

Shenley Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135911
Local Authority	N/A
Inspection number	381961
Inspection dates	2–3 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Brooker HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
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	911
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris York
Principal	Ruth Harker
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
School address	Shenley Lane Northfield Birmingham B29 4HE
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. In total, the inspection team made 40 lesson observations of 40 different teachers, many of which were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors observed key aspects of the academy's work and looked at a range of documents including students' work, school self-evaluation, assessment and tracking data and arrangements for safeguarding. In addition, analysis was undertaken of inspection survey responses from 277 parents and carers, 204 students and 36 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the academy's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How has the academy secured such rapid improvement in raising standards in its first two years?
- Do students make sufficient progress, particularly in English and mathematics, to achieve standards that are broadly in line with age-related expectations?
- Do most sixth-form students make at least good progress in lessons and over time?
- Is teaching consistently good?

Information about the school

Shenley Academy opened in September 2009 in the accommodation of its predecessor school. It is an average-sized secondary school with specialisms in performing and creative arts and in science, and is sponsored by E-ACT. The academy serves an area that experiences significant social and economic disadvantage. The large majority of students are from a White British heritage. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is exceptionally high. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national figure; the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.

A new school building is due for completion in September 2012 and will include extensive sports facilities.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Shenley Academy is an outstanding school. Its overall provision is outstanding because so many elements are excellent and rigorous self-evaluation ensures that outcomes, both in terms of students' academic achievement and their wider personal development, are ever-improving. Students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress at every key stage. The outstanding curriculum is tailored to meet the needs and aspirations of different groups, and is underpinned by high-quality teaching, exemplary use of assessment and rigorous tracking, combined effectively with excellent guidance.

Since it opened in September 2009 the academy has been on a strong trajectory of improvement. There has been remarkable progress in raising standards, increasing attendance and securing good behaviour. The academy's first examination results in 2010 were above national figures in some areas, although the headline figure for five A*–C GCSEs including English and mathematics was significantly below average. The relentless focus on raising standards led to sharp improvements in 2011 and the academy's robust assessment and tracking information shows that current standards are broadly in line with age-related expectations in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. This impressive improvement has been achieved by the academy's determination to meet the needs of individual students so that no one is left behind. Intervention and support are targeted from the start so that weaknesses in students' literacy, in particular, do not become an impediment to their learning and progress.

A large majority of teaching is consistently good, with much that is outstanding. The use of assessment is a notable strength. Robust procedures for monitoring provision identify precise areas for improvement, so that the overall quality of teaching is improving strongly. Lessons are generally well planned and effectively delivered. Little time is wasted because teachers have high expectations of how students will behave and what they will achieve. The positive climate for learning enables students to work steadily, develop the confidence to share ideas and reflect on their own progress. The most effective teaching develops students' independence and creativity and fosters their enjoyment of learning. However, this is not a consistent feature, and weaker lessons tend to rely too heavily on teacher input. The academy recognises that, although standards are rising quickly, students are not always given sufficient responsibility for their own learning.

Survey responses from staff, students, parents and carers demonstrate their confidence in the academy and its leadership. Students' positive attitudes are

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reflected in their consistently good behaviour and improved attendance, which has gone from broadly average to well above the national figure. These successes reflect the strong improvements in students' wider personal development. Students say that they feel very safe, and understand how to keep fit and healthy. They enjoy being at the academy and are proud of the many and varied contributions they make to their own community.

The Principal's expert leadership has guided the academy's development and successfully galvanised the energy and skills of staff. The academy works outstandingly well with parents and carers and also with an impressive range of external partners to achieve good outcomes for students. Rigorous self-evaluation and ambitious target-setting have been central to development planning. The speed and evident sustainability of all the improvements demonstrate the academy's outstanding capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the drive to raise standards, particularly in literacy and mathematics, by:
 - replicating more widely the best practice that exists in the most outstanding lessons
 - challenging students to take responsibility more often for their own learning and progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

When students start in Year 7 the standard of their work, particularly in English and mathematics, is generally below and often well below the levels expected. However, the accelerated progress that most students make at the academy enables them to close the national attainment gap by the end of Key Stage 3. Although attainment in English and mathematics at Key Stage 4 was below national figures in 2010 and 2011, the work seen in lessons and students' books confirms that standards are now broadly average. The academy's specialist subjects make a strong contribution to raising standards, and English Baccalaureate subjects, including history, geography and modern foreign languages, perform notably well.

Evidence from lesson observations confirms the strong upward trend of improvement across all year groups, including in the sixth form. In its most recent examinations in 2011, the academy exceeded most of its challenging targets. All groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, made good progress. It has continued to accelerate this year and the academy is firmly on course to maintain its improvement and exceed all previous results.

Students enjoy school, particularly their lessons in the specialist performing arts. They have a role in important decision-making and are rightly proud of the wider contributions that they make in the local community and through links with people

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abroad, for example through charity work. Students readily participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer, including sports and performing arts. They say that they feel completely safe and are confident that any rare incidents of bullying will be properly addressed.

Students’ positive attitudes contribute to their good achievement. In lessons, students comply with instructions and behave well. They sustain their concentration and collaborate impressively when working together in pairs and small groups. Learning objectives and outcomes are routinely shared with students so they can evaluate their own learning. When given the opportunity, students increasingly take responsibility for their own progress.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers plan a good range of activities to actively engage everyone in the class. Technology is used very well in lesson planning and delivery, often presenting stimulating resources for learning. Teachers make excellent use of assessment information to plan suitably ambitious outcomes and set challenging tasks that are well matched to students’ differing needs. They are careful to check that students understand their work and routinely involve the students themselves in peer and self-review. This ensures that students know how to improve their work and achieve or exceed their targets. In the outstanding lessons, teachers direct and manage learning skilfully, put the onus on students to work out answers for themselves, and encourage their active involvement, independence and mutual support. The few

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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weaker lessons tend to be dominated by teacher talk.

The academy’s curriculum provides rich opportunities for high-quality learning and wider personal development and well-being, and is carefully adapted to meet the specific and changing needs of individuals and groups. Students have a high take-up across a vast range of clubs, visits and residential experiences that make a significant contribution to their personal development. The Fresh Start course has a significant impact on developing students’ basic literacy, as well as their confidence and independence. In addition, all students in Key Stage 3 and 4 follow a ‘Learning for Life’ course through tutorial time and/or lessons that develops key skills, including literacy and numeracy, and has a demonstrable impact on their ability to reflect on their learning.

The academy provides outstanding care, guidance and support for its students. It monitors closely the performance of all students to maximise their participation and engagement. Since the academy opened, attendance has increased significantly, while persistent absenteeism and incidents of unacceptable behaviour have greatly reduced. The academy is able to call upon an impressive range of in-house personnel and external expertise to provide well-targeted support for students, especially those whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable. Students feel well supported through the vertical mixed-age tutor groups.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers, including the governing body, have been conspicuously successful in creating a strong sense of purpose based on ambitious target-setting and rigorous self-scrutiny. Led by the Principal, the academy has been relentless and highly successful in strengthening provision and raising standards. Weaknesses in teaching have been tackled, and leaders and managers at all levels are taking highly effective steps to drive up the quality of teaching still further. Rigorous self-evaluation enables leaders to target support, prioritise improvement and guide clear strategic planning. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the academy’s endeavours, so that any students who start with academic or social disadvantage are given every chance to participate fully and thrive. The academy’s planned actions make a strongly positive impact on community cohesion within the school and beyond, and positively foster students’ understanding of other faiths and cultures.

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The academy is highly committed to promoting any partnership that has the potential to improve the well-being and achievement of its students and successfully encourages engagement with a wide range of different groups. Links with local theatre and media companies, Birmingham City Football Club and the police have, for example, all been developed for the benefit of students, their families and the local community. The academy works hard to promote highly positive relationships with parents and carers, particularly those who might traditionally find working with the school difficult, and ensures that they are well informed and closely involved in their children’s progress.

The governing body has very robust systems for monitoring the effectiveness of the academy. Governors are consequently very knowledgeable about the work of the academy and are able to provide high levels of professional challenge to hold it to account. The academy has well-established procedures for safeguarding students which are rigorously implemented and reviewed so that staff and members of the governing body are fully aware of their responsibilities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

The academy has quickly expanded and strengthened its sixth-form provision, successfully encouraging an increasing number of post-16 students to stay in full-time education. Effective use is made of well-established collaborative arrangements with other providers, ensuring that sixth-form students have an appropriately wide range of courses at different levels of accreditation and a wide choice and combinations of academic and vocational courses. Teaching and the curriculum in the sixth form are subject to the same rigorous scrutiny as in the rest of the academy, leading to continuous improvement over the last two years. During the

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inspection, the quality of teaching and learning in sixth-form lessons was consistently good. Sixth-form students make good progress from their various starting points, which are often comparatively low. Success rates, retention levels and attendance are all above average. Progression pathways are carefully structured to meet students’ needs and aspirations, and guidance for students is a notable strength. Robust target-setting and systematic tracking ensure that students feel well supported. Strategic leadership of the sixth form is excellent.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

The questionnaire responses from parents and carers were overwhelmingly positive. Many took time to make additional comments about the excellent support provided by the academy and the dedication of staff. These responses affirm the academy’s outstanding levels of care, guidance and support. One or two responses raised concerns about students’ safety, relating to specific and isolated incidents. However, inspection evidence indicates that the procedures for safeguarding students are robust and that students feel very safe.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Shenley Academy to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 277 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 911 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	92	33	165	60	14	5	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	128	46	140	51	2	1	3	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	125	45	137	49	11	4	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	118	43	141	51	8	3	4	1
The teaching is good at this school	106	38	156	57	9	3	1	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	89	32	165	60	13	5	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	78	28	172	62	22	8	1	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	97	35	159	57	6	2	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	104	38	155	56	10	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	122	44	130	47	14	5	4	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	82	30	158	57	17	6	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	118	43	145	52	6	2	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	132	48	126	45	17	6	1	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 8 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



4 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Shenley Academy, Birmingham, B29 4HE

Thank you for making such a positive contribution to our recent inspection of your outstanding academy. We enjoyed speaking with you, hearing your views and seeing your work. We were particularly impressed by:

- your positive attitudes that are demonstrated in your good behaviour, excellent attendance, high levels of participation and the commitment that you show to your academy and the wider community
- the accelerated progress that you make as a result of good teaching, challenging target-setting and the academy's outstanding curriculum
- the academy's rapid improvements during its first two years and the outstanding care, guidance and support that it provides.

Leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, have an ambitious vision for the academy and have very high expectations for every one of you. The relentless focus on raising standards has already led to significant increases in attainment. However, no one is complacent because standards in key subjects such as English and mathematics are so important for your future success. We have therefore asked the academy to:

- further raise standards, particularly in your reading, writing and in mathematics.

This will be possible if the academy successfully replicates the excellent teaching in the most outstanding lessons, and it is essential that you each play your part. You all know your targets and effectively assess your own progress. However, there are times when you can take more responsibility for your own learning, for example by leading group work in lessons or responding to guidance given in marking.

We wish you all every future success.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker
Her Majesty's Inspector

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