

West Walsall E-ACT Academy

Primley Avenue, Walsall, West Midlands WS2 9UA

Inspection dates

31 October–1 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, staff and the trust have successfully addressed the school's previous weaknesses. Improvements since March 2016 have been significant. This is a rapidly improving school.
- Leaders have created a culture in which pupils flourish socially and academically. Staff understand and share leaders' vision to 'provide an education that enables pupils to grow and develop into well-educated young citizens'.
- Staff and the trust make sure that all pupils are well cared for and safe. The school's safeguarding arrangements are highly effective.
- Teaching throughout the school is improving rapidly and is particularly effective in English, religious education and art. However, inconsistencies remain in a small number of mathematics, history, geography and science classes. A small minority of leaders do not challenge underperformance quickly enough.
- The curriculum is planned well and provides a broad range of experiences. This is starting to have a positive effect on pupils' outcomes and their readiness for the next stage of their education or employment and training.
- Pupils' behaviour and attendance are good. The large majority of pupils are polite and thoughtful, and take their learning seriously. However, a few staff do not manage pupils' misbehaviour consistently. As a result, a few pupils talking out of turn disrupt other pupils' learning in a small number of classes.
- The recently relaunched sixth form provides a well-planned, well-organised, good level of education and support. As a result, students' academic and social needs are catered for well.
- Leaders have worked effectively to improve pupils' writing skills that are now good. However, pupils' reading skills are less well developed and a significant minority of pupils do not read widely or often.
- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are safe and happy in school. The pupils understand how fundamental British values underpin modern Britain.
- Pupils' achievements throughout the school are rapidly improving. However, the legacy of previous poor teaching means that pupils' progress, particularly that of a few pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most able pupils in mathematics, lags behind improvements in the quality of teaching.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and subsequently pupils' outcomes in all subjects, but particularly in science, mathematics, geography and history by making sure that:
 - all staff implement the school's behaviour for learning policy consistently and effectively
 - the gaps in pupils' learning are identified and addressed quickly and effectively
 - all staff use what they know about pupils' abilities and needs to plan learning activities that secure good progress from pupils' starting points, particularly for the most able and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Embed and develop current initiatives to improve pupils' reading skills and to make sure that they read widely and often.
- Improve the effectiveness of subject leaders by making sure that:
 - all leaders use the information about the quality of teaching and learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes to challenge and address underperformance quickly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since his appointment in April 2016, the headteacher, well supported by staff and the trust, has identified and successfully addressed the many deep-seated issues that faced the school. As a result, the school has improved significantly since the previous inspection in March 2016.
- Staff are clear about, and share, the headteacher's vision to provide a high-quality education that meets pupils' needs and aspirations. Staff are optimistic about the future and morale is high. Staff, pupils, parents and the trust work together effectively so that the headteacher's vision is being realised.
- Leaders are ambitious for the pupils. Almost all staff have high expectations of the pupils and expect them to work hard, behave well and attend school regularly. The improvements in pupils' outcomes, behaviour and attendance indicate that pupils are meeting staff's expectations.
- Senior leaders frequently check and evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' progress. As a result, they have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Senior leaders use this information to implement development plans and deliver relevant tailored staff training quickly and effectively. Almost all of the staff value the training they receive and believe it helps them to improve their practice. The improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment show that they are correct. However, a few subject leaders new to post or new to the school do not use the information they have about the work in their subject area to address underperformance quickly enough.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. A range of lessons, visits, events and speakers from external organisations such as Stonewall deepen pupils' understanding and acceptance of different views, cultures, faiths and beliefs. Pupils have a secure appreciation of others' differences and of how the active promotion of fundamental British values helps to secure a thriving and safe modern Britain.
- Leaders plan and organise the curriculum well. Almost all staff deliver the curriculum successfully through interesting and engaging lessons and a wide range of extra-curricular activities that the vast majority of pupils appreciate and enjoy. The rapid improvement in pupils' outcomes and behaviour shows that the improvements to the curriculum and to the quality of teaching and learning have successfully raised standards. Pupils in all age groups have suitable careers information, advice and guidance that prepare them well for the next stage of their education or employment and training.
- The local authority provides effective training and support to help staff meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) leads this provision well. Staff use the money for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to deliver a range of strategies that help the majority of pupils to improve their learning effectively. The SENCo, staff and parents work together closely to identify pupils' needs quickly and to

implement appropriate intervention successfully. As a result, the academic outcomes and attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are improving rapidly. Leaders acknowledge that due to the legacy of poor teaching there are still gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Staff are addressing these gaps with some success, but some of the gaps, particularly in mathematics, remain.

- Leaders and the trust use the additional funding that the school receives for pupils who are disadvantaged or for those in Year 7 who need extra help to catch up with others effectively. The differences between the achievements of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are reducing. Pupils in Year 7 eligible for the catch-up funding do well from their starting points, particularly in numeracy and writing.

Governance of the school

- The arrangements for governance are effective. The roles and responsibilities of the trust and the ambassadorial advisory group (AAG) are clear, and the trust and the AAG work well together to challenge and support the school. The trust frequently gathers information from a wide range of sources to hold the school's leaders to account and to question underperformance. The trust has a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, the trust is able to prioritise those areas most in need of improvement. The trust has systems in place, for example, thorough and detailed staff appraisal, to make sure that the school continues to improve.
- Trust and AAG members have a wide range of skills and expertise that they use to good effect to support school staff. For example, the trust's subject and system leaders assist staff in developing their teaching, safeguarding or administrative knowledge, skills and understanding effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are highly effective and a strength of the school.
- Pupils feel safe and are safe. The designated safeguarding leader has an excellent understanding of her role and responsibilities. She uses this knowledge to provide regular focused training for all school staff. She makes sure that the systems for keeping pupils safe are suitable. For example, the checks on staff's suitability to work with children are comprehensive and fully meet government guidelines. A trust system leader routinely monitors and reviews these checks. The school works well with outside agencies, including the local authority, to provide a range of care and intervention. For example, the school's approaches to checking on the whereabouts of absent pupils or those who are missing from education are meticulous and detailed.
- Staff are vigilant, caring and committed to meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils and their families. Staff recognise that they all have a role to play in keeping pupils safe. Levels of staff supervision before school begins and during the school day are appropriate and help pupils to feel safe. The school's policies and procedures to report, record and follow up concerns are rigorous.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching and pupils' learning have improved hugely due to the excellent training that staff complete and the reduction in changes to the staff team. Almost all staff apply the school's learning and teaching and assessment policies consistently. Leaders establish pupils' starting points accurately. Staff use this information and the school's data collection and analysis system to track pupils' progress well. The vast majority of teachers are good at building on what pupils have previously achieved. This is particularly the case in art, religious education and English. Parents are clear about how their child is doing and value the information that the school provides about their child's progress.
- The overwhelming majority of teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They use this expertise to deliver interesting and engaging lessons that maintain pupils' interest and enable them to make progress. Teachers use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding or to encourage them to think about their work and to deepen their understanding. Teachers in all subjects use homework to consolidate and reinforce pupils' learning effectively.
- Teachers, learning support assistants and academic coaches have high expectations of what pupils should know and can do. Leaders and teachers set challenging targets for pupils of all backgrounds and abilities. The large majority of pupils respond to these targets and do well from their starting points, particularly pupils who are disadvantaged. However, the most able pupils in mathematics and a few pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- Almost all staff use the information they have about pupils' abilities and progress to plan, deliver and modify lessons that meet their learning needs. However, in a few classes staff do not make sure that the gaps in pupils' learning caused by a legacy of poor teaching are filled. This is particularly the case in science, mathematics, geography and history.
- The majority of staff develop pupils' writing, including spelling, punctuation and grammar, and numeracy skills well. As a result, pupils are able to write confidently for different purposes and audiences and to apply their numeracy skills to a range of problems in different subjects. However, the development of pupils' reading skills in subjects other than English, while improving, is still not good enough. In addition, a significant minority of pupils do not read widely or often. Leaders are aware of this and suitable strategies are in place, but they are yet to secure significant and sustained improvements.
- The majority of teachers have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and implement the school's behaviour for learning policy in line with the school's expectations. Classroom rules and routines are generally well established and pupils respond positively to the feedback about their work and staff's instructions. However, a few teachers do not manage pupils' misbehaviour consistently. As a result, pupils' learning is disrupted in a small number of classes, primarily by pupils' talking out of turn.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **Good**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The vast majority of pupils demonstrate resilience and perseverance in their learning and are increasingly ambitious and aspirational. Staff are trained in mental health first aid. As a result, they quickly identify and successfully address pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. The vast majority of parents feel that their children are well cared for and enjoy school.
- Pupils have a secure understanding of how to identify and avoid potential risks that they face in and out of school. For example, pupils are able to talk knowledgeably about the dangers of online grooming and people who might use social media to radicalise vulnerable individuals, child sexual exploitation and substance misuse. Staff achieve this through a detailed and wide-ranging safety curriculum and other events such as visiting speakers. Lessons, assemblies, tutor time and 'deep learning days' equip pupils with the skills to keep themselves and others safe.
- Pupils feel safe in school and know whom to speak to if they have a concern or are anxious. Pupils have a clear understanding of what constitutes bullying and unacceptable social behaviour. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that there were very few bullying incidents and that staff deal with these quickly and effectively. All staff promote equality of opportunity and diversity by challenging stereotypes and unacceptable and prejudiced language.
- The school's 'small school leaders' provide valuable support for pupils who have difficulties or who are not meeting the school's expectations. Pupils value this support and rightly identify improvements in their self-confidence, attendance or behaviour as evidence that the support is effective.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are usually polite, courteous and respectful to others.
- Leaders have successfully addressed pupils' historical poor behaviour. Leaders, working with staff, pupils and parents, have greatly reduced the number of fixed-term exclusions and negative behaviour incidents. The number of exclusions is very low for all pupils including pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. There have been no permanent exclusions since April 2016.
- Pupils' attendance, including that of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or who are disadvantaged, is improving and is consistently in line with national figures. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is decreasing and below national figures. The vast majority of pupils arrive on time for school and for lessons. Suitable levels of adult supervision before school, at breaktimes, lunchtimes and lesson changeovers make sure that pupils move safely and in an orderly manner around the school site.
- The vast majority of pupils conduct themselves well in classes. They have positive attitudes to their learning. They come to lessons properly equipped, take pride in their

work and present it neatly and accurately. The relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils are very positive. One pupil spoke for many when they said, 'We enjoy being with teachers. We like each other's company.' However, when teachers do not implement the school's behaviour policy effectively, a few pupils' negative behaviour can disrupt the learning of others.

- Pupils generally wear their uniform in line with the school's expectations. Pupils respect the school's buildings and environment. There is little litter or graffiti.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The improvements in the quality of teaching and the reduction in the number of supply teachers have resulted in significant improvements in pupils' progress from their starting points. However, there are a few classes in which improved teaching has not yet had time to make sure that pupils catch up with the gaps in their learning. In these classes, pupils are not yet making good progress or reaching the standards of which they are capable. This is particularly the case in mathematics, science, history and geography.
- The provisional 2017 end of key stage 4 outcomes are much improved on previous years in all subjects, but particularly in English, religious education and art. This broadly reflects the improvements seen in the progress of pupils currently in the school. Pupils who are disadvantaged do particularly well, and the gap between them and other pupils nationally continues to diminish.
- Pupils, and their families who are new to English or who are developing their competence in English have a range of excellent support and teaching to develop their linguistic skills. For example, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) qualified teachers deliver English language lessons for pupils and their parents. As a result, pupils make rapid gains in their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.
- The achievements of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are improving. This is primarily due to the focused and tailored teaching they receive. However, leaders recognise that a few pupils from this group do not do as well as they should in a range of subjects.
- Leaders and staff have addressed pupils' weak writing skills successfully. As a result, the majority of pupils now write fluently and accurately in subjects across the school. Staff acknowledge that a large majority of pupils have reading ages significantly below their chronological age. Staff have begun to implement suitable strategies to address this weakness. However, it is too early to see any significant or sustained improvement. As a result, a significant minority of pupils do not read widely or often, or have secure reading skills.
- Pupils in Year 7 have work that matches their abilities and aptitudes. They make good progress in English and mathematics when compared to their end of key stage 2 final assessments. Leaders use the Year 7 catch-up premium to improve the literacy and numeracy skills successfully of pupils eligible for the funding.
- Pupils' numeracy skills are improving as the result of the better teaching they receive. Pupils, particularly in key stage 4, are able to apply their knowledge and understanding confidently and precisely to a variety of problems in a range of subjects. However, the

most able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable in mathematics, particularly in key stage 3.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders recently reviewed the post-16 provision. As a result, the sixth form was relaunched with a changed curriculum in September 2017. Students are able to choose from an appropriate range of academic and vocational courses. The number of students attending the school's sixth form compared to last year has increased. Leaders frequently check the quality of teaching and students' progress. As a result, they have an accurate picture of the sixth form's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders act promptly to address underperformance.
- All of the students who completed their studies at the end of Year 13 in 2017 achieved their target grades and made good progress from their starting points. All of the students went on to their first-choice university or chosen employment and training.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and have high expectations of what students should achieve. Students have work that challenges them and deepens their knowledge and understanding. Students are diligent and respond well to teachers' thoughtful questioning and feedback.
- Leaders provide dedicated lesson time for students who join the sixth form without achieving a good pass in English or mathematics GCSE or who want to improve their grade. As a result, the success rate in GCSE English and mathematics is in line with those seen nationally.
- High-quality careers information, advice and guidance ensure that students are clear about their next steps in education or employment and training. The current curriculum provides opportunities for all students to gain valuable work experience.
- Students have a wide range of opportunities to develop their leadership skills. For example, students have completed training to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In addition, students provide mentoring support to younger pupils who need to improve their literacy or numeracy skills.
- The sixth form's safeguarding arrangements are effective. For example, staff check on students who are absent or who are potentially vulnerable. Students feel safe. All of the students who spoke to inspectors said that staff are helpful, caring and supportive. Leaders ensure that students are supported academically and socially. The sixth form meets the requirements for the 16 to 19 study programmes.

School details

Unique reference number	138374
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10021068

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	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	774
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair	Michael Wemms
Headteacher	Qamar Riaz
Telephone number	01922 720741
Website	www.wwea.org.uk
Email address	info@wwea.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 March 2016

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- West Walsall E-ACT Academy opened in September 2012. E-ACT is the sponsor. The board of trustees is the appropriate authority. A local ambassadorial advisory group is in place but has no accountability responsibilities. The headteacher has been in post since April 2016. The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- When the school was inspected in March 2016, it was judged to require special measures. Subsequently, the school had two monitoring inspections. At the previous monitoring inspections, leaders and managers were judged to be taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

- Pupils enter the school with starting points significantly below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average. A large proportion of these pupils are competent or fluent in English.
- The proportion of pupils who receive special educational needs support is below average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is below average. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school is likely to meet the provisional government floor standard.
- Pupils are placed in four 'small schools', Tolkien, Shakespeare, Austen, Bronte, for tutor periods and for pastoral support.
- The school does not use alternative educational provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in all year groups including in the sixth form. Some of these lessons were jointly observed with school leaders. Inspectors also carried out an extensive scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views about their safety and welfare, learning, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff, leaders and representatives of E-ACT.
- The views of staff were considered from the 60 responses to the school's own questionnaire. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for these to be considered. Inspectors considered the views of parents from the responses to the school's own questionnaires.
- A range of documents and policies were scrutinised that included the school's self-evaluation, records of pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance and the minutes of the meetings of the trust board. The checks on staff's suitability to work with children were also evaluated.

Inspection team

Peter Humphries, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rob Steed	Ofsted Inspector
Jacqueline Newsome	Ofsted Inspector

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