

The International School

Gressel Lane, Tile Cross, Birmingham, B33 9UF

Inspection dates

5–6 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Leadership at all levels is weak. Consequently, initiatives that have been implemented to tackle under-achievement have been ineffective. This is because senior leaders do not make clear what is expected from staff and their monitoring has lacked rigour and accuracy.
- The governing body has been over reliant on the views of the headteacher and has not sought an external view of his performance. This has limited their capacity to hold him to account effectively.
- Students are too passive in lessons because teaching fails to engage their interest. Occasionally there are incidents of low-level disruption.
- Teaching is inadequate because there is insufficient account taken of the learning needs of different groups of students. Most importantly, teachers and teaching assistants do not tackle the very low levels of literacy and numeracy that limit students' access to the curriculum. Consequently, too many are unable to achieve at least a grade C in their GCSE examinations.
- The attainment of all groups of students is too low, and has remained too low for many years.
- Over the last few years, many students have made inadequate progress. In 2014, at the end of Key Stage 4 the progress of students fell sharply below the national average, and was below the previous year when some improvements were seen.

The school has the following strengths

- Students taking Spanish, physical education and vocational courses are taught well and as a result they learn better in lessons in these subjects than in others.
- Students are increasingly successful in their sporting endeavours and there are high levels of take up for extra-curricular activities.
- Students and staff have good relationships and students feel safe in school. Students have excellent manners.
- Recent initiatives to tackle poor punctuality have been successful.
- Students receive comprehensive and effective careers education and guidance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 lessons. Four observations were made jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors observed the behaviour of students at break times and lunchtimes and before and after school.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, teachers with additional responsibilities, groups of students, and the Chair and a Vice Chair of the Governing Body.
- The views of the 16 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were analysed. The results of 32 staff questionnaires were analysed.
- Inspectors analysed the previous three years' examination results. They analysed the school's data on the progress students have made from their starting points and their current progress.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including minutes of meetings, curriculum plans, records relating to safeguarding and behaviour, and data on attendance and exclusions. Inspectors also scrutinised students' work. They looked at the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance and the performance management of staff.

Inspection team

Michelle Parker, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Marion Lloyd	Additional Inspector
Andrew Phillips	Additional Inspector
Tracey Lecointe	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized secondary school.
- Just over 40% of students are from White British backgrounds. Other students come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased over the last few years to well above the national average and accounts for over half of the student population. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language, many of whom are recent arrivals to Britain, is higher than the national average. Forty-eight different languages are spoken.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students eligible for the pupil premium is 78%. This is well above the national average. The pupil premium is the extra government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children.
- At 19% the proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- The school has a much higher than average level of student mobility, both joining and leaving the school. Over the past three years, the school has had a falling roll. This year the number of students entering the school in Year 7 increased.
- For the last three years, the school has been managing the legacy of a significant deficit budget. This has led to a large number of staff redundancies and limited the capacity of the school to employ additional staff as the number of students has increased.
- The school is being supported by Bishop Challinor Teaching School, and is part of the East Birmingham Schools' Network.
- The school works with South Birmingham College to provide a range of vocational courses.
- In 2013, the school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management at all levels so that the achievement of students rapidly improves to good and better, through:
 - rigorous monitoring of teaching which tackles weaknesses effectively through robust performance management procedures
 - ensuring that governors hold senior leaders to account for implementing an effective action plan which is monitored regularly, and which provides them with accurate and timely information on the performance of all staff and groups of students
 - middle leaders effectively monitoring the performance of teachers and other staff in their areas of responsibility and holding them to account for students' progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - communicate high expectations of all students, and provide work which engages and challenges them and promotes at least good progress from their different starting points
 - plan work to ensure students' literacy and numeracy skills improve rapidly from their starting points on entering the school and are practised well through being applied effectively in all subjects
 - provide feedback in marking that accurately assesses the standards of students' work and indicates clearly to students what to do to make improvements
 - help students to correct mistakes in their writing, so that students spell accurately, write in complete sentences, and use capital letters and full stops appropriately
 - insist all students complete their work, write legibly and take care with its presentation

- deploy teaching assistants effectively so that they prompt students to think more deeply about their learning and improve the standard of their work.

An external review of governance and of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- The headteacher's vision for the school has not been implemented partly because of budget constraints, but mainly because the approach to school improvement has not been systematically carried through in all areas. Initiatives, such as the introduction of literacy mats, are not monitored. Consequently, they are not used and do not improve teaching or learning. High levels of staff turnover and a reliance on supply staff, coupled with weak systems to support new staff have also limited the success of actions of the senior leadership team. Many teachers do not plan for, and consequently do not tackle, students' low levels of literacy as part of every lesson.
- The capacity of the senior leadership team is limited because capable staff are overburdened by the extent and range of their roles. There is no planning in place to ensure continuity of provision if key post holders leave.
- Middle leaders do not monitor teaching and learning rigorously. Their judgements are not checked by senior managers and therefore teachers are not held to account effectively. Inaccuracy in teacher assessments is not identified. The school's records show that, for all but two subjects, estimated grades for students' GCSE examinations were inaccurate. The new tracking system cannot, therefore, give leaders a secure view of students' progress.
- Performance management systems are weak. Staff are not sufficiently held to account for improving the progress of all groups of students. A literacy target is not provided for all staff therefore they are not held to account to improve students' literacy skills. Weaker teachers are identified and support plans are put in place but these have limited impact because checks are not in place to ensure they are improving.
- The school's improvement partner and the local authority have an accurate view of the school. The effectiveness of the support provided by the teaching school has been hampered by high levels of staff turnover and the International School's lack of capacity to embed it into everyday practice. The school should not employ newly qualified teachers.
- The special educational needs policy meets the new requirements and the special needs coordinator has ensured that staff have had up-to-date training on these. The school's website provides information on teaching strategies to support class practice, but staff have not used this information and this limits progress of students.
- The pupil premium is not used effectively because the gaps are not closing between disadvantaged students and others. Leaders' monitoring of strategies to improve the performance of students eligible for the pupil premium lacks rigour. Leaders are not able to identify accurately which interventions are effective.
- The number of excluded students has begun to fall, but it is still too high. The school's use of alternative provision for students at risk of exclusion is managed well through the East Birmingham partnership. Systems to monitor attendance have improved, and attendance is rising slowly. The range of vocational courses supports students' personal development and careers aspirations well. The assistant head monitors the progress, attendance and behaviour of students attending college rigorously.
- The school does not promote equality effectively because disadvantaged students and those who underperform are not identified early enough and fail to make at least expected progress. The school has improved relationships and the attitudes of students towards each other and racism is rare.
- The safeguarding of students' well-being meets requirements and is secure. A recently appointed senior leader has ensured that all staff have up-to-date safeguarding training and that policies have been updated. The school swiftly identifies students who are at risk.
- The curriculum does not prepare students well for the work place or future study, because students' levels of literacy and numeracy are too low. Recent improvements to broaden the curriculum enable students to

study music and information and communication technology. There is a good range of vocational courses. Students develop a good understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues and there is a greater focus on ensuring students understand British values of liberty, democracy, tolerance and respect. The school makes good links with students and staff from schools in different countries, for example through the Comenius project, to help broaden students' understanding of different cultures. Through their links in other countries, for example Poland and China, students regularly use information and communication technology to contact their counterparts and learn first-hand about different cultures.

- Staff have identified the need to improve students' health, and a number of themed weeks have been introduced to improve students' understanding of how to be healthy. School sports teams are increasingly successful and participation rates for extra-curricular activities are high.
- Careers information, guidance and support to students is a strength. There is a wide range of activities and events, involving local businesses, that support and challenge students to aim high. Staff involve parents in their children's discussions about careers, and this is reducing the number of students who leave school and who do not go onto college, training or employment. The careers programme has been extended to include all students from Year 7 onwards. For example, all Year 7 students now write a personal statement linked to this programme.
- The small number of parents that responded to Parent View were positive about the school. Their views mirrored those in the school's questionnaires.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance has improved, but governors' overall effectiveness is limited because they do not have an external view of the effectiveness of the headteacher's performance. Governors are unclear about the performance management of staff.
- The governing body does not effectively monitor students' achievement and the progress of different groups, including those eligible for pupil premium funding. This is because the information that they receive about students' progress and attainment is inaccurate.
- Governors' knowledge of the quality of teaching is poor but improving. Governors have begun to come into school to look at teaching, and to look at work in students' books. Governors have had insufficient involvement in discussions about teachers' performance. The information they have been given does not help them to accurately identify good teaching and tackle underperformance.
- Governors used the recommendations of the external review of governance to re-structure their work and clarify the expectations of what they need to do. Governors with poor attendance have resigned. Governors have updated their training, and all governors are linked to senior leaders and to different areas of the school. Individual governors have responsibility for oversight of inclusion, the most-able students and those in receipt of the pupil premium.
- The Chair of the Governing Body has introduced a pro-forma for reporting on governor visits but governors' monitoring is not shared with parents. Governors carry out their statutory duties and have worked successfully to reduce the budget overspend.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Where teaching fails to engage the students, there are instances of off-task talking, which distracts other students from learning. Presentation of student's work is too often poor. Pages are missed or torn out of a few exercise books.
- The majority of younger students stated they enjoyed school and were keen to attend to learn. However, a small minority of mainly older boys, stated they liked coming to school to 'meet their mates' and were not focused on improving their learning.
- The majority of students are proud of their school. Students stated bullying was rare and when it occurred was swiftly dealt with. Staff supervision at breaks and lunchtimes is appropriate.

- Students are caring and courteous towards visitors. They smile and chat confidently to adults. They wait at doors, hold them open for each other and show respect. They are punctual to lessons and arrive well prepared.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement because exclusions remain too high in spite of the good work of staff in the internal exclusion room.
- Punctuality and attendance have improved. Attendance is near to the national average. Staff are more rigorous in following up any non-attendance. They take robust actions against families with consistently poor attendance. Students liked the reward system that has been introduced to promote good attendance.
- Students told inspectors that they felt safe at school and understood how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. All students spoken to believed that if they had a problem they could speak to a number of staff, even if it related to the behaviour of a member of staff or a family worry. They understood about the risks of radicalisation and extremism, and issues around grooming, forced marriages and female genital mutilation.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate because the level of difficulty of work set for students does not take account of their different starting points, and learning frequently proceeds at too slow a pace. Work in books is often incomplete.
- Teachers do not plan work that takes account of students' poor literacy skills. Teachers do not insist on accurate spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Teachers' marking does not systematically identify mistakes in writing. Consequently, students do not write in complete sentences; capital letters and full stops are missed; common words are misspelt and even the most able students do not correct their own spellings.
- Insufficient support is provided to improve students' oral skills and use of technical language. Students' answers, both spoken and written, are too superficial. There are too few opportunities for students to write at length. Too few strategies are used to help students improve the structure of their writing and explain their ideas more coherently. Too much written work is barely legible.
- Teachers' expectations are too low. Too much teaching is aimed at middle attaining students. Most able students are not given work that challenges them or extends and develops their understanding. While a good range of resources are available to support the individual needs of students, they are not used effectively to promote learning in classrooms.
- Teachers do not understand how to develop and improve students' skills in reading. For example, in the dedicated tutor period for developing literacy skills, teachers failed to improve students' reading because they did not help them to decode words. Teachers do not use information from assessments of students' reading ages to plan work. In a Year 10 English lesson, a student with a reading age well below her chronological age struggled to understand the same reading materials that were provided to the most able group.
- Teachers' use of assessment is weak. Too often teachers incorrectly tell students that their answer reflects a specific national curriculum level of attainment when there is insufficient work at the level to indicate that learning is secure. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson, students explained that they completed end of unit tests, but feedback on their test performance was not used to help them improve their skills.
- Many students' targets are unrealistic and teachers do not understand what needs to be done to ensure students can achieve them. Marking frequently does not explain why a students' work is at a particular level. Too frequently over-generous praise is lavished on poor quality work and this deflects students from

making specific improvements.

- Teachers questioning is not well thought through. Too often boys are the focus of teachers' questioning as a method of trying to keep their interest. In these classes, girls are largely overlooked and questions do not encourage more complex lines of thought or reasoning and fail to challenge the most able.
- Students make good progress when teaching engages their interests. In these lessons, the learning is broken down into small steps and the teacher carefully rehearses and explains what students need to do. Learning is checked frequently and adjustments to tasks are made which encourage students to keep trying. In a Year 11 physical education lesson, the teacher demonstrated clearly what students were going to do. Carefully chosen examples of students' work showed others what to do. In a Year 9 Spanish lesson, the teacher used her excellent subject knowledge to encourage students to 'have a go' using the target language. Her feedback during the exercise improved the students' skills and built their confidence.
- The support to students new to Britain varies in quality. Some students do not receive enough support to widen their vocabulary sufficiently or to practise their speaking skills to develop correct enunciation. In a Year 9 music lesson, students did not spend enough time using the technical vocabulary in their talking to understand what terms meant and to pronounce accurately words such as 'timbre'. They were not able to use them to describe a piece of music. The teaching of intervention groups for students new to Britain is more effective because staff use their language skills well to demonstrate good English. Work is matched well to students' different starting points and many students quickly transfer to mainstream classes.
- Teaching assistants are not deployed effectively to support groups of students in classrooms. They do not ask questions which promote students' higher order thinking skills and they do not challenge superficial work. Where teaching assistants work one-to-one with students, however, they know them well and help to keep them engaged and motivated in the lesson.

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- The proportion of Year 11 students achieving five A*-C grades in GCSE examinations, including English and mathematics, declined substantially from 2013 to 2014 and is well below the national average. The attainment of all groups of students on this measure is below the national average. Students speaking English as an additional language attained slightly better; however their results also declined from the previous year and are below the national average.
- In 2013 only 64% of students made expected progress in English and 64% in mathematics; figures that are well below those of all students nationally. Provisional results for 2014 indicate that progress has worsened, with only around half of students making the progress expected in both subjects. In 2013, disadvantaged students attained results that were more than two grades lower than others in the school. The additional support that these students received did not improve their work. This is because a lack of basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics impedes progress in most subjects.
- Fundamental weaknesses from Key Stage 2 in numeracy and literacy are not identified quickly enough and are not tackled systematically. This prevents lower attaining students from making the progress that is needed for them to catch up with their classmates.
- Too few most able students made better than expected progress or attained above a C grade at GCSE in the majority of subjects. Teachers' expectations of students are too low and there are not enough opportunities for them to tackle work that is more demanding. Students do not write sufficiently accurately or at length in all subjects.
- No students were entered early for GCSE examinations.
- The progress of students with special educational needs in English and mathematics is well below that of others both in the school and nationally. The special educational needs coordinator carefully tracks individuals' progress and quickly identifies specific subjects that require interventions. However, too often

classroom teaching does not take account of individual needs, so students continue to underachieve. Students in alternative provision achieve well in their vocational courses.

- Students do not read widely and often enough. Students enter the school with reading ages well below their chronological ages. Despite the range of reading programmes used, students do not make sufficient progress to enable them to understand work in Key Stage 4. This is because teachers are unclear how to promote effective reading. Students are not prepared adequately for life after school.

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	103518
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	452839

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	702
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	George Tolley
Headteacher	Mark Garside
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2013
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