regularly and includes a requirement to undertake extended personal learning projects.
- Teachers address challenging and relevant topics such as in religious education where Muslim attitudes to homosexuality were explored. Pupils feel comfortable to express different points of view because of the positive relationships and effective learning environment established by teachers.
- Frequently, pupils show great enthusiasm for their learning. This was seen in Year 7 history where pupils were very keen to offer ideas on the causes of the Black Death.
- The information provided to parents on pupils' progress is of high quality and detailed. For example, reports include pupils' targets and their success in meeting them, a personalised comment from each subject teacher and a member of the leadership team and attendance information.
- Leaders accept more is required to accelerate progress of the most able pupils. Planning does not always allow pupils to move on quickly enough, including to more challenging work. Questioning is often used well to develop pupils' thinking but occasionally the more able pupils are not made to think hard enough about topics.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe. This includes in assemblies given by police officers. Pupils are taught how to stay safe on line, be responsible and alert in their community and what to do if they have any safeguarding concerns.
- Pupils say bullying is rare. When it does occur, it is addressed quickly and successfully by teachers.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive, although a few can become off task quickly if teaching is less effective. Inspectors saw only a small amount of off-task behaviour, and those pupils who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire felt that this was not common but did happen occasionally.
- Pupils are clear about the meaning of democracy and the importance of tolerance in modern Britain. Pupils explained how their involvement in a whole-school election in 2016 had led to their improved understanding of issues surrounding Britain's membership of the European Union.
- Opportunities exist for pupils to develop effective leadership skills. For example, pupils can stand for election to become members of the student council or prefects. 'Well-being pupil leaders' deliver information to their peers and staff on how to support good mental health and develop resilience and 'play leaders' work with primary school pupils on how to socialise well.
- Pupils spoke very positively about the reward system and gave an example of being rewarded for a record of healthy eating in the canteen. All pupils who spoke to inspectors would recommend the school to others.
- Positive role models are invited to meet pupils to raise aspirations further. These include former pupils who are now working in the financial sector, those who have attended university and professional sports people. Other agencies reinforce expectations of pupils' behaviour and welfare in school and their community, including the police and health professionals.
- Children looked after are well supported. Their attendance is well above school and national averages and these pupils are making good progress. The small number of pupils who attend alternative provision are now more engaged in their learning. This is because they follow courses that are better matched to their individual needs. Their successes are reflected in their attendance, which is much higher than when they were at school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is calm and pupils show respect for their environment which is litter and graffiti free. During assemblies pupils are well mannered and attentive, including when listening to visitors.

- Current attendance is above the national average in all year groups. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent has fallen to well below the national average. In the past, the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been exceptionally low. Their attendance, although improving, is not yet in line with other pupils nationally.
- Inspectors met pupils who had previously been a concern because of their behaviour and/or attendance, and those who had joined the school late due to poor attitudes in their previous school. These pupils said that they are well supported to become engaged in their learning.
- Fixed term and permanent exclusions have fallen dramatically in the past two years and are now well below the national average. This includes exclusion rates for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who had been excluded disproportionately in the past.
- Staff and parents expressed no concerns about poor behaviour. A small minority of pupils who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire felt that behaviour in social times is sometimes poor. Inspectors saw no evidence to support this concern.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Year 11 pupils in 2016 had skill levels well below average when they joined the school. At GCSE, they gained pass grades in English and mathematics in line with pupils nationally. Pupils' progress was, therefore, significantly above average, particularly in English, and contributed to the school being placed in the top 10% of schools nationally.
- Pupils with low and average prior attainment achieved well in their GCSE examinations in 2016, achieving half a grade higher than pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- Those who speak English as an additional language receive effective, extra support, including after school. Consequently, pupils who speak English as an additional language made over a grade more progress in both English and mathematics than pupils with the similar starting points nationally.
- Those with high prior attainment performed in line with others nationally with similar starting points in 2016. Improving their outcomes is rightly a key focus for leaders and teachers. The progress of these pupils currently is generally secure but leaders, including board members, acknowledge there is more to do to make sure these pupils are always challenged in lessons.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, made good progress last year. This is continuing for current pupils because of carefully targeted support.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported to make good progress. This includes through teachers planning bespoke lessons based upon pupils' skills and interests.
- In 2016, far fewer pupils took subjects which count toward the English Baccalaureate than in other schools. As a result, progress was weak in the English Baccalaureate subjects. However, progress in subjects that count towards the open element was

significantly above average for all pupils, apart from the most able, whose performance was in line with national averages.

- Leaders monitor pupils' progress carefully, including from their different starting points. They have correctly identified that most-able pupils are not yet on track to make good progress, especially in mathematics, and boys in Year 7 not making sufficient progress in English. Once potential underachievement is identified, a range of effective interventions are put in place to support pupils to catch up.
- Leaders have taken robust action to improve outcomes in mathematics. Following significant underperformance at examination level in 2014 and 2015, there was a strong focus on improving teaching, including utilising support provided by the academy trust. Attainment in GCSE mathematics in 2016 was much improved and the amount of progress made by pupils was in line with the national average.
- Pupils are well supported in terms of developing their literacy skills. Weekly spelling tests are set and are taken very seriously by pupils across Years 7 to 9. Pupils are also encouraged to read during tutor time.
- Most pupils who attend alternative provision are making good progress. This is because they follow courses which meet their interests and allow them to develop skills relevant for their future careers.
- Pupils are very well supported in making plans for the next stage of their education, employment or training. This support includes being able to access effective and impartial careers advice and pupils can make use of a well-stocked careers section in the school library. As a result, the proportion of pupils moving on to further education, employment or apprenticeships is now very high.

School details

Unique reference number	139047
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10025171

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	470
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Parkinson
Principal	Rebecca Elcocks
Telephone number	0121 566 6666
Website	www.fourdwellingssacademy.org/
Email address	contactus@fourdwellingssacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	29–30 January 2015

Information about this school

- Four Dwellings Academy is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. Pupils enter the school with starting points significantly lower than the national average.
- The school converted to become an academy in April 2013 and is sponsored by the Academies Enterprise Trust.
- The majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and an above-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- 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 average.

- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' progress by the end of Year 11.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision on a part-time basis at key stage 3 and full time at key stage 4. These pupils attend centres called Bridging Skills, Bournville College, Greenhill, The Edge and Southside.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a number of subjects and at both key stages. At times these observations were made jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also made shorter visits to lessons.
- Pupils' work was looked at in lessons and as part of a formal scrutiny with the vice-principal. Inspectors visited registration periods and assemblies. Pupils' conduct was observed in lessons and also during lesson change-over times, at breaktimes, in the canteen and around the school site at lunchtimes. During these times inspectors also spoke with pupils informally.
- Meetings were held with the principal and other senior leaders, middle leaders, newly qualified teachers, three groups of pupils and two members of the local management board, including the chair.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including self-evaluation and action plans. They also evaluated documentation related to assessment, behaviour, attendance, management board meetings, safeguarding and the school's surveys of pupils and parents.
- Inspectors considered the views of 16 parents who responded to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View. They also took account of 57 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire and 35 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Nigel Griffiths, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Henshaw	Ofsted Inspector
Wendy Tomes	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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