

Sidney Stringer Academy

2 Primrose Hill Street, Coventry, CV1 5LY

Inspection dates

13–14 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Many students enter the academy with low reading, writing and mathematical skills. They make outstanding progress to achieve above average results in GCSE examinations. Results in all of the English Baccalaureate subjects are significantly above the national average.
- The academy's checking and review of its teaching are consistently accurate. Staff professional development opportunities are very good and have significantly improved teaching.
- Teaching is consistently good or better and students relish the imaginatively planned, vibrant lessons provided.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Students from different backgrounds work very well together, have a very positive attitude to learning and feel safe. They are courteous and immensely proud of their academy noting that the academy allows them 'to be leaders of their own learning'.
- Attendance has improved significantly since the academy opened and is above the national average.
- The academy looks after the students exceptionally well, particularly those who find learning difficult. Support and challenge is highly personalised.
- The academy has used additional government funding very effectively to support a wide range of students in need of extra help. The progress of these students is often outstanding.
- The sixth form is good. Sixth form students make good and often outstanding progress from below average starting points. Some variations in standards remain between subjects. The students benefit from small teaching groups and very good resources.
- Outstanding leadership exists at every level. The leadership team has driven forward every aspect of academy life with vision, shared values and remorseless energy. The Governing Body offers effective challenge because of the clarity of the high quality information provided by the leadership team.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 66 lessons including eight joint lesson observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors assessed student behaviour around the academy throughout the working day.
- Meetings were held with the principal, the senior team, students, two members of the governing body, and nominated staff. The lead inspector also met with the Principal of the City College and a local authority officer in their roles as co-sponsors of the academy.
- Inspectors considered 35 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and analysed the results from 109 staff questionnaires. Inspectors reviewed the outcomes of the academy’s recently conducted parental survey.
- The inspection team observed the academy’s work and scrutinised statistical information about student achievement, attendance and exclusions. In addition they reviewed the academy’s analysis of how well it is doing, the school development plan, minutes of governing body meetings and examined senior leaders’ observations of teaching.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school’s view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

David Jones, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Anne McAvan

Additional Inspector

Terence Payne

Additional Inspector

Neil Gillespie

Additional Inspector

Alicia Welsh-Kuligowicz

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is larger than the average secondary school.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is more than four times the national figure. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is more than six times the national figure. The academy population is drawn from a wide variety of ethnic groups and nationalities.
- The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is twice the national average.
- The proportion of students supported by the academy who are disabled or with special educational needs is four times the national average, although the number with a statement of special educational need or supported at 'school action plus' is average.
- A small number of children who are looked after by the local authority attend the academy.
- The academy has specialist status in mathematics and design technology.
- The academy meets the minimum standards required by the government (floor targets).
- The academy opened in September 2010 following the closure of its predecessor school. Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) visited the academy in March 2012 to monitor its progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Work closely with the academy's feeder schools to enhance the students' reading, writing and mathematical skills on entry so they are well equipped for the opportunities Sidney Stringer provides.
- Eliminate the remaining variations in post-16 results so that student progress matches the best already available.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Achievement is outstanding; student progress is in the top 2% of schools nationally. Most students enter the academy with low reading, writing and mathematics skills. Subsequently, they make outstanding progress because their development is checked regularly; teaching is invariably good and often outstanding.
- The average points scored by students in their best 8 examination courses have been significantly above the national average since the academy opened. In 2012, the percentage of Year 11 students who secured five higher grade GCSEs, including English and mathematics was above the national figure, with the success rates of middle and lower ability students well above expectations.
- Students who are disabled or who have a statement of special educational needs make outstanding progress because of the quality of the individual support available.
- Students in need of extra help and those in the care of the local authority make outstanding progress because of the wide range of personal and academic support provided, in part by additional government funding (the pupil premium) and supplemented by the academy's own funds. The progress of these disadvantaged students is stronger than the outstanding progress made by other students in the academy. The average point scores made by this group of students in English and mathematics was one point above other students in the school.
- Almost all students in the academy speak English as an additional language. The outstanding progress they make is directly related to the high quality teaching they encounter in every lesson. Every subject area places considerable emphasis on improving the students' reading and writing skills.
- Senior staff review and revise the organisation of subject teaching on a regular basis to ensure individuals progress well. The use of early entry to GCSE examinations is very effectively managed to make certain that students can achieve well and then move on to more demanding courses.
- Standards in the sixth form are close to or above the national averages and rising. They are above the national figure in psychology, media and applied business studies. The average points scored per examination entry were just below the national average at A level and AS level. This represents good progress from the students' often well below average starting points that relate to their previous education.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching has improved significantly since the HMI monitoring visit in March 2012 when eight out of ten lessons were good or better. During this inspection over nine out of ten lessons were good or better and half of all lessons secured outstanding learning. Inspectors' judgements confirm the academy's own very accurate picture of its teaching

quality and relate impressively to the outstanding progress made by all groups of students.

- Teaching is strong in all subject areas. As a result student progress in all of the English Baccalaureate subjects is significantly above average. Subject teams are strong and students consistently express confidence in the availability and quality of the personalised support provided by staff during breaks or out of school hours.
- Lesson planning is detailed and imaginative, showing a personal knowledge of the students. Marking is impressive and students were keen to explain how much help it provides.
- Lessons are often inspiring and students are very keen to learn. In an outstanding Year 10 psychology lesson, the student discussion of criminality would have been impressive in an A level class. Similarly, in an excellent English lesson on Macbeth, the brilliantly planned character evaluation of Lady Macbeth produced student discussions on this key character's almost 'animal characteristics' evident in Shakespeare's text. The class settled on her 'snakelike' actions as she sought to influence Duncan; individual students offered Biblical and Koranic references to support their evaluation in an impressive spiritual, moral and cultural debate.
- Teachers ask probing questions and work effectively to create high level discussion in every lesson. Students work well in small groups and staff use this time effectively to tackle the gaps in the students' knowledge related to their previous education. Teachers and support staff use subject-specific vocabulary effectively to help students improve their writing and speaking skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students have very positive attitudes to learning. Attendance has risen rapidly since the academy opened and is currently above the national average. This improvement is the result of the rigorous monitoring of attendance, very clear systems, high expectations, and improved communication with parents and carers. The pastoral teams make attendance a feature of every assembly. Punctuality in the mornings and to lessons is very good; lessons often start early because all pupils have arrived promptly.
 - Students move around the site promptly, use the freely available computer facilities at every opportunity and gather in easy social groups during breaks and lunch periods. They have a very good understanding of safety matters, particularly e-safety. They state bullying, racism and discrimination are rare and dealt with very effectively. Students have a strong sense of right and wrong and exercise high social and moral values with others students and adults.
 - Staff supervision is low key but effective. Students are keen to engage staff and visiting adults in conversation in the corridors and social areas and clearly appreciate the staff interest in them as individuals. HMI took many informal opportunities to speak with students; when asked what they would do to improve the academy they consistently
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replied 'nothing, it's wonderful here!'

- Students are onsite well before the start of the academy day to take advantage of the computer and study facilities available and significant numbers stay on at the end of the working day to access the unstinting personalised support provided by staff.
- Parents and carers who responded to the Parent View questionnaire were very positive about the academy: all felt their children were happy, well looked after and safe. The academy's recently conducted parental survey confirmed this positive view.
- The number of students on roll has risen rapidly, a mark of the academy's impressive reputation, so there are few spare teaching spaces in a building only recently completed. Students who joined discussions with inspectors were overwhelmingly positive about the care and academic support available.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The principal and her senior team consistently communicate high expectations and lead by example. Staff and students have a very positive opinion of the principal's leadership. The academy provides exceptionally well for all its students' needs and ensures that they are very well-equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
 - The monitoring of teaching by senior staff is rigorous, providing a particularly accurate basis for staff development and performance management. The senior leaders worked alongside HMI in the joint evaluation of teaching and the views they expressed consistently matched the judgements given by the inspectors.
 - Self-evaluation is robust and the academy's actions are carefully planned, concerted and very effective. The performance management targets set by the governing body for the principal, and by the senior team for every member of staff, are linked to improvements in teaching and standards and, as a result, both are outstanding.
 - Pupil premium funds are used very well. The improvements made in English, mathematics and science have been supported by this government funding and the academy's own resources.
 - The senior staff have built very effective subject and project teams at every level. The working relationships between these teams are cooperative and efficient and have been a significant factor in the successful drive for high standards in every subject.
 - The range of subjects provided is wide and the organisation of the year by year subject options very impressive. The strength of this curriculum has had a positive impact on standards and achievement.
 - The range of subjects available to students and how they are organised is regularly adjusted to provide effective opportunities for learning for all groups of students, including disabled students and those in need of extra support. These often individual
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adjustments, have secured very positive attitudes to learning and outstanding progress. Many GCSE courses begin in Year 9 and this creates good opportunities to study higher level courses in the same discipline once good GCSE grades have been secured.

- The clarity and extent of information provided to the governing body is exceptional. Senior staff are open to questions and ideas from all stakeholders and this is a feature of the way senior staff communicate with parents and carers. For example, the academy's website is a model of how to provide the range of information schools should make public, including how it effectively uses the funds received through the pupil premium to raise standards.
- The local authority provides 'light touch' support for this very successful academy. This means that they provide access to the City's School's network and a very effective data analysis service for the academy.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are trained well and are fully informed about how the academy is performing. The governing body provides effective challenge because of the clarity of information available from a senior management team with a relentless focus on high-quality education for all. The governing body is knowledgeable and consistently compares the academy's progress to the appropriate standards. Governors make regular visits to the school and understand where teaching is most effective. They check the impact of senior staff reviews of teaching and ensure that teachers' progress through the pay scales is related to their effectiveness in raising standards. Governors set targets for the principal, and check carefully how well these are being met. Governors know how the pupil premium funding is being spent and closely monitor the impact of this and all other spending to ensure that the school's budget is being used efficiently to help pupils make outstanding progress. The governing body and the principal manage the academy's budget very efficiently. The co-sponsors, City College and the local authority, have a strong connection to the local community. The governing body ensures that requirements for the safeguarding of pupils are met.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136126
Local authority	Coventry
Inspection number	399779

This inspection of the school 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 the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1306
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	250
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Taylor
Headteacher	Wendy Tomes
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Telephone number	024 76251756
Fax number	024 76627400
Email address	admin@sidneystringeracademy.ork.uk

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