

The Holly Hall Academy

Scotts Green Close, Dudley, DY1 2DU

Inspection dates 6–7 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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

- For some time, students have not made good progress. Although, students are making better progress, so that attainment is closer to national expectations, it is not yet good.
- Teaching is improving but it is not yet good.
- Some teachers do not use questions effectively to check students' learning and probe understanding, in order to identify and address misconceptions.
- Some teachers do not match learning closely to students' abilities, particularly the most able, disadvantaged students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- Disadvantaged students do not progress as well as their classmates.
- The quality of teaching in science is weak and teachers' expectations are too low.
- Teachers do not check that students follow advice and make corrections to their work as advised to help improve their learning.
- Students have limited opportunities to practise their literacy skills in a range of subjects.
- Some teachers do not mark students' written work with the rigour and consistency required.
- The behaviour of a minority of students sometimes disrupts learning and does not support good progress.
- A small number of students are persistently absent from the academy or arrive late.
- Senior leaders and heads of departments do not fully evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken to raise achievement, so they do not always know which of their strategies make the most difference.
- Governors have not ensured that senior leaders follow a systematic and robust plan to eradicate weak teaching.
- Governors have not checked that senior leaders evaluate the effectiveness of the actions used to raise the achievement of disadvantaged students.

The school has the following strengths

- The large majority of students are polite and friendly. They behave well in lessons and say that they feel safe in the academy.
- Students understand the benefits of living in a democracy. The student council is elected democratically. Student leaders enjoy mentoring and organising activities for other students.
- Close work with the West Midlands Police and other organisations strengthens the school's work to keep students safe and increases their understanding of British values.
- The curriculum provides a balance of work related and academic courses that appeal to students' interests and aptitudes.
- Governors, senior and middle leaders track students' achievement and behaviour much more closely and there is a greater emphasis on improving the quality of teaching.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students’ learning in 26 lessons. Six of these observations were completed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also observed students at breaks and lunch times and attended tutorial periods.
- Discussions were held with students, staff, governors and the Acting Principal.
- Inspectors took account of the 15 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also took account of 51 responses to staff questionnaires.
- A wide range of documents was examined including samples of students’ work, information about students’ progress, the academy’s development plan and self-evaluation, records of any poor behaviour, records of governors’ meetings and safeguarding documents.
- Inspectors listened to students read, and observed reading-support lessons and the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make).

Inspection team

Sherry Gladwin, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Marks	Additional Inspector
Suha Ahmad	Additional Inspector
Dorothy Bond	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students who belong to minority ethnic groups and the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well-above average.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium is well-above average. This is additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The academy does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- Approximately twelve students attend off-site work-related courses at the Cherry Tree Learning Centre, Black Country Wheels School, Nova Training and Ed Lounge.
- The school converted to become an academy on 1st September 2011. It is a partner and member of the board of Dudley 6th and a member of Dudley Grid for Learning.
- After a period of some turbulence in staffing, a new Principal has been appointed for September 2015 and staffing at other levels is now more settled.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and make teaching good, by:
 - checking that teachers use questions effectively to assess students' learning, and probe understanding in order to identify and correct misconceptions
 - ensuring that teachers match learning closely to students' abilities, particularly the most able, disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs
 - raising teachers' low expectations and improving the quality of teaching in science
 - checking that students respond to teachers' comments and make the corrections advised to improve their learning
 - increasing the opportunities available for students to practise their use of literacy in a range of subjects
 - ensuring that teachers mark students' written work with the rigour and consistency required to improve literacy.
- Improve behaviour so that it is consistently good, by:
 - reducing persistent absence and poor punctuality
 - improving the behaviour and attitudes to learning of a small minority of students.
- Strengthen the quality of leadership and a management by:
 - making sure that governors ensure that senior leaders follow a systematic and robust plan to eradicate weak teaching
 - ensuring leaders check the effectiveness of the actions used to raise achievement so that they know which of these make the most difference and provide the best value for money.

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

An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Despite recent improvements, leadership and management have not been strong enough to ensure that achievement, teaching and behaviour are good across the academy.
- The academy has made good progress with the key issues identified in the previous inspection report. Some turbulence in staffing affected students' progress, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Staffing is now more settled and improvement in English and mathematics are now noticeable in the work of current students and in the data collected about their performance. The quality of teaching in science remains weak and teachers' expectations are too low.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching but they do not identify, systematically record, and rigorously follow-up any areas of weakness until they are eradicated. Consequently, teaching is not yet good.
- The use of pupil premium funding has had mixed success in the past. It provides disadvantaged students with appropriate learning support and access to educational visits and other activities. More recently, disadvantaged students are making good progress in closing the gaps with classmates. Governors have not checked that senior leaders track the progress of these students closely, nor have they evaluated the effectiveness of the strategies. As a result, they do not have accurate information about which of the actions are most effective and provide good value for money.
- Leaders welcome students from all backgrounds and treat everyone fairly. Tighter checking procedures are improving attendance. Exclusions are reducing following the recent introduction of robust approaches to behaviour management. Better attitudes to learning are helping all groups to progress more quickly. The large majority of students feel safe from discrimination and bullying. However, a small number of students are persistently absent and a small minority often arrive at the academy late, which damages their chances to achieve well.
- Staff, governors, parents and students provide a good level of support for the Acting Principal. She has quickly identified the correct areas for improvement and evaluated the academy work accurately. Staff performance targets are linked well to areas for improvement.
- Subject leaders monitor students' progress, participate in lesson observations and regularly examine students' work to gauge the quality of teaching and learning. Subject leaders benefit for the outstanding teachers' programme and share this information with colleagues to improve teaching. However, they do not fully evaluate the actions used to raise achievement. This means that they do not know which actions are the most effective.
- As a stand-alone academy, the school has little involvement with the local authority. Partnerships with Dudley 6th and Dudley Grid for Learning, provides networking opportunities for leaders to improve teaching and learning. This is helping to build the capacity of leaders and improve teaching.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is effective. Governors and senior leaders respond well to the dangers posed by intolerance, radicalisation and sexploitation. Leaders work closely with the West Midlands Police and local organisations to raise awareness and train staff, parents and students.
- Recent changes to the curriculum mean it now provides a good mix of academic and vocational courses, which appeal to students' aptitudes and interests. Effective partnerships with local organisations provide some students with an opportunity to study off site and in a setting that motivates and engages them to make better progress. The curriculum promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. They understand the rule of law and British values, and their preparation for life in the twenty-first century is good. Students understand democracy and participate in elections to appoint year representatives to the school council.

- Students benefit from good careers advice, which helps to inform their GCSE subject choices and plan their pathway into training, education and employment. Leaders check the behaviour, safety and attendance of students attending courses off site to ensure that they are kept safe and make good progress.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The effectiveness of the governors has been reviewed. Governors have reconstituted and they are more effective as a result, but there is more still to do. Governors are trained in safeguarding and students' performance data. Regular reports from the academy keeps them informed of students' progress, behaviour and attendance. They are familiar with some of the academy's strengths and areas for development because they visit often and meet staff to check progress with the academy's improvement plan.
 - Although, governors understand the contribution that good teaching makes to students' achievement, they have not ensured that senior leaders follow a systematic and robust plan to eradicating weak teaching.
 - Governors manage staff performance well. They set appropriate targets for the Principal and staff, linked to identified areas for improvement. Pay rises and promotions are based on good teaching and progress for students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. The large majority of students are polite, friendly and behave sensibly. Behaviour has improved and there are fewer exclusions. Sometimes, a small minority of students are disruptive and do not have positive attitudes to learning. This slows their progress and that of others in the class.
- The large majority of students enjoy coming to the academy. They wear their uniform smartly and with pride. Attendance is improving for all groups of students and the pupil premium is used well to support the good attendance of eligible students. Despite the academy's efforts, a small minority of students are persistently absent and some students do not attend punctually. This affects their chances to do well.
- In classes where teachers set high expectations, students respond positively and produce good neat work. They listen attentively, and engage thoughtfully in question and answer sessions productively. Responses demonstrate good understanding and recall of prior learning.
- Students value the opportunities they have to serve the academy as student leaders. Student leaders organise competitions, quizzes, media, sports, arts and other events for students. Democratically elected members represent each year group. Year 7 elections took place on the day of the general election. Students have a good grasp of democracy and spoke about its value to good governance.
- Effective work with external agencies ensures that students who have a disability or special education receive good support. Students with challenging behaviour are supported through well-designed individual plans. Mentors work closely with students, parents and students to set targets for improvement. Students develop good approaches to managing their own behaviour. A number of success stories were shared during the inspection.
- Students attending courses off-site are kept safe through the close checking of their progress, attendance and behaviour. These students progress at least as well as their peers.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Staff and students understand the dangers of radicalisation and sexploitation. Staff are trained well in child protection and safeguarding. They are vigilant and spot signs of abuse early so students are protected from harm. The academy helps students to assess risks in the community, including those associated with the internet and social networking sites. Students feel safe and spoke of recent improvements to behaviour and attitudes to learning.

- Students understand right and wrong. The large majority of students collaborate successfully. Students from different cultural backgrounds mix well. Inspectors investigated a complaint from a small number of students concerning unpleasant name-calling. They found that the vast majority of students are confident that adults deal quickly with such comments.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The outstanding teachers programme is being used to improve standards in teaching. Subject leaders cascade their learning from the programme to other teachers but teaching is not yet good. Teachers do not use questions effectively to probe students' understanding. Consequently, they fail to identify and correct misconceptions, which slows progress.
- For some time, students have failed to make good progress in a range of subjects. Students' work and the data collected about their progress show that they are now making better progress but, across all year groups, significant proportions do not make good progress in science. Teaching is weaker than in other subjects and teachers have lower expectations of what students can do and achieve. Scientific information is not explained clearly and teachers do not correct students' misconceptions often enough.
- Some teachers do not stretch and challenge students sufficiently, particularly the most able and those who have special educational needs. Too often, learning activities do not closely match students' abilities, which mean that work is sometimes too easy or too hard.
- Marking has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers mark students' work regularly, including helpful comments about how they can improve their work. However, students do not follow teachers' advice, and teachers fail to check that students make the required corrections and improvements. Therefore, students do not learn quickly from their mistakes.
- The teaching of literacy, reading and numeracy is improving, so that students' progress is now closer to national expectations. There are limited opportunities for students to practise their literacy skills in a range of subjects and teachers do not mark written work with the rigour and consistency required to improve spelling, punctuation and grammar, and speed up progress.
- Some teachers are highly skilled, possess good subject knowledge and manage behaviour effectively. They set high expectations about the quality, quantity and presentation of work expected from students.
- Some teachers form highly respectful and collaborative approach with students and create a positive climate for learning. Classroom displays are of a high quality and contribute to raising students' expectations and achievement.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students join the academy with Key Stage 2 results that are significantly below the national average. In 2014, Year 11 students left the academy with well-below-average attainment in a broad range of GCSE subjects, including English and mathematics. Improvements in teaching this year, particularly in mathematics, are resulting in students making better progress. As a result, they are on track to achieve higher results this year.
- In 2014, the proportion of Year 11 students who made good progress in English was significantly below average. The proportion of Year 11 students who made good progress in mathematics was too low. A range of strategies for improvement are helping to secure better progress in both subjects, but particularly in mathematics. Students are on track to make progress that is closer to national expectations in English and mathematics in 2015.
- For some time, the attainment of disadvantaged students has not been as high as that of other students. In 2014, eligible Year 11 students were, on average, half a GCSE grade behind others in English and more than a GCSE grade behind others in mathematics when compared with other students in school. When

compared with students nationally they were one and a half GCSE grades behind in English and two and a half grades behind in mathematics. The attainment gap is slowly closing. Currently, disadvantaged students are on track to make better progress and close the gaps with peers in 2015.

- In 2014, some of the most-able students did not make good progress. The academy is now more aware that these students do not reach their full potential. Some teachers do not plan learning to stretch and challenge the most able to produce their best work. These students are on track to achieve higher results in 2015.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs did not make good progress in English and mathematics in 2014. The academy recognises that learning activities are not matched closely enough to students' abilities. The academy meets the needs of these students. They are helped to close gaps in their knowledge and understanding through academic mentoring, small group sessions and revision classes. A greater proportion of students are on track to make good progress in 2015.
- Students who join the academy with below average attainment in English and mathematics receive learning support through the Year 7 'catch-up' funding. A combination of classroom support and supplementary learning activities help students develop literacy and mathematical skills, which are age appropriate. The large majority of Year 7 students make at least expected progress.
- In 2014, the progress of minority ethnic groups was variable. Students of mixed Black Caribbean and White British heritage and those of Black Caribbean heritage did not achieve well. These students are performing much better and they are on track to make good progress in 2015.
- Students who speak English as an additional language receive good support. They are helped to develop language skills quickly through in-class support, small group and one to one work. They progress at least as well as their classmates.
- In 2013, some students were entered early for GCSE mathematics to give them the opportunity to improve their grades. This policy was not as successful as hoped. Students did not achieve as well as they might have done if they had studied the subject in greater depth.
- Students attending courses off site develop good skills in work related courses and achieve at least as well as peers.

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	137390
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	462577

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	723
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Price
Principal	Denise Malone (Acting Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2013
Telephone number	01384 253722
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