

Handsworth Wood Girls' Academy

Church Lane, Handsworth, B20 2HL

Inspection dates 22–23 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Outstanding 1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The academy provides an exceptionally high quality of education, which results in students making outstanding progress.
- All groups of students make the same fast progress irrespective of their starting points or backgrounds.
- Teaching is outstanding because teachers know students extremely well and adapt learning to suit individual needs and abilities.
- Pupil premium funding is used very effectively to support students who need extra help, so that they make the same outstanding progress as the others, especially in English.
- Students thrive because the academy is a very caring, inclusive community with excellent support systems. Students say they feel safe.
- Teachers' marking is very good. Just occasionally, they do not make sure students follow up the guidance offered by improving their work.
- Outstanding leadership at all levels has established a climate where staff readily share expertise and check the impact of their work.
- The very experienced governing body is exceptionally effective. Governors provide a high level of support and challenge.
- Robust systems for managing performance reward and encourage staff at all levels to ensure students succeed.
- The sixth form is outstanding and the 16 to 19 study programmes meet students' needs and aspirations well.
- Students are very proud of their academy. They display exemplary attitudes to learning and their behaviour is outstanding.
- The range of courses and subjects is very well planned and ensures that students enjoy their time in the academy.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is promoted extremely effectively.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 35 lessons, of which five were jointly observed with senior leaders. Inspectors also made a number of visits to assemblies and tutorial sessions and carried out short visits to classrooms across a range of subjects.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors spoke to students in lessons, at breaks and at lunchtimes. They also met with various groups of students.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documentation, including the academy's checks on how well it is doing, the academy improvement plan, and statistical information about students' progress, achievement, behaviour and exclusions. They looked at the work of a wide range of students.
- Inspectors looked at the academy's documentation relating to the management of the work of staff, training arrangements for teachers and other staff, lesson observations, and arrangements for the safeguarding of students and for governance.
- Inspectors took into account the academy's own parent responses, and the 51 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Christine Young, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Rosemary Myers

Additional Inspector

Robert Steed

Additional Inspector

Helen Martin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Handsworth Wood Girls' Academy is average in size for a secondary school with a sixth form. It converted to become an academy in November 2012. When its predecessor school, called Handsworth Wood Girls' Visual and Performing Arts Specialist College and Sixth Form Centre, was previously inspected by Ofsted in January 2011, it was judged to be good.
- Almost all students come from minority ethnic heritage backgrounds.
- A much higher than average proportion of students speak English as an additional language. Many students are new to Britain from a wide range of countries, and speak very little English.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is well above average. This is additional money allocated by the government for students who are looked after by the local authority and those eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The academy runs a 'nurture' group to support students in literacy and numeracy.
- The academy supports an alternative provision free school, St George's Academy. It has partnerships with the Handsworth Association of Schools, the Titan Partnership, the James Brindley and Wood Green Academy Teaching Alliances and Citizens UK Birmingham.
- The academy is the first academy in Birmingham to achieve the Careers, Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Quality Mark.
- A small number of students attend off-site work-related training at Birmingham Metropolitan College, Gordon Franks Training, City Learning Centre, Hamstead Hall Academy and University College Birmingham.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that marking and feedback are consistently effective in helping students to improve their work across the academy.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The vast majority of students make rapid and sustained progress from below-average starting points. Students' attitudes to learning are excellent. The calm, purposeful atmosphere that prevails in the academy promotes learning.
- In 2013 over two-thirds of all students attained five or more A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics; 74% gained A* to C GCSE grades in English and 73% in mathematics, which was considerably above average. Overall achievement is excellent and has been sustained. The academy's own recent data suggest that GCSE results in 2014 will be even better.
- Students' achievement in both academic and work-related qualifications in the sixth form is outstanding. The proportion of students who stay on in the sixth form is extremely high. The school prepares them exceptionally well for higher education.
- Students thrive and respond to the school's high expectations, so that students from diverse backgrounds all achieve extremely well. Students who are at an early stage of learning to speak English make outstanding progress because of the academy's exemplary tracking of their progress, the identification of their learning needs and good planning by all teachers to address their special needs, including the development of literacy.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make very good progress. Teachers and other adults support and guide these students and the extra help they receive makes a considerable difference to their achievement.
- Students read widely and often. They write extensively across all subjects and apply a wide range of skills very effectively to ensure they are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. No student leaves the academy without clear options that have been carefully planned for their future lives.
- The academy has highly effective links with the providers of alternative education that support a few students with specific needs. Their progress is monitored in line with all students in the academy and provision amended where necessary, so that they make the same excellent progress as other students.
- The achievement of students eligible for the pupil premium is similar to that of other students. They make even better progress than others in English, where because rigorous programmes of support boost their performance.
- Students who are eligible for the Year 7 'catch-up' premium receive additional support in the 'nurture' group to develop their numeracy and literacy skills. This excellent help and guidance ensures they make rapid progress. The academy does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- The exceptional quality of display around the academy and in classrooms enhances its appearance and promotes learning very well.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Consistently high-quality teaching promotes excellent progress across the academy. The variety and pace of activities keep all students fully motivated and engaged in their learning.
- Warm, constructive relationships pervade classrooms; disruption of any kind is virtually unknown. Courtesy is the norm and students enjoy numerous opportunities for pair, group, and individual work. Students show a strong desire to learn and all teachers have very high expectations of them.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work together to provide support that is well matched to the accurate assessments they make of students' abilities. This ensures that all students, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs and the most able, make excellent progress.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is outstanding. Students are very keen to learn, especially where teaching is aimed at developing their analytical and reflective skills. Students are most confident when applying skills, knowledge and understanding to real situations.
- Teachers find a variety of ways to motivate students, including through providing opportunities for them to work with each other to share and develop ideas. For example, in a Year 7 graphics lesson students were challenged to create a moving animation. Excellent discussions between students quickly enabled them to share ideas and create clear frameworks, which led to some exciting animations being devised.
- Teachers use praise well, which underpins the high levels of enjoyment shown by students in lessons. Teachers and students have excellent working relationships, which develop confidence and enables teachers to test students' understanding of the topic being studied.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge promotes assured teaching, which improves students' rates of progress. They ask questions that challenge, encourage and help students to think more deeply and come up with their own ideas and answers to problems. This was clearly evident in a Year 8 geography lesson, where students entered into a practical exploration of how glaciers move which captured their imagination and made learning fun.
- Many students commented on how supportive their teachers are and what a difference their commitment and high aspirations are making to their achievement.
- The academy's literacy programme is very effective and is helping to develop students' literacy skills and to support their learning across a range of subjects. 'Literacy mentors' help students to improve their reading skills.
- Some of the marking and feedback given by teachers is very good and leads to students having an accurate understanding of how well they are working and what they need to do to improve. However, this good practice is not sufficiently widespread and some teachers do not give students enough good-quality guidance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding, both in lessons and around the academy. Attitudes to learning are exemplary. Students are very smart and well dressed and are excellent ambassadors for their academy.

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students, including those in the sixth form, say they feel safe. They understand risk and have a very good understanding of the different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They say that there is very little bullying in school and express great confidence that should any happen, it would be dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Students show a great pride in their academy. The atmosphere is one of respect, sharing and learning together. Students are very polite, well-mannered and courteous towards each other and to adults and visitors. They are inquisitive and fun to talk to.
- Students' leadership skills are promoted both within the classroom and throughout the academy community. Participation in the Academy Council, The Young People's Parliament, Sporting Leadership Academies and the Arts Award provide opportunities, develop clear personal skills and have an impact on academy life. Students speak very highly of the chances they are given to explore ideas and take part in activities beyond their lessons.
- Students are active in raising funds for local and national charities including Cancer Research. This enables students to develop as responsible individuals and make a significant contribution to the wider community.
- The academy's house system has helped to build a strong community and healthy competition that inspires aspiration and excellence. The academy's celebration of diversity is exemplary.
- Students' behaviour in the sixth form is exemplary, as are their attitudes to learning.
- Students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is a major strength of the academy. Assemblies focus on values and encourage students to reflect upon their lives.
- Attendance is above average, and as a result of the work done with parents it is continuing to rise during 2014, reflecting students' enjoyment in learning. The attendance of potentially vulnerable students is also high; far fewer than found nationally are persistently absent.
- The responses to the academy's own parental survey indicate that the vast majority of parents agree that their children are very safe and exceptionally well looked after, and that they would recommend the academy to other parents.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and the senior leadership team, including those responsible for the sixth form, have a focused, inclusive vision for the academy's future. This is leading to rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and students' achievement. They have a clear awareness of the academy's main strengths and weaknesses.
- The headteacher is determined in her ongoing focus on improvement. This is driven by her passionate belief that all students, irrespective of their circumstances, are entitled to the best possible education. The academy's commitment to equality of opportunity is demonstrated by its determination to give all students the chance to excel and achieve their potential.
- Leaders use well-developed systems and processes to check the performance of students and staff. As a result, they have an accurate view of strengths and any areas requiring further

improvement.

- The leaders' rigorous and accurate analyses and evaluations provide all teachers and governors with a clear understanding of the academy's performance. Its track record, reflected in students' outstanding achievement and effective teaching, also shows capacity for continued improvement.
- Comprehensive checks on students' progress, through analysing assessment information, enable all staff to follow how each student is progressing. Leaders use the results to challenge staff to ensure their efforts promote the best possible progress.
- Weekly two-hour sessions enable teachers and managers to develop their expertise through workshops and other training that are linked to their targets for improvement.
- The academy's links with the Teaching School's Alliance Programme has enabled it to build on high-quality, targeted training for teachers. This has helped to improve the quality of teaching and raise standards.
- The leadership of the sixth form is outstanding, and it offers a wide-ranging curriculum including work-related subjects. Very few Year 11 students do not stay on into the sixth form. The school is very proud of the individual support that guides students to make the right subject choices for Year 12. Practically all sixth form students move on to apprenticeships, university, further education or employment.
- Students who join the school with low levels of literacy are given special support to develop language skills, self-confidence and understanding. Their reintegration into main school from the nurture group enables them to accelerate their learning and achieve the same success as other students.
- Pupil premium funding is being used successfully to give students extra help in English and mathematics, which includes one-to-one support, small-group work and focused learning sessions. It pays for additional teachers, literacy and numeracy support.
- All safeguarding requirements are fully met. All documentation is meticulously completed. Child protection procedures are exemplary. All staff are appropriately trained and are aware of child protection and risk assessment procedures.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has planned meticulously to ensure that the school provides a motivating and inspirational school community. Governors hold the headteacher to account for the accuracy of predictions, the quality of teaching and attendance. They have a very good understanding of data on how well the school is performing when compared to all schools nationally. They have completed RAISEonline data analysis training. A series of well-planned meetings for governors help them to maintain a robust but balanced overview of the effectiveness of the school. Governors make sure that the Year 7 catch-up and the pupil premium funding is well managed and they have a very good awareness of how to evaluate its impact on students' achievement. They have a firm grasp of the school's finances and of systems for pay progression linked to performance management. They monitor the performance management of the principal and monitor targets for senior leaders.

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	138937
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	440699

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	790
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amjid Mahroof
Headteacher	Nicola Walters
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0121 554 8122
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