

Four Dwellings Academy

Dwellings Lane, Birmingham, B32 1RJ

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Requires improvement 3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement 3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement 3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement 3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement 3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The standards achieved by students over time have not been high enough and are only just beginning to improve.
- Not enough students in Key Stage 4 make the progress expected of them in a range of subjects, but particularly in mathematics.
- The gaps in attainment between disadvantaged students and their peers have been too wide and are only now beginning to improve.
- Too few of the most-able students in mathematics make or exceed the expected progress because they are not suitably challenged.
- Teachers do not always make good use of assessment data to plan and teach lessons designed to interest, engage and challenge all groups of students.
- Teachers are not always held fully to account by their subject leaders, resulting in inconsistencies within subject departments.
- The quality of written feedback for students is too varied and not detailed enough to help them to improve their work.
- The use of homework is patchy and many students do not benefit from regular opportunities to consolidate their classroom learning through homework.
- Students' attitudes to learning are not routinely positive. A minority of students pay too little attention to their teachers and disrupt the learning of others.
- Some students in Key Stage 3 call each other inappropriate names during social times.

The school has the following strengths

- The academy now has robust systems of assessment and moderation in place and information about students' achievement is reliable.
- Current students in Year 11 are set to achieve above-average outcomes in English and average outcomes in mathematics. This better achievement is sustained through all other year groups in the school.
- The academy is a safe place to learn and students enjoy coming to school. Their attendance is above average.
- The governing body knows the academy well and holds senior leaders to account for the quality of teaching and the achievement of students.
- There are good programmes in place to support the students finding literacy and mathematics difficult.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities available to students through and beyond the curriculum are good.
- The academy has developed good partnerships with other schools since the new principal took up post.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students learning in 30 lessons taught by 28 different teachers; four of these lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior, subject and other leaders, two members of the governing body and the regional director of the academy trust.
- Inspectors spoke with students in meetings, as well as informally in lessons and during social times.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the academy’s evaluation of its own performance, the academy improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings and evaluations on the quality of teaching. The academy’s analysis of data on students’ attainment and progress, attendance and behaviour were also examined. Inspectors also looked at safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors reviewed a selection of work in students’ books.
- Inspectors took into account the 30 responses to the staff questionnaire and evidence provided by the school about the views of parents as there were no responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Liz Talmadge, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Atwell	Additional Inspector
Terence Payne	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Four Dwellings Academy is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Formerly an 11-16 high school, the academy opened in April 2013 and is sponsored by the Academies Enterprise Trust.
- The academy has seen a significant change in staff over the last twelve months. Most senior leaders were appointed in the last twelve months, some in the current academic year.
- Close to half of students are from ethnic minority groups, which is twice the national average. About a fifth of students speak English as an additional language, and this is also an above-average proportion.
- The academy receives pupil premium funding for almost three quarters of its students. This is much more than the national average. This additional funding is for children looked after by the local authority or those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is a little above average at slightly less than one in ten students.
- A small number of Key Stage 4 students attend alternative provision at Bournville College or Southside Construction for vocational training courses.
- The academy does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring that all teachers make good use of assessment data to set tasks that are at the right level of difficulty for students, particularly the most able
 - ensuring that the written feedback students receive is more consistent and that teachers' comments are detailed enough to help students to know exactly how to improve the quality of their work
 - raising expectations of what students can achieve, including the amount of work that they are expected to do during a lesson
 - increasing the level of challenge and the pace of learning in mathematics
 - ensuring that all teachers are clear about the academy's expectations for setting homework and then apply them consistently.
- Improve behaviour by:
 - ensuring that the academy's behaviour policy is applied consistently to improve attitudes to learning and eradicate low-level disruption during lessons
 - tackling the issue of 'name calling' amongst some Key Stage 3 students so that it is eliminated.
- Improve leadership and management by
 - continuing to secure better progress for disadvantaged students through additional coaching, so that the gap with their peer group closes even more quickly
 - ensuring that subject leaders, particularly those new to the school, are confidently holding teachers in their departments to account for their students' progress, the quality of their teaching, and students' attitudes to learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The new principal has taken on the leadership of an academy that had low expectations and aspirations for its students and, in its predecessor school, historically low standards. In a short period of time, she has effectively challenged these low expectations and the academy now has a clear vision of successful learning and of high aspirations for students and the local community. In the process of tackling the legacy of underachievement, many staff have left the academy and most senior leaders have recently been replaced. It is only since September 2014 that a stable staff and senior leadership team have been in place.
- Despite swift and decisive action being taken by senior leaders on all fronts, it is too early to demonstrate the full impact of the significant changes they have made. There is, however, evidence of better systems and processes in place, higher expectations of staff and students, more rigorous assessment and better checks on students' progress and the quality of teaching. Further improvement is still needed, but inspectors saw good evidence of successful strategies being used to bring it about.
- The Academies Enterprise Trust has considerable confidence in the principal and provides bespoke support for the academy from other academies sponsored by the Trust. Representatives of the Trust regularly review progress with senior leaders and governors. Academy leaders know the academy well and their evaluation of its current progress is accurate.
- The principal, senior team and governors have an accurate and realistic view of the quality of teaching in the academy. They have introduced a rigorous system of performance management for all staff and their judgements about teaching are accurate. This is being linked to decisions about pay increases and is effective in identifying the training needs of teachers.
- New and robust systems for assessing and monitoring students' achievement are now in place. All students are formally tested every six weeks and the marking of these tests is then checked by teachers from other local schools. This has resulted in reliable data on the students' attainment and the progress they are making.
- Senior leaders monitor students' progress regularly. Students' current progress supports the academy's view that improvements will be seen in the results from Year 11 examinations in 2015. To hasten this improvement, the academy has organised Year 11 mathematics sets into tutor groups so that students can have additional mathematics sessions three times a week during tutorial time. It has also introduced an hour of additional teaching at the end of the school day as period 6.
- Attendance has been a key focus area since the opening of the new academy and it has improved significantly.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets students' needs in preparing them for the next stage in their education or employment. Additional time is made available for English and mathematics to support the academy's focus on improving outcomes in these subjects. The academy provides a programme of extra-curricular activities that make a positive contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A number of trips and educational visits help students to broaden their horizons.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is promoted through a well-planned programme of assemblies and tutorial activities, as well as through the subjects taught in the curriculum. The key concepts of British values are taught through history, geography and English, and by a policy of enabling students to take on roles of responsibility. The academy challenges intolerance and discrimination through its anti-bullying and anti-racist policies.
- Many subject and other leaders are new in their posts but they have a clear understanding of the priorities for improvement for the whole academy and how these relate to their own areas of responsibility. They now feel involved in contributing to the vision for the academy and improving the quality of teaching in their subjects, but not all are holding their teachers to account for their performance and for students'

progress. A robust quality assurance programme ensures subject leaders are held to account for standards in their subjects by senior leaders. Their regular meetings with the principal are seen as both challenging and supportive.

- The academy's independent careers and guidance adviser spends two days a week in the academy advising students in Years 10 and 11. He also arranges a number of helpful careers-related events throughout the year for students in Years 9 to 11. When students leave the academy at the end of Year 11, they are all successful in gaining places at local colleges for post-16 study or on sixth form courses in local 11–18 schools.
- Strong partnerships with good and outstanding local schools are currently supporting teacher training and the external verification of assessments.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are skilled and experienced professionals who know the strengths and weaknesses of the academy. They are committed to improving the academy and regularly challenge senior leaders to make sure that this happens. Governors have supported the significant staffing changes that have taken place because they are well informed about the quality of teaching and leadership. They talk knowledgeably about the skill set of the newly appointed staff and understand the strengths that they bring to the academy.
- In the words of the Chair of the Governing Body, the new, robust performance management programme for staff, 'starts with the performance management of the principal.' Governors are fully involved in reviewing the performance of staff and determining whether pay increases are awarded as a consequence of improved students' progress.
- Governors understand why students underachieved in 2014 and they are regularly involved in the scrutiny of students' progress. They have a clear understanding of what is being done to support disadvantaged students and what impact these actions are having.
- Governors ensure that their training is up to date. They have all had safeguarding training and regularly hold the academy to account about safety, extremism and child protection. They ensure that the academy's arrangements for safeguarding students meet all statutory requirements.
- Governors employ good financial advisers and resources are well managed. They have allocated pupil premium funding to activities and staffing that are having a good impact on disadvantaged students' progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement because students' attitudes to learning vary and their behaviour in classrooms is not always good. Some lessons are affected by low-level disruption because not all teachers apply the academy's behaviour policy consistently. Some misbehaviour is not dealt with effectively.
- Older students say that behaviour has improved considerably under the leadership of the new principal. The majority of parents and staff think that behaviour in the academy is generally good.
- Generally, students behave well during social time, and they are polite and courteous to staff and visitors. Students in Key Stage 3 report that, out of earshot of adults, inappropriate terms are often used to call each other names. Although students report that this is done in fun, it needs to stop.
- Students' attitudes to learning are positive when they are set interesting and engaging tasks that challenge them at the right level. On these occasions, students' attitudes have a good impact on their progress.
- Rates of exclusion have been rapidly reduced in the last year. As a result, attendance has improved and is now well above average.

- The use of the academy's system of rewards and sanctions is carefully monitored. Students who need additional support with their behaviour are given extra support through a short-term programme designed to support them with social and emotional aspects of their learning. The evidence indicates that this works well.
- Senior leaders monitor the behaviour of students at the academy's alternative provision and there is no evidence of any concerns there.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The academy's safeguarding procedures meet all statutory requirements.
- Students feel safe in the academy, and teaching and support staff make themselves available to ensure that this is the case. Older students report that safety has improved since the formation of the academy.
- Students are all made aware of the need for safe behaviour when using the internet and social media through planned programmes of activity in assemblies, tutorials and lessons. They are taught about extremism and understand the need to keep themselves safe.
- Bullying, including racist or homophobic bullying, is infrequent but students know that if reported it will be dealt with swiftly. The youngest students in the academy do not currently perceive name-calling to be bullying and the academy knows that it will have to be much clearer about this in order to eliminate it.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it has not been consistently good enough since the academy opened to ensure good outcomes for students in all subjects, particularly English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 4.
- Teachers do not always use the assessment information that they have about their classes to plan work of the right difficulty to ensure that all students make good progress. This is particularly the case in mathematics, where the most-able students are not stretched enough. Students who spoke with inspectors said they needed more challenge and could work harder.
- Teachers' written feedback through marking is inconsistent in its quality and frequency. It does not always help students to improve their work because it is not detailed enough. As a result, students rarely respond or make improvements.
- Teachers' expectations of how much students can achieve in a lesson is sometimes too low, in contrast to the good pace achieved in English in Key Stage 4. When learning is slow, students become more easily distracted, lose concentration and make less progress than they should.
- The teaching of literacy and reading is an improving area of the academy. These areas are given additional time in Year 7 and 8, so that most Key Stage 3 students are now making good progress. English is taught effectively and the quality of students' written English is good because teachers are providing good-quality written feedback. This is not the case in all subjects, and the teaching of mathematics is still weak.
- Where students are making good progress, teaching is characterised by good subject knowledge, high expectations, and tasks and activities that interest and engage students. Some teachers expect students to assess their own work and the work of others.
- There is some good and outstanding practice in the academy. Where teaching sets high levels of challenge, students make very good progress. A lower set in English in Year 7 enacted a speech from *Romeo and Juliet*, deepening students' understanding of the characters they were studying. In a history

lesson, students in Year 10 made very good progress with their essay writing skills with the support of peer assessment and clear guidance on the standards needed. In an art lesson, students in Year 9 engaged fully with the activity and made good progress because they were able to make choices about the theme that they worked on.

- The support offered to disabled students and those who have special educational needs in mainstream classes ensures that they make the same progress from their starting points as other groups. The growing number of students who speak English as an additional language are well supported by specialist teaching assistants.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students who completed Year 11 in 2013 underachieved in both English and mathematics. The gap between disadvantaged students and others in the academy was too wide. Some improvements were made in 2014 but the academy's students still achieved results well below the national average in both English and mathematics.
- Not enough students made the progress expected of them in 2014. Progress in English was better than in 2013 but, in mathematics, progress was worse than in the previous year. Very few students exceeded the progress expected of them in mathematics.
- The progress made by disadvantaged students improved in 2014 in English and more students made enough progress to show that the gap between disadvantaged students and their peer group is beginning to close. In 2014, the gaps in English and mathematics between disadvantaged students and their peer group were three quarters of a GCSE grade.
- The academy's most-able students who completed Year 11 in 2014 made better progress in English than similar students did in 2013 but too few made more than the expected progress. In mathematics, the proportion of the most-able students making at least the progress expected of them was well below average.
- Those students who left the school from Year 11 in 2014 also attained good GCSE grades in electronics, sports studies, applied science and chemistry.
- The academy's data for current Year 11 students show a much-improved picture. Externally moderated test and examination data indicate that progress in English will be above average. Expected progress in mathematics is projected to be average, although there is still a lot of work to do if the most-able students are to achieve what they are capable of. Disadvantaged students are also on track to improve their rates of progress in English and mathematics and narrowing the gap with their peer group.
- Key Stage 3 students' achievement is improving quickly. The results of the six-weekly tests are used well to check that rates of progress are being maintained. Progress for these students is good.
- Most disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress because the support that these students receive in class is well planned and targeted to meet their individual needs. This has a good impact on the progress that they make.
- All students in the academy are expected to read widely and regularly through the academy's reading programme. Inspectors observed 'Drop Everything and Read' in operation through tutorial sessions. Students say they enjoy reading and carry a reading book with them at all times.
- The funding for literacy and mathematics catch-up in Year 7 has been used effectively to improve reading standards and mathematical skills for those who join the academy with below-average attainment. 'Raising attainment' teaching assistants have been employed to teach additional small-group classes for both literacy and mathematics. To support the needs of students who are new to learning English, the academy has also appointed a bilingual teacher.

- The academy does not enter any students early for GCSE examinations.

- The academy's monitoring of the progress made by students attending alternative provision indicates that they are making good progress on the vocational courses that they are following.

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	139047
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	433617

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	400
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Kershaw
Principal	Rebecca Elcocks
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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