

# The International School

Gressel Lane, Tile Cross, Birmingham, B33 9UF

## Inspection dates

3–4 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- There is not enough good teaching, and only a small proportion is outstanding.
- Teachers do not always use the data available to make sure work in lessons is at the right level for the age and ability of the students.
- The work set for more-able students is often not hard enough to stretch them.
- Some lessons lack pace. Teachers do not all draw on a variety of approaches to actively engage students.
- Feedback and marking do not always help students to improve their work.
- Work to improve students' reading, writing and speaking is not carefully planned to develop these key skills as students move through the school.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured that progress in other subjects is as strong as that now seen in English and mathematics.
- Leaders and managers have not reduced exclusions quickly enough by seeking alternatives or working more effectively with students who do not behave well.
- The curriculum does not currently meet all statutory requirements.

### The school has the following strengths

- Attainment and progress in English and mathematics have risen sharply, and the proportion of students achieving at least five passes at GCSE has remained high.
- Students who speak English as an additional language make particularly good progress as they move through the school.
- Gaps have closed for students known to be eligible for free school meals. They achieve at least as well as other students.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs also usually make stronger progress because of good support.
- Teaching is improving because of the training provided for staff. Very little is inadequate.
- The attitudes of students to learning are positive and there is respect shown for adults and between students. This helps learning to proceed without interruption in most lessons.
- Focused support is making a noticeable difference to students' ability to read, write and speak more fluently.
- Students feel and are safe at school. They report that there is little bullying and they are confident that adults deal with personal and work issues quickly and well.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 34 lessons, four of these jointly with senior leaders and managers. They also made shorter visits to some classrooms to look at other issues such as marking and literacy support.
- The team visited many different areas of the school and the site during lessons and at break times.
- Meetings were held with three different groups of students, members of the governing body and senior staff. Meetings were also held with a local authority representative.
- The inspection team examined a range of school documentation, including school development plans and policies, lesson plans, records of lesson monitoring and checks on students' work, and the minutes of meetings, including those of the governing body.
- Inspectors examined a range of data, both those available to the public and those used by the school to monitor current rates of students' progress and attendance.
- There were just nine responses made to the online questionnaire Parent View by the end of the inspection, so no analysis was available. The team considered a number of responses to a questionnaire sent out to parents by the school. The inspection team also considered staff questionnaires returned during the inspection.

## Inspection team

David Martin, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Susan Hickerton	Additional Inspector
Colin Lower	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized secondary school.
- The school has suspended the sixth form provision for the foreseeable future, and has informed the Department for Education. There are no sixth form students currently studying at the school.
- Just over 40% of students are from White British backgrounds. Other students come from a wide range of different ethnic backgrounds. The largest ethnic groups are of Pakistani, White and Black Caribbean, Caribbean and Black African heritage. The proportion of students from ethnic minority backgrounds has increased over the last four years.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is much higher than in most schools, and is also increasing.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is much higher than average. This is extra government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and other students.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is a little below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is a little higher than average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- No students regularly study for part of their education off site at present. Four students currently have some additional help with behaviour management from outside external providers.
- The school has faced challenges related to a large deficit budget. This led to a significant reduction in staffing and a restructuring of roles and responsibilities.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning so that it is usually good, with more that is outstanding, by ensuring that:
  - work is more carefully set so that it is not too easy or too hard, and in particular, provides greater challenge for the more-able students
  - lessons make use of a suitable variety of teaching approaches that actively engage students' interests
  - students are encouraged more often to work without direct help from the teacher for parts of lessons.
- Raise standards in other subjects at least to the levels now seen in English and mathematics, by ensuring that:
  - the information that teachers hold about students' previous learning is used well to plan and provide challenging work for different groups within classes, particularly the more able
  - feedback and marking always give students helpful advice, where appropriate, on what they need to do next to improve their work
  - literacy work is planned more thoroughly so that students develop and apply stronger reading, writing, speaking and listening skills across all subjects as they move through the school.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, must address missing subjects and reduce fixed-term exclusions, by:
  - ensuring that that the curriculum meets all statutory requirements, particularly in terms of

- music, religious education and information and communication technology
- working more closely with the families of students who have more difficulty in meeting the high expectations that the school has of behaviour and conduct
- considering a wider range of alternatives to exclusion from school so that students do not miss essential learning.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Attainment in subjects other than English and mathematics is well below national levels, and the progress that students make in some subjects is weak. This is particularly true in science, languages, history and geography.
- Teachers have a great deal of information about the progress already made by students and about their particular learning needs. This is not always used well to plan work that meets all of these needs, particularly for the most able.
- Students who join the school with higher levels of attainment do not make as strong progress as those who have not attained the expected levels. Funded by the government's Year 7 'catch up' programme, students starting from lower points are very well supported in terms of their literacy needs, but the most able are rarely stretched by the work they are set.
- Students know their targets but are often not given the detailed advice that they need so that they know exactly how to improve their work. As a result, they do not always achieve as much as they might over time in order to develop a strong range of skills and knowledge.
- Attainment at five A\* to G including English and mathematics in 2013 has risen by 12%. This is because there has been a careful tracking of progress in these subjects, and well chosen support in English and mathematics that is not yet seen in other subjects.
- Most students were previously entered for courses early in mathematics at the end of Year 10, although they continued to study the subject in Year 11. Some more-able students settled for results that were below what they were capable of achieving. Students are no longer entered early for mathematics GCSE.
- Nearly all students achieve five passes at GCSE and this has been the case for the last few years. This reflects the belief of staff that all students can achieve if they attend regularly and have positive attitudes to learning. The majority of students prove that this is the case. The school actively promotes the opportunity to a good education for everyone, good relationships and tackles any form of discrimination firmly.
- The school has had notable success in the achievement of students eligible for pupil premium support. There is almost no difference in their attainment and that of all students. In some cases, these students make better progress than their classmates; for example, in English.
- White British students make the weakest progress. Students from all other ethnic backgrounds, including the largest ethnic groups mentioned previously, make good progress from their different starting points. Students from a Black African heritage made particularly good progress in 2013.
- Students who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Their needs are identified early, and very effective support, often from adults who speak their first language, is provided so that they make rapid gains in reading, writing and speaking in English.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to other students overall. Those who attend school regularly and do not have their education interrupted by exclusions often make good progress because their needs are accurately identified and they

benefit from good support.

- No students are currently studying for post-16 qualifications. The small number who finished their courses in 2013 achieved broadly as expected from their starting points. Retaining students on courses, particularly at A and AS level, has been a problem in recent years.

### **The quality of teaching** requires improvement

- In the lessons seen during the inspection, around two thirds of the teaching seen was judged to be good or better. Little outstanding teaching was seen. Students' attainment and progress indicate that teaching over time has not been good enough, and there is still too much teaching that requires improvement.
- There are too many inconsistencies in teaching. A particular weakness is that work is not always planned so that it provides the right level of difficulty for different ability groups, particularly the more able. Sometimes challenging extension work is offered, but only as an optional choice.
- In some lessons, students are not sufficiently motivated by tasks that are too easy for them. These lessons also often lack opportunities for active learning that engages students in discussion, deeper thinking or more extended questioning.
- Few lessons include opportunities for students to work without direct help from the teacher for periods of time, so they do not develop the ability to take responsibility for their own learning rather than relying too much on teachers for explanations and directions.
- Literacy activities, partly funded through the Year 7 catch-up programme, are making a difference in accelerating the reading ages of younger students and those who speak English as an additional language. The programme for older students is not yet planned across all subjects to ensure that build steadily on their key skills as they move up the school.
- There is some good marking, and teachers generally help students to understand the levels at which they are working. Feedback is not always specific enough about what needs to improve, and students rarely use the advice given in the marking and verbal feedback to improve their work.
- The school has encouraged questioning that involves all pupils, and this was seen in many lessons. There was also a considerable amount of enthusiasm seen for learning; teachers make it clear that they are ambitious for all students to succeed.
- There is a strong emphasis on tolerance, trust, honesty and hard work. This has made a significant difference to creating a school where learning is greatly valued by most students. This has been reflected in higher attainment, particularly in English and mathematics, where the school has focused the most attention.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** requires improvement

- Behaviour and safety requires improvement because too many students are excluded from school for periods of time, meaning that they miss parts of their education and fail to make the progress that they should.
- In 2012, six times as many exclusions were made than in the average school, a figure twice as

high as the previous year. Although the number is reducing, 32 fixed-term exclusions have already been made in the autumn term of 2013.

- The school has raised its expectations of students in terms of conduct and behaviour. Exclusions are made where these expectations are not met, particularly in terms of verbal or physical abuse. Many of the students excluded have special educational needs, so have their learning and support interrupted by absences.
- The school has recently used a 'pupil reflection unit' to help students who find difficulty in following school rules and expectations. This is used as an alternative to exclusion, and has helped to reduce the number of fixed term exclusions.
- The school has been more successful in reducing absence rates, with the result that recent attendance figures are close to the national average. There are staff who work with families and carers of those who find attendance and appropriate behaviour difficult, and they have had considerable success in reducing persistent absence.
- The 'golden rules' have had a positive impact on the majority of students' behaviour. Students told inspectors that disruption in lessons is rare, and that was confirmed by lesson observations. Behaviour around the school was also generally calm and orderly.
- Students' behaviour in class is well managed. Students are keen to learn and to engage with adults and each other. They show a strong sense of right and wrong, and show respect and tolerance in their dealings with others, and in moving safely and sensibly around the site.
- Students are aware of different forms of bullying, including cyber- and prejudice-based bullying. They say that there is little bullying or harassment, and that teachers deal well with any issues that do arise. Responses from parents to the school questionnaire confirm that this is the case.

### **The leadership and management**

### **requires improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because there has been too little impact made on reducing exclusions and absence from school for a significant minority of students. There are also aspects of the curriculum where the school is not meeting statutory requirements.
- Although the school has recently invested in electronic systems to record important information such as attendance and absence, this is not yet being used by staff to analyse the information and take early action. This means that patterns of absence and poor behaviour are not always identified in time to deal with issues quickly.
- The headteacher inherited severe financial problems, necessitating a drastic reduction in staffing. At the same time, behaviour and students' attitudes were very poor and the local reputation of the school was low. Against these challenges, he has created a calm, orderly school where the focus is on learning in a culture of respect.
- The restructuring of the school has been completed, and staff and parents are very happy about the school's transformation. However, changes to staffing have meant that there is little provision for music, drama, or information and communication technology, and religious education is not offered to all students. The headteacher has stated his intention to address this as a priority when opportunities to recruit new staff arise.
- The financial management of the school is now robust, and the budget has been brought back

into balance from a very large deficit. At the same time, the school has been refurbished and the buildings are very well cared for, and learning resources maintained at a good level.

- In the current structure there are fewer middle leaders. Senior staff, particularly the more recently appointed members, have worked energetically and successfully to support the headteacher in improving teaching and achievement in English and mathematics. They are completing further nationally recognised training to develop their skills for the future.
- Senior leaders and managers have ensured, through their planning and monitoring, that improving teaching and learning and raising standards have been the main priority. Improvements in English and mathematics show that leaders have the capacity to improve the school further in the future.
- Performance management has been revised to take account of the *Teachers' Standards*. A new pay policy has been agreed with governors, and staff are set clear teaching and student progress targets to meet.
- The curriculum promotes students' social, moral, cultural and spiritual education effectively. The multicultural nature of the school is celebrated, and many opportunities are taken to draw on the wealth of backgrounds that students bring to the school. There is an emerging international dimension that students value.
- Some students feel that the options that they are offered in Years 10 and 11 are too limited, and a few commented that they did not really want to take certain subjects. The narrowing of subject choice is affected by the staffing reductions.
- Students are pleased with the careers advice that they get and feel that they have access to a wide range of information.
- Pupil premium funding has been used very effectively and targeted at areas of greatest need, particularly in developing literacy skills. The impact has been to fully close the gaps in performance for eligible students over the last three years.
- The school has developed good links with parents, with staff conducting home-school liaison work. More parents and carers than ever attend progress evenings. Leaders recognise that the school needs to do everything possible to ensure that a minority of students and their families understand the vital importance of regular attendance and a positive attitude to learning.
- The school has found local authority support to be weak in some areas, particularly in handling difficult staffing reductions. The reduction in the services offered by the local authority has led the headteacher to develop some very useful links with other schools. He also is influential in a number of local networks.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The Chair and joint Vice-Chairs of the Governing Body had only been in post for two weeks at the time of the inspection. This change followed a period of considerable turbulence within the governing body that has interrupted the expected continuity of experience and knowledge held by key governors. At the same time, the governing body is reviewing its constitution as it moves forward. Consequently, governors have yet to fully decide on their new roles and have not gained the knowledge and experience needed to fully hold the school to account.
  - Governors are knowledgeable about the school's overall strengths and areas for development. They understand the *Data Dashboard*, for example, which compares aspects of the school's

performance with that of other schools. A more detailed understanding of school performance is currently lacking, despite the good information provided by the headteacher in his reports.

- Governors are informed about the overall quality of teaching and have previously taken part in lesson observation, but less so recently. They recognise that this aspect of their work needs to be revived so that they can have a first-hand view of the school.
- A revised pay policy has been agreed by governors. They have made it clear that performance targets have to be met in order for teachers to progress through the pay scales. The current governors have not yet had a report on performance management, although this has been considered in the past.
- Governors have previously helped the headteacher to tackle and manage a complicated restructuring of the staff, which has included managing redundancies. Much of the decision-making was made by the former Chair of the Governing Body, so the new team has limited experience of some important parts of the role. They have yet to undertake training to develop their skills and knowledge.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	103518
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	430234

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	587
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	George Tolley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mark Garside
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 November 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 566 6400
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