

North Birmingham Academy

395 College Road, Erdington, Birmingham, West Midlands B44 0HF

Inspection dates

6–7 March 2018

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
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders know the strengths and weakness of the school. They have identified and are tackling areas of relative weakness in an effective manner.
- Leadership in the school is strong. Leaders are ambitious for the school and its pupils.
- Teachers' secure subject knowledge and increased expectations of pupils mean that the quality of teaching at North Birmingham Academy has improved and is now good.
- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, are making good progress across a wide range of subjects.
- In subjects such as mathematics and humanities, in which outcomes have not been strong in the past, improved teaching and effective assessment ensure that current pupils achieve well. Further improving progress in mathematics continues to be a key priority.
- Bullying is rare. When it occurs, pupils are confident it will be dealt with swiftly.
- The sixth form provides well for its students. The requirements of the 16 to 19 study programme are met.
- Sixth-form students are articulate, reflective and ambitious. They value education and the support that the school provides.
- Leaders are taking effective action to improve attendance, which, overall, is now close to the national average. Pupils with past poor attendance are coming to school more often than they did previously.
- Attention to pupils' personal development and welfare is a particular focus in this inclusive school. Pupils are well supported and develop reflective attitudes. A wide range of experiences is offered to pupils.
- Leaders have created a highly vigilant safeguarding culture. Pupils feel safe and value the support of staff.
- Behaviour is usually good in the school, particularly in pupils' social time. Pupils are proud of their school and display attitudes that demonstrate values of inclusion and fairness. There are still a minority of lessons in which poor behaviour disrupts learning. Leaders are taking effective action to address this.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the improvements in mathematics so that all groups of pupils make good progress, with a particular focus on the most able and disadvantaged pupils.
- Strengthen the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - the best teaching in the school is shared fully so that there is consistently strong practice
 - the skills of classroom teachers are further developed so that they can meet the needs of individual pupils
 - behaviour for learning strategies are embedded to ensure that teaching secures better progress for all pupils.
- Reduce the minority of poor behaviour that disrupts learning in lessons.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and raising achievement board members demonstrate a crystal-clear knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have taken appropriate actions to tackle areas of weakness. As a result, the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and behaviour have improved.
- Leaders are committed to achieving the best for pupils, and this ambition is strongly supported by staff. The school is a place where pupils feel safe and are well looked after. Leaders are ambitious for pupils' futures, rightly addressing all aspects of pupils' experience in school when tackling potential barriers. These include pupils' attendance and preparation to learn. Leaders develop securely informed plans, based on thorough evaluation of all aspects of the school's work.
- Leaders' assessment of pupils' progress and attainment is strong. Leaders and teachers are using regularly gathered information on pupils' performance to set appropriate targets for improvement. Pupils identified as underperforming have appropriate intervention strategies in place. Examples of this are mentoring, small group teaching, literacy and numeracy support, breakfast revision clubs and after-school sessions.
- Middle leaders are an emerging strength of the school. Like senior leaders, they are ambitious for the pupils, have high aspirations and show no complacency. Middle leaders are open and honest about their strengths and weaknesses. They are becoming increasingly skilled in being able to evaluate effective teaching and learning. They are now more able to support colleagues to ensure that pupils make good progress in lessons. They are keen to learn from each other and open to new ideas. Middle leaders clearly see the link between developing positive attitudes to learning and achievement. Pastoral and curriculum leaders are working together with the common aim of the development of the whole young person. There is, however, still some variability in how pupils achieve in different subjects.
- Staff and pupils spoke highly of the leadership in the school. They talked about the improvements since the last inspection, in particular behaviour and the quality of teaching. One parent wrote, 'I am really pleased with the school and my child's progress.'
- Staff turnover, including in the leadership team, has been a significant challenge to improvement in the past. Leaders have been effective in raising staff morale. Staff overwhelmingly said that they are proud to work at the academy and feel supported in their professional development by leaders. Trainee teachers cannot speak too highly of the school and the leadership. This investment in training and staff has resulted in increased stability.
- Leaders accurately evaluate strengths and weaknesses of teachers through a rigorous appraisal and monitoring process. As a result, additional support through informal mentoring and coaching is put into place where needed. Leaders are committed to the professional development of staff to improve teaching.
- The pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up premium are used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils and those who start at the school with weak literacy and

numeracy skills. Members of the raising achievement board members hold leaders firmly to account for the impact of the additional funding. Strategies include additional staffing of groups with high proportions of disadvantaged pupils, programmes to increase engagement of parents and carers and pupils in Years 9 and 10 and additional literacy and numeracy sessions to help pupils to catch up with their peers.

Disadvantaged pupils said that the school ensures that there are no barriers stopping them from accessing any school activity.

- Leaders have ensured that pupils develop the skills and qualities needed to be productive members of society. The core curriculum, alongside assemblies, tutorial and enrichment activities, prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Diversity and inclusion are areas of strength in the school. Pupils are taught and demonstrate respect for each other and the diverse range of cultures and backgrounds that form the academy's community.
- Leaders have reviewed and adapted the curriculum offered to pupils in order to ensure that it provides every opportunity for pupils to be able to achieve well. Pupils in Year 9 will choose three options rather than four in order to be able to deepen their knowledge and understanding in their subjects. Pupils in Year 11 have a compulsory additional period in which subject teachers deliver revision sessions. Pupils are encouraged to choose subjects that play to their strengths and to ensure that their curriculum is broad and balanced. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is at the heart of the curriculum, for example music, dramatic performances, cultural and sporting events, as well as a range of leadership opportunities.
- Leaders recognise that the quality of teaching in some areas is weaker than in others. Continuing to improve teaching is a key priority.

Governance of the school

- Raising achievement board members demonstrate a clear understanding of the school's context, challenges and priorities. They are highly aspirational for the pupils in the academy.
- Members of the raising achievement board are highly knowledgeable and skilled. They gather a range of evidence in order to clearly identify the strengths and weakness of the school. They hold academy leaders stringently to account and offer support and guidance when required. They know the school extremely well. They rigorously and regularly evaluate the school's performance in order to set priorities for improvement.
- Raising achievement board members regularly seek the views of pupils, parents and staff. They are effective in ensuring that the school cares for pupils' social, emotional and mental well-being. They ensure that the leaders have high expectations for pupil outcomes.
- Members of the raising achievement board are fully aware of their statutory responsibilities. They hold the headteacher and other leaders to account. They do not shirk from challenging leaders by asking probing questions across a range of issues such as behaviour, attendance, finance, safeguarding and pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have established safeguarding procedures and policies that meet statutory requirements. Leaders have the well-being of pupils as a driving force behind all that they do. A culture of safeguarding is evident throughout the school. The safeguarding lead is well supported by a team of trained staff.
- The school is the centre of excellence for the multi-academy trust and is held as an example of good practice for safeguarding. High-quality record-keeping and extensive work with a range of external agencies are evident. Systems are in place which ensure that any concerns raised are followed up thoroughly. Staff have ongoing training on issues such as female genital mutilation and social, emotional and mental health. A large number of staff are trained as young mental health first aiders. Consequently, staff can recognise the signs to look out for when identifying potential areas of concern and whether a pupil may be at risk.
- Pupils said that they feel safe and well cared for. Pupils are taught to be safe and healthy and are well aware of issues surrounding radicalisation, extremism, mental health and online safety. Pupils said that if they have a concern they know who to go to and trust that it will be dealt with effectively.
- Leaders and staff work effectively with families and external agencies. Vulnerable pupils are well supported.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers know their pupils well and inspectors saw teachers using their class files to deploy appropriate strategies to support the less able and stretch the most able pupils. Teachers used annotated class files on how to support pupils' literacy and numeracy, social and personal skills effectively. At its most effective, teaching is challenging and supportive. However, some teachers do not set work that matches closely the skills and abilities of pupils.
- Teachers use their class folder to identify disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Teachers and middle leaders value this strategy because it results in ensuring that pupils' additional needs are met and that expectations of these pupils' progress remain high.
- Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge. In some subjects, such as English, teachers are able to enthuse and engage pupils and expertly develop their writing skills. Good levels of challenge were evident in English and a range of other subjects. In these instances, teachers had ambitious expectations of pupils' work. Inspectors saw many lessons that were extremely well planned, and pupils were enjoying their learning.
- Leaders have ensured that teachers are consistent in their planning of lessons. Assessment is clearly used to advise pupils on how to improve their work. Pupils engage regularly in re-learn activities in which they have an opportunity to improve their work. Pupils are able to say specifically what they need to do to improve. This

strategy is consistent across all subject areas.

- Pupils are regularly assessed and progress monitored. Pupils know their target grades and understand what level they are working at. Teachers use this information, in the main, to plan effectively for individual pupils.
- A positive climate for learning permeates the academy. Pupils are keen to improve. Pupils show a pride in their work and books are very well presented. Pupils value the extra time that teachers give to them to support them in their studies.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils demonstrate values that are at the heart of the school, respect for diversity and inclusion. Leaders promote all aspects of pupils' welfare in a highly effective manner. Strong systems are in place that ensure that all pupils are cared for well. Trusting relationships exist between adults and pupils.
- Pupils said that they feel safe, and the majority of parents agree that the school provides a secure environment for their children.
- Pupils said that bullying is rare and that if it does occur it is dealt with swiftly. Pupils said that discriminatory behaviour is not tolerated in the school. Consequently, it too is extremely rare.
- Pupils' leadership development is a high priority. This ensures that pupils develop effective leadership skills such as good communication and teamwork. Pupils value the opportunities for them to become student leaders, prefects and mentors. Pupils spoke highly of these peer leaders and of how they have been both supported and inspired by them.
- Pupils are proud of their school, and the majority are confident and ambitious. They value their education and the standard of teaching that the school provides. They are self-aware and see that education is important for their future happiness.
- Pupils display a clear understanding of what is right and wrong and talked positively about how the school supports them in adhering to boundaries. Pupils have a clear understanding of the importance of physical and emotional well-being.
- Pupils spoke very positively about the personal and social education programme at the school. Work that they do in these sessions is valued.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of how to stay safe, including from bullying, extremism and exploitation. Pupils trust leaders to take rapid and appropriate action to deal with any concerns that they have.
- Pupils' social, emotional and mental well-being is a priority. A personalised tutorial programme based on the individual needs of pupils is in place. Areas that are identified by pupils in a self-assessment are explored through a programme that teaches people the skills and resources to overcome mental health issues and learn to thrive. Pupils fully engage in these sessions. They are given opportunities to reflect and debate. They

also learn about a range of contemporary issues.

- Pupils attending other educational provision are closely monitored by school staff for progress, attendance and well-being. Effective monitoring systems are clearly evident.
- Pupils receive high-quality, impartial careers advice that informs them about which courses are most suited to meeting their academic and vocational needs and aspirations.
- Pupils spoke very highly of the range of care they receive, such as counselling and support for their emotional and mental well-being. As the quality of teaching has improved, pupils are now becoming better prepared for their futures. Leaders acknowledge that there is still more to be done to equip pupils with the academic and life skills necessary to make the most of life after school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour during social time is very orderly. During break and lunchtime, pupils are well behaved, courteous and self-monitoring.
- Pupils in the school are smart, punctual and well equipped for lessons. They are eager to get to lessons on time. This is a result of the commitment of staff who have very high expectations of pupils' conduct.
- The school environment is welcoming and very well maintained. Pupils treat the school buildings with respect. For instance, inspectors saw no graffiti and very little litter around the school.
- Leaders have improved behaviour by focusing on high standards that are clearly communicated. There is also an emphasis on rewards for good behaviour. Pupils value this system and can see that it being effective. Pupils who behave well all of the time feel that they are now valued, and pupils who need to change behaviours can see the benefit of doing so.
- Pupils' attendance is improving. In 2017, attendance was below average, but current attendance of pupils shows a clear improvement, particularly for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Attendance is the main responsibility of five members of staff in the school. As a result of early intervention working with pupils and families, causes of poor attendance are tackled effectively and attendance has improved.
- Fixed-term exclusions have reduced significantly. Leaders have instigated a cultural shift in how poor behaviour is managed. Pupils at risk of fixed-term exclusion are now dealt with through a range of strategies, for example use of internal isolation and support, and supporting behaviour modification through the use of external agencies. Permanent exclusions have also significantly decreased.
- Behaviour in most lessons is good. This is an area that has improved over the last few years. There is, in a minority of lessons, some behaviour that hinders learning. This is not specific to one particular year group or subject. When this does occur, the teacher usually deals it with effectively. However, on occasion, it is not managed as well as it might be. Staff told inspectors that leaders are very supportive of them when they are dealing with pupils' behaviour. Development of positive behaviour for learning in

lessons remains a priority.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Leaders acknowledge that, despite the 2017 GCSE progress measures being above the government's minimum expectations, the outcomes, although an improvement on 2016 GCSE results, were not to the standard that they aspire to. The performance of particular groups of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those with middle prior attainment at key stage 2, was disappointing.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics in 2017 was below the national average. Leaders are clear that this needs to improve, particularly for more-able and disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils join the school with lower-than-average prior attainment. Since the last inspection, pupils' attainment and progress have increased. In 2017, progress in English, science and modern foreign languages was in line with national averages. Current information shows that progress in these areas continues to improve.
- Current information shows that most pupils in Years 7 to 11 are making good progress in a wide range of subjects, including English and foundation subjects.
- In 2017, disadvantaged pupils' achievement was below that of other pupils with similar starting points nationally. However, current disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving, particularly in Years 7 to 9. This is due to improved teaching, higher expectations of pupils' achievement and effective use of the pupil premium funding.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making improved progress from their starting points. This is a consequence of improvements in teaching, development of literacy and numeracy skills and the caring and nurturing ethos of the school.
- Middle-ability pupils made slower progress than that of other pupils last year. Consequently, there has been an increased focus on raising expectations of pupils' achievement. Intervention with pupils who are falling behind has improved. Better use of assessment information means that now teachers are increasingly challenging pupils to make better progress.
- The small number of pupils who are placed in off-site, alternative provision are well supported in their studies by the teachers and other staff in the centres. Their progress is not as strong as that of their peers in the school. However, the curriculum they are following meets their needs and prepares them for their next steps in education, training or employment.
- The careers guidance programme allows pupils to make informed choices regarding their future pathways. Last year, the number of pupils who went on to further education, employment or training increased.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership and management of the sixth form are strong. The curriculum offers a range of academic and vocational courses. Levels of achievement in 2017 were below the national average, but progress of current students is good.
- In 2017, students on vocational courses made better progress than average. An

increased number of students are currently working at the higher levels compared with 2017. Students on academic courses performed less well in 2017 because of underperformance in a minority of subjects. The 16 to 19 study programme meets requirements.

- Students' results in GCSE English and mathematics retakes are strong this year.
- Attendance is high and retention of sixth-form students from Year 12 to 13 is improving, as is recruitment into the sixth form from Year 11.
- Monitoring of students' progress is secure. Each student is tracked carefully, and interventions are effective.
- Relationships between staff and students are very positive. Students said that the sixth form provides a perfect balance between support and independence. They are taught to be independent learners.
- Careers information and guidance are good. In 2017, the majority of students went on to higher education, employment or training. Increasingly, students' aspirations are leading more of them to apply to Russell Group universities. Work experience is highly valued and is linked to career aspirations.
- Bursary funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged students while they are studying.
- Students in the sixth form take on a wide range of leadership roles within the academy, such as mentoring younger pupils and assisting school leaders in developing and implementing the behaviour policy.
- Students have a well-developed social conscience. They are thoughtful about their futures. Students are reflective, ambitious and articulate. They value education highly.
- Students told inspectors that they feel safe and are fully supported at the school.
- There is a wide range of extra-curricular experiences open to students, including educational, employment-related and cultural experiences.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. The vast majority of lessons are well planned and imaginative. Work in folders is well researched and well written. Students are interested in learning and curious. Past inconsistencies in teaching have been addressed.

School details

Unique reference number	136032
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10042870

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 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	983
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	107
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Michael Wemms
Headteacher	Philip Lloyd
Telephone number	01213 731647
Website	www.northbirminghamacademy.e-act.org.uk
Email address	NBA.enquiries@e-act.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 February 2016

Information about this school

- North Birmingham Academy is an averaged-sized, mixed, non-selective sponsored academy.
- The current headteacher was appointed after the previous inspection in 2016. At the time of his appointment, he was the third headteacher at the academy in the last three years.
- Prior to the current headteacher's appointment, there had been a high turnover of staff.

- Since the previous inspection, the school's sponsor, E-ACT multi-academy trust, has replaced the governing body with a regional achievement board consisting of E-ACT regional staff.
- Since the last inspection, the successful recruitment of staff has led to a number of appointments to leadership and teaching roles.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium is in the highest 20% of state-funded schools nationally.
- The number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is in the highest 20% of state-funded schools nationally.
- The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is in the highest 20% of state-funded schools nationally.
- In 2017, the school met the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school uses two alternative providers, City United Academy and St. George's Academy. Eight pupils currently attend these alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 58 lessons, including joint observations with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' books and listened to pupils in key stages 3 and 4 read.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and with students in the sixth form. They also met informally with pupils during break and lunchtimes.
- Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders, teachers and support staff, and members of the raising achievement board. Inspectors took into account 18 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also considered responses to a pupil questionnaire administered by the school and 54 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation document, safeguarding policies and procedures, the school improvement plan, information about pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance records and a range of policies and records from raising achievement board meetings.

Inspection team

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Graham Tyrer	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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