

South Wolverhampton and Bilston Academy

Dudley Street, Bilston, WV14 0LN

Inspection dates 11–12 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The proportion of students achieving five good passes at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is well below the national average.
- Too many middle ability students in English and lower ability students in mathematics do not make the progress expected. In Key Stage 4, in particular, their spelling, punctuation and grammar are not secure.
- Not enough of the most-able students, including those who are also disadvantaged, achieve the highest grades at GCSE.
- Not enough students have the confidence and speaking skills to play an effective part in class discussions or in academy activities.
- The quality of teaching requires improvement because students arriving with weak skills in literacy are not always making fast enough progress.
- Teachers do not always ensure students act swiftly on the guidance they are given in class and in teachers' marking.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Since the previous inspection, the achievement of students on A level courses in the sixth form has been below national averages.

The school has the following strengths

- Leadership and management of the academy are good. The Principal and the new team of senior academy leaders have successfully shared their high expectations with students, staff and parents. They have ensured that the academy is a safe, orderly place, where teaching and achievement are strongly improving, in the face of considerable challenges.
- Governance is effective. Governors use their considerable experience and expertise to challenge and support senior leaders.
- Academy leaders have worked hard to achieve attendance that is now above the national average.
- Students at an early stage of learning English, disabled students, and those who have special educational needs, are well supported and are now making closer to expected rates of progress.
- Students enjoy learning and behaviour is good in this respectful, caring and friendly academy.
- The academy's work to promote the safety of students is outstanding. From staying safe on the internet to improving physical well-being, students learn, in a place of safety, how to stay safe.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is promoted in every aspect of the academy's work with students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students' learning in 37 lessons across the academy, including in the sixth form. Of these, 11 were observed jointly with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team looked at students' work in their books and folders.
- As well as conversations in lessons and at social times during the inspection, inspectors held discussions with four groups of students about the quality of their educational experiences and the standard of behaviour in the academy. The inspectors also held meetings with senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the academy's lead sponsor.
- Inspectors took account of the 25 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and considered the 33 responses to a staff questionnaire. Inspectors also considered responses by parents to recent questionnaires from the academy.
- The inspection team examined: the academy's own information on students' recent and current progress; the academy's evaluation of how well it is doing and its records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching; records relating to behaviour and attendance; and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Richard Boswell, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Helen Booth	Additional Inspector
Carl Sugden	Additional Inspector
Keith Thomas	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- South Wolverhampton and Bilston Academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school. The number of students attending the academy has increased by nearly one-fifth since the previous inspection.
- The majority of students are from White British backgrounds. Over one third of students come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups.
- Over a quarter of students speak English as an additional language and of these, an increasing proportion of them are at a very early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of students who join the academy between Year 8 and Year 11 is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported through the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- In 2014, the academy did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 11.
- A very small number of students attend part-time or full time provision off the academy site at The Lawnswood Campus, Wolverhampton and at The Orchard Centre, Wolverhampton.
- Since the previous inspection the academy has appointed a new team of academy leaders. There have also been a large number of changes in the academy's teaching staff.
- The Principal has received support from a National Leader of Education at the John Kyrle Academy, Ross-on-Wye. The academy receives support from Wood Green Academy Teaching Alliance and Hartlands Academy, Wolverhampton. The academy's lead sponsor is the University of Wolverhampton.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement for all students by:
 - sustaining and extending the strategies that are helping students to make improved progress so that standards rise to the point where they are at least in line with national averages
 - ensuring that a higher proportion of the most-able students, including those who are disadvantaged, make more than expected progress and achieve the highest grades at GCSE
 - making sure that students in the sixth form make good progress in all their subjects, particularly those on academic courses at A level.
- Improve the quality of teaching, including in the sixth form, and so raise students' achievement, by ensuring teachers:
 - check that students have always acted on teachers' verbal and written advice given in class and in marking
 - give greater attention in all subjects at Key Stage 4 to improving the reading, spelling, punctuation and grammar of students, particularly those who are of middle ability and the most-able
 - encourage all students to develop confidence in speaking and debating in class and in activities outside the classroom.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- In the last three years the Principal and the largely new team of senior leaders, along with the academy's governors, have taken hard, strategic decisions for the long-term benefit of the academy and the community it serves. This has resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching and means that current students' achievement, including in the sixth form, is now better than it was at the time of the last inspection. This has been accompanied by above average attendance, increasing numbers of students on roll, more parental involvement in students' learning and a flourishing culture of good behaviour, respect and aspiration.
- There was, however, a marked dip in the achievement of Year 11 students in 2014. These students had joined Year 7 with exceptionally weak attainment that placed the academy in the bottom 9 of all schools in the country for standards on entry. This year group included a high proportion of students whose circumstances made them vulnerable. However, their subsequent achievement was also adversely affected by weak teaching and decisions about examination entry that did not result in the best possible outcomes for all students. These factors led to too many students not achieving as well as they should.
- Academy leaders and governors have responded decisively and effectively. New leaders of English and mathematics have ensured that Year 11 students in 2015 have made much improved progress and are on target to achieve considerably higher standards than those seen last year.
- Middle leadership is effective. Together with senior leaders, they oversee an exceptionally rigorous process for checking the accuracy of information about students' progress. This includes: all teachers comparing their assessment of students' work every seven weeks; independent consultants checking students' books against mock examination results; and comparisons of the data on performance of the academy's students with partner schools. The strength of these arrangements provides strong evidence, in the view of inspectors, that teachers' assessments of the standard of current students' work are accurate and that they point to the likelihood of a marked rise in achievement this year.
- All staff are completely familiar with the academy's policies and procedures, including those for managing behaviour. This provides consistent and highly effective support for the increasingly large number of students joining the academy between Year 8 and Year 11, many of whom are at an early stage of learning English. Leaders monitor the attendance, progress and quality of provision for students attending alternative provision systematically.
- Leaders have employed additional staff to offer short, intensive English courses and also provide speakers of many of the languages spoken by newly arrived students. Much of this work is done through close links with students' families, who are assisted to meetings at the academy in minibuses when necessary.
- Academy leaders have led improvements in teaching well since the previous inspection. They have not been afraid to tackle underperformance in staff, including at all levels. While a high proportion of academy staff are new, leaders have a strict policy of only appointing teachers who demonstrate the potential to deliver high quality teaching over time and have high expectations of what students can achieve. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the support they receive from the academy's programme of professional development.
- Many of the academy's disadvantaged students come from areas of exceptional deprivation, in the bottom two per cent in the country. Senior leaders have been determined to tackle discrimination and ensure equal opportunities for all students. They have done this in part through carefully targeted spending of the pupil premium and Year 7 'catch-up' funding. This is used to provide additional teaching support and resources, which has led to increased rates of participation by disadvantaged students in academy activities and educational visits.
- Raising aspirations and broadening horizons are central to the academy's mission. As a result, it makes excellent use of links with its lead sponsor, the University of Wolverhampton. Not only are students regular visitors to the university, but parents are also invited to experience what higher education has to offer their children. Students are very positive about the high quality of impartial careers advice they

receive. Links with other schools have brought improvements in the quality of teaching and support from a National Leader of Education.

- The academy's leaders have worked hard to bring attendance to above the national average and to establish strong relationships with students' families. For example, in recent months, senior leaders have met individually with parents of 80 Year 11 students to discuss the importance of GCSE examinations to their children's futures. Parents and local people have recognised the commitment of the academy to its community and student numbers have grown rapidly so that the academy is now full.
- The academy's curriculum has been adapted to meet the changing needs of students and leaders recognise that literacy continues to be a high priority. Students follow three pathways in Key Stage 3 as 'Explorers', 'Discoverers' or 'Pioneers'. This is in line with government guidelines for adopting new systems for the assessment of student progress. The academy has already fully implemented the system in Year 7 and is rolling it out to the other year groups. The curriculum offers good opportunities for academic, technical and sporting achievement. There is also a rich and varied programme of after school activities, including very well attended homework and study clubs.
- Every area of study includes aspects designed to promote students' moral, social and cultural development and to provide opportunities for spiritual growth. Three consistent themes of self-management, community and citizenship run through the academy's curriculum and its programme of assemblies. These reinforce the study of and reflection on values that are a fundamental part of British society, such as individual liberty and mutual respect. The cultural life of the academy is vibrant and celebrates the diversity of its intake. As a result, students are well-prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders carefully monitor the behaviour, attendance and progress of the small number of students at alternative provision.
- The academy fully meets all statutory requirements with regards to safeguarding and the protection of students in its care and ensures that its arrangements are as effective as they can be. In addition, any emerging issues, for example to do with students' mental health or their possible radicalisation are identified and acted on before they develop. The academy works tirelessly with a wide range of agencies to ensure that students have the support they need, when they need it. Religious and cultural sensitivities are acknowledged and the level of the academy's work with families is outstanding.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective. Governors are highly experienced and bring high levels of management expertise from education and the health service to the benefit of the academy. They take their educational and social responsibility to the wider community very seriously, wanting to ensure that students have 'twenty-first century skills'. Governors have worked closely with academy leaders to raise achievement and to improve the quality of teaching since the previous inspection.
 - Governors are well informed about the academy's work and the pace of improvement. They hold academy leaders fully to account, understand data well and confidently evaluate the academy's performance in relation to other schools nationally. Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and have supported the Principal in tackling any underperformance. They are rigorous in ensuring that pay increases are closely aligned to teachers' performance targets. For example, in spite of acknowledging the challenging circumstances facing the academy, none of the academy's leaders received pay rises in 2014. Governors and leaders take a long term and strategic approach, insisting on only appointing high quality staff.
 - Governors are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity, tackling discrimination and promoting good relationships. They ensure the pupil premium funding is well spent and analyse its impact on students' achievement and that of the Year 7 catch up funding. Governors' prudent management of finances means that the academy has a balanced budget and considerable reserves.
 - Governors ensure, together with academy leaders, that statutory duties are met effectively, including those for keeping students safe. Governors take an active and leading role in the safeguarding of students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is good.
- The academy's work in promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and has a marked impact on their behaviour. Students are well motivated, respectful of each other and of staff and cooperate particularly well in lessons. They do not give up when they find the work is difficult and are very positive about the level of challenge and support they receive from their teachers.
- Parents and staff are very positive about behaviour in the academy and agree that it is very well managed. Parental involvement in the education of their children has helped to drive the year-by-year improvement in attendance for all groups of students. Since the previous inspection attendance has been above the national average. The rate of persistent absences and the proportion of students temporarily excluded from the academy are below the national average.
- The academy leaders' commitment to broadening students' horizons and raising their aspirations is demonstrated, for example, in the good work of the breakfast club. This is an opportunity for disadvantaged students to have a 'working breakfast' with representatives from 75 local companies over the course of the year. This results in students being better prepared for future training and employment.
- Students in challenging circumstances currently at the academy are making improved progress in their studies. Low-level disruption in lessons is rare and is swiftly addressed. Temporary exclusions are used as a final resort and are decreasing, and there have been only two permanent exclusions in recent years.
- Students are very positive about their academy. They wear their uniform with pride and show respect for its buildings and resources.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Academy leaders insist that whatever the circumstances in which students may find themselves outside the academy, within it they are safe.
- Students know how to stay safe. They learn about how to deal with bullying but say that it seldom occurs at their academy, and this is supported by the academy's own records. Students are absolutely clear that they themselves will not tolerate derogatory language about any groups of people and would not accept or endorse any extremist or discriminatory behaviour.
- Students, including those in the sixth form, learn about the practicalities of staying safe, for example in practical lessons, in which they learn to draw up their own risk assessments. In information and communication technology, they learn to be vigilant and to protect their identity when they go online.
- Case studies show that the academy works very effectively with parents and external agencies to manage and improve the behaviour of students who have specific difficulties and to ensure the safety of vulnerable students. This includes the small number of students who are educated off the academy site.
- The academy shows particular concern for students' physical safety and well-being. Students are made aware of the benefits of exercise and a healthy diet, and the academy makes excellent use of the neighbouring leisure centre.
- Procedures are firmly in place for ensuring that all visitors are suitably checked and monitored. The academy ensures that students' behaviour is good and their safety well managed when they are off the academy site.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, while improving strongly, has not been good enough over time to bring about a good level of student achievement in literacy, reading and mathematics. Standards in these subjects are not yet as high as they should be.
- Not all teachers are effective in encouraging students to respond promptly to the advice in their marking or in the verbal feedback they give students. Teachers do not always plan work for the most-able students which is difficult enough to make them think hard, and which will enable them to reach the highest levels of attainment. However, teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and students say they find lessons to be interesting and varied.
- There is not enough focus across all subjects in Key Stage 4 on improving students' reading, spelling, punctuation and grammar. Literacy is much stronger at Key Stage 3, particularly where effective use has been made of primary school expertise to support the weaker students in Years 7 and 8.
- Group work is encouraged and teachers use questions very effectively to deepen students' thinking. For example, in one Year 10 English lesson students worked together to recreate the narrative of a novel by placing images in order. The teacher asked probing questions about their choices. However, teachers do not always encourage students to develop their confidence in speaking out in class, giving presentations and in debating with other students.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are well supported by teaching assistants in the classroom. These students and those who are at an early stage of learning English are encouraged to work increasingly without assistance as much as possible and also receive good support from their subject teachers.
- The strong relationships that teachers have established with students make a positive contribution to the learning that takes place. Teachers have to spend little time dealing with low-level disruption because their expectations are so clear and are accepted by almost all students throughout the academy.
- The work in current students' books indicates that the quality of teaching is now better than it has been in the past and students are making more rapid progress. This is because teachers carefully plan lessons that, with just a few exceptions, challenge the great majority of students well. For example, in one Year 9 science lesson, a quick fire question and answer session about crude oil and compounds established the level of students' knowledge. Groups were then given appropriately challenging activities to extend their learning further.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students in Year 11 did not achieve well in 2014. They entered the academy with exceptionally low starting points, in the bottom 9 of all schools nationally. They had experienced weak teaching in the first few years they had been in Key stage 3 which continued to affect their progress in Key Stage 4. These factors not only limited their attainment at the end of Year 11 but also slowed their progress, given their markedly weak literacy and numeracy skills. Some groups of students made good progress, however, notably students with lower prior attainment in English and middle prior attainment in mathematics.
- Although attainment and progress have yet to be in line with national averages, the achievement of current students in all year groups at the academy is now better than it was at the time of the previous inspection, in spite of their continuing low levels of attainment on entry.
- The proportion of students gaining the highest grades at GCSE was well below the national average in 2014. However, the proportion of students with high attainment on entry to the academy has historically been far lower than that found nationally. There are increasing numbers of the most-able students in lower years, and these students are making the progress expected of them. In 2014, the most-able students in the sixth form attained standards at AS level above those found nationally.

- The gap in attainment in Year 11 between disadvantaged students and others in the academy narrowed from 2013 to 2014 in English from nearly a grade to less than a quarter of a grade and in mathematics from nearly one and a quarter grades to just over three-quarters of a grade. However, the gap with others nationally remained static at around one and a half grades in English and around two grades in mathematics. Disadvantaged students in the current Year 11 and throughout the academy are making much improved progress and are on target for markedly higher attainment.
- Students in Year 7 who underachieved in English or mathematics in Key Stage 2 benefit from the extra support in reading, writing and mathematical skills the academy has provided through the catch-up funding. The academy has employed two additional teachers with expertise in primary school literacy and numeracy in order to support these students. As a result, many of these students are making improved progress and are narrowing the gap in their reading and mathematics.
- Students currently in Years 7, 8 and 9 are making improved progress in all subject areas. The introduction and full implementation in Year 7 of a new form of assessment has motivated students and encouraged deeper learning, with many more students showing increasing mastery of key skills in mathematics and English in particular.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement because students' achievement at A level in academic subjects is not yet in line with national averages. Sixth form leaders have driven improvements in students' achievement at AS level since the previous inspection and students attained standards above the national average in 2014. In addition, students make good progress and achieve well in work-related subjects.
- There are strong links between home and the academy and highly individualised programmes of support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs. This is leading to strongly improving progress for these students. The same level of individual attention and close work with families has led to similar improvements in the progress of students at an early stage of learning English. Since the previous inspection, the performance of students from minority ethnic backgrounds has been stronger than white British students.
- Academy leaders demonstrate their continuing support for the most vulnerable students by using early entry to GCSE examinations for a very small number of these students who might otherwise not be able to sit the examination. The progress of the very small number of students who attend provision off the academy site on a part time or full time basis is closely monitored and the success for some lies in continuing to engage with their education while others are making good progress.

The sixth form provision requires improvement

- Students' achievement on academic courses in the sixth form is below average and has been over time. Students' attainment and progress in different academic subjects is not consistently good, including that of the most-able students. The vast majority of students continue their academic studies from Year 12 to Year 13 but achievement in academic subjects is not as good as in work-related subjects. This means that achievement requires improvement.
- While students' recent attainment at A level has been below the national average, attainment at AS level is much improved and is above the national average. The proportion of the most able students at AS level achieving the highest grades is also above the national average. This is as a result of improvements in the quality of teaching in the sixth form.
- The attainment of students on work-related courses is in line with the national average. Their progress is also in line, while the significant number of students taking the subsidiary diploma made progress above the national average.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is improving and has led to improvements in attainment at AS level and in work-related courses. However, it is not consistently good across all subjects, and particularly in the case of those teaching academic courses. Students' folders and books show that teachers' advice is

not always taken and teachers do not always insist that students re-visit their work to learn from their mistakes.

- Disadvantaged students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs usually make similar progress to other students. Their performance, along with other students, is more closely monitored through the regular 'risk register', than at the time of the previous inspection.
- Sixth form students behave very well. They are considered as role models of good behaviour for younger students. The academy ensures they are safe at all times and that they know how to keep themselves safe. For example, in terms of their personal security on the internet and the dangers of radicalisation. Sixth form leaders have ensured that students play an active role in the life of the academy and take on responsibilities such as being 'reading ambassadors' with Year 8 and Year 10. They also have duties and can earn money performing a wide variety of tasks for the academy community, thereby giving them experience and a record of employment for the future.
- Students say they enjoy their time in the sixth form and that staff are knowledgeable and helpful regarding careers and higher education choices. A small number of students retake their English or mathematics GCSE in the sixth form; in the last academy year these have been largely successful. The proportion of students not in employment, education or training has fallen dramatically and every single student in the current Year 13 has a clear destination.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form require improvement because achievement has not been sustained at a high enough level in all courses. Nevertheless, the leaders of the sixth form demonstrate a strong capacity to improve. This can be seen in the improved attainment above the national average of students at AS level and the continued good achievement of students on work-related courses. In addition, the sixth form meets the government's minimum standards for performance in both academic and work-related courses. Leaders always ensure that students are entered for the most appropriate courses and there is a high level of monitoring of students progress.

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	135983
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	462595

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	969
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Crockett
Principal	Kerry Inscker
Date of previous school inspection	18 September 2013
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