

Shire Oak Academy

Lichfield Road, Walsall Wood, Walsall, West Midlands WS9 9PA

Inspection dates

20–21 June 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Outcomes have been weak for the past two years. Pupils do not make consistently good progress. This includes boys, the most able and disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for additional support through pupil premium funding.
- Some leaders are less skilled than others in checking and improving teaching and achievement. As a result, the quality of teaching is variable.
- At times, work does not meet the needs of all pupils. The most able are not consistently challenged.
- Teachers are not using assessment effectively to inform planning. As a result, teaching sometimes does not meet the needs of all pupils.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's performance is not accurate. It does not set out key milestones and leaders do not monitor the impact of actions on pupils' progress effectively.
- Girls do not achieve well in the sixth form.
- Rates of absence and persistent absence have increased over the past two years and are above the national averages.
- Although the capacity of the governing body has improved since joining the Mercian Academy Trust, governors have not held leaders to account for their plans and actions as well as they should.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching is improving. Joining the Mercian Academy Trust has provided additional support. Middle leaders are providing more effective leadership in their areas.
- Pupils are cared for effectively. Pastoral support is a strength of the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress made by all pupils, but particularly boys, the most able and disadvantaged, by:
 - increasing the level of challenge in lessons so that all pupils are fully engaged in learning and make the progress they should from their starting points
 - using accurate assessment to improve planning and to ensure that work is matched to pupils' skills and abilities
 - improving the quality of questioning to encourage pupils to think more deeply.
- Improve the quality of leadership in the school so that there is a sharper focus on ensuring that the achievement of pupils and sixth-form students improves more rapidly by:
 - developing more rigorous approaches to monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and attendance
 - sharpening leaders' use and analysis of data about all aspects of the school's performance so that these inform strategic direction and bring about rapid improvement in teaching, learning and outcomes.
- Improve the progress of students in the sixth form, particularly girls, by making sure that leaders respond more rapidly to evidence of weakness by:
 - embedding the new tracking policy and ensuring that intervention is timely
 - making sure that students progress equally well in all subjects.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management might be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management might be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders did not fully address the areas of improvement from the last inspection and did not respond quickly enough to outcomes in 2016. As a result, pupils completing Year 11 have underachieved for the past two years.
- Leaders have too generous a view of the overall performance of the school because it is dominated by the actions that are presently being undertaken, rather than an evaluation of their impact on pupils' progress. As a result, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and subsequent underachievement by groups of pupils, including that of students in the sixth form, have not been addressed effectively.
- Current strategies have been implemented relatively recently. Although teaching is improving and pupils in all years are currently making better progress than they have in the past, there is still some way to go for these improvements to fully impact on pupils' and students' progress.
- Progress is poorer for pupils in key stage 3. New assessment strategies are not yet embedded. There is overlap with work taught at primary school, particularly in mathematics. Leaders have not ensured that there is sufficient challenge in the curriculum.
- Some leaders do not have the skills to improve and check teaching and achievement. Mercian Academy Trust is now providing good capacity to address this through the support provided by its chief executive officer and school improvement partner. Both are ambitious and expect high standards. There is evidence that middle and senior leaders are benefiting from this additional support.
- Leaders have not used the pupil premium funding effectively and are not securing good value for money. Around a quarter of the pupils are eligible for support from the additional funding but these pupils have not, historically, made good progress. The current strategy has a greater focus on good-quality first teaching and there are some early signs of improvement. However, the progress of the most able disadvantaged pupils is poor.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is now being used more effectively to encourage the development of literacy and mathematical skills for relevant pupils. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are supported effectively. Leaders have accurately identified staff development needs, one of which is to be able to identify pupils' needs more accurately. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has also accurately identified the need to refine and expand the range of interventions available to improve the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Leaders now make sure that teachers benefit from regular training opportunities. Teachers work together in learning triads and receive support and guidance from four enthusiastic teaching and learning advisers. Staff value these opportunities.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. School leaders changed the curriculum offer in key stage 4 this year in order to better meet the needs of all pupils. It now offers a

range of vocational pathways at different levels in the performing arts, business, media and sports.

- Leaders' commitment to the care of pupils and sixth-form students is a positive influence across the school and this is shown in the good relationships between pupils, sixth-form students and staff. Staff know their pupils and sixth-form students well and provide effective support, care and guidance.

Governance

- The governing body has not taken the necessary action to address the decline in standards over the past two years. It has not held leaders to account well enough and this is an important reason why outcomes have not been good enough.
- Governors accept that their use of pupil premium funding over the past two years has not brought about the progress required. They have not monitored the impact on eligible pupils' progress in enough detail.
- Governors have reflected on the way they operate and have adopted new ways of working. Governors are now asking more probing questions and holding leaders at all levels to account better than they have in the past.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is a strength of the school. Staff are appropriately vetted and trained as required, including in the 'Prevent' duty. Leaders treat safeguarding as a priority.
- Pupils feel safe and they learn about keeping safe through assemblies and visiting speakers.
- There are appropriate procedures in place for reporting any concerns that staff have if a pupil shows signs of being at risk. The designated lead for safeguarding and her deputy are knowledgeable and tenacious. Pupils know where they can find help and support when they are needed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement because there is too much variability between and within subjects.
- Teachers do not consistently use assessment information to plan and set work effectively. As a result, work set for pupils is not well matched to their skills and abilities, meaning that their progress is weaker. This is particularly so for the most able pupils.
- Pupils do not develop their thinking in sufficient depth because the mainly closed questions that teachers ask require only short responses. Pupils made more progress in lessons where questioning was challenging and prompted pupils to demonstrate a higher level of application. Pupils, particularly the most able, said that they are not given enough opportunities to do this.

- Some of the most able pupils told inspectors that they found much of the work too easy and could not identify a lesson when they have had to think really hard. They added that much of the work asked of them is repetition of work completed at primary school, particularly in mathematics.
- Pupils do not develop their literacy skills sufficiently across subject areas other than English. Some teachers do not insist that pupils' work contains accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. This means pupils continue to make the same errors.
- Where the school's feedback policy is consistently applied, it challenges and develops learning and inspectors observed pupils who were keen to respond to this feedback.
- Teaching is improving and pupils are beginning to benefit from stronger teaching. However, the best practice is not yet being shared effectively to encourage more rapid improvement in teaching overall.
- Where teaching is strong, teachers have secure subject knowledge and a better understanding of what pupils and students can and cannot do and are able to plan appropriately. Consequently, pupils and students make better progress.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and support pupils well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to support pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Most pupils are confident young people who are proud of their school. There are very positive relationships between pupils and staff. The support and care available to pupils are a strength of the school. Currently, a small number of pupils attend alternative provision. School leaders work effectively with partner organisations to ensure that these pupils are cared for and supported.
- Careers education, information, advice and guidance enable pupils to make appropriate choices about their next steps in education. More pupils than previously are accessing vocational courses, including apprenticeships, as their preferred destination. Last year, school leaders organised a careers fair for all year groups, which was well attended. School leaders are committed to ensuring that pupils receive strong, impartial guidance about future options and, for the older students, continue their studies on the most relevant pathway.
- Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are positive. In addition, several parents contacted inspectors directly to applaud the care and support provided for their children. Pupils say they feel safe in school and know where to go if they have any concerns. They say they feel their personal development is supported.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and healthy as a result of a strong personal, social, health and economic programme. This helps pupils make the right decisions in staying safe and healthy.
- The SENCo is committed to the personal and academic development of those pupils in his care. A number of parents visited the school during the inspection wanting to share

with inspectors their highly positive experience. Comments on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, also support this. He has a detailed knowledge of the pupils in his care and deploys teaching assistants appropriately. The support for pupils who attend the resource centre is focused on their individual needs.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Most pupils are polite and courteous. Inspectors were made to feel very welcome and it was not unusual to see pupils hold doors open for adults and peers and greet them with a 'good morning' or 'good afternoon'.
- Low-level disruption is rare. However, in some lessons, pupils are not actively engaged in their learning. Where teacher expectations are high, behaviour for learning is effective. Inspectors saw examples of passive behaviour where pupils were opting out of learning and the strategies used by teachers were not consistent in addressing this. In these lessons, pupils were not making the progress they should.
- Attendance is below the national average. Leaders have appointed an education welfare officer to provide additional support and are taking a firmer stance towards unauthorised absence. However, the attendance of different groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, is not improving quickly enough.
- Persistent absence remains above the national average. Data provided by the school for the first two terms of this academic year shows that, while strategies for individual pupils are having some effect, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent remains high.
- Permanent exclusions have been above the national average for the last three years. However, fixed-term exclusions, including repeat fixed-term exclusions, are well below the national average. The school's use of internal exclusion is working as an effective internal means of managing and dealing with poor pupil behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Year 11 pupils for the past two years did not make the progress expected of them, given their starting points. Last year, this was the case in English, mathematics and science and in a number of non-core subjects. It was also the case for middle- and higher-ability pupils, boys and disadvantaged pupils.
- Action has been taken which includes a more effective response from governors and good support from the Mercian Academy Trust. Moves to improve the quality of teaching and leadership in some areas have also been made. As a result, the progress being made by current pupils at key stage 4 is improving.
- The strategy to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils now has a sharper focus. Data provided by school leaders shows that this is having some impact on outcomes. However, progress for the most able disadvantaged pupils is not improving.
- Initiatives such as 'the brilliant club' are having an impact on the achievement and progress of the most able pupils. Outcomes at the end of this year are expected to be

higher for the proportion of pupils who achieve a level 5+ in English and mathematics.

- More rigorous tracking of pupils in Year 11 is expected to see the gap between the progress of boys and girls close. Data provided by school leaders during the inspection supports this.
- At key stage 3, assessment data provided by the school shows that pupils are not on track to reach predicted grades. This is particularly the case in English and mathematics and for disadvantaged pupils, particularly the most able disadvantaged pupils. School leaders are addressing this and are currently modifying their assessment policy. The Mercian Academy Trust is providing effective support.
- The destination data about Year 11 pupils indicates that the qualifications they gain and their personal development while at school enable them to access the next stage of education.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- In 2017, the progress that students made was below average. Girls' progress was significantly below the national average and declining. School leaders have been slow to respond to this. There are now strategies in place, including mindfulness courses to support girls' confidence, and the data shared by school leaders shows some improvement in progress.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is improving. The profile of teaching in the sixth form is more consistent than in the main school. However, data provided for school leaders indicates that there are still variations in the proportion of pupils who are meeting their target grades across different subjects.
- Since September, leadership of the sixth form has been stronger than in previous years. This is ensuring that monitoring is more effective. Assessment data is more current and is being used more consistently by teachers to inform their planning.
- In 2017, the proportion of students who completed their courses was lower than the national average. School leaders now ensure that students receive more personalised guidance around their subject choices. As a result, far fewer students have changed courses this year and a much higher proportion of students have completed their courses.
- Students who join the sixth form without at least a level 4 at GCSE in English and mathematics undertake appropriate additional study and, particularly in mathematics, many gain a level 4 or above.
- The curriculum offer is broad and students benefit from a range of subjects. There is a strong curriculum offer across all schools within the Mercian Academy Trust and students spoke positively about the options available to them.
- There are appropriate systems in place for ensuring that students are safe, while also giving them the freedoms expected by sixth-form students. They act as good ambassadors for the school and some support younger pupils, for example acting as reading buddies or working in the school's gym.
- Students participate in relevant enrichment opportunities, including visiting speakers from a range of industries and university preparation seminars, including financial

planning and UCAS support.

- The quality of careers information, advice and guidance has improved and students are well prepared for their next steps. The majority of students secure a place in education, employment or training at the end of their courses.

School details

Unique reference number	136620
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10047694

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,456
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	191
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees, Mercian Academy Trust
Chair	Kevin Hubery
Principal	Ray Beech
Telephone number	01543 452 518
Website	www.shireoakacademy.co.uk/
Email address	postbox@shireoakacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 November 2014

Information about this school

- The school is an 11 to 18 converter academy which, as of 1 January 2018, is now a member of the Mercian Academy Trust. The trust is led by a chief executive officer and is made up of five local secondary schools, including a grammar school and a studio school.
- A new principal has been appointed since the last inspection in 2014.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding is broadly in line with the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities who are supported by the school is below the national average but on an upward trend.
- The school occasionally uses alternative providers to meet the needs of individual pupils. Generally, these are short-term placements to provide pupils with additional support.

Information about this inspection

- Pupils in Year 11 and Year 13 were not in school during the inspection due to external qualifications. Year 10 were involved in school examinations.
- Inspectors visited 46 parts of lessons across the curriculum. They also visited three tutor sessions on day 2 and observed a year group morning assembly. During visits to classrooms, inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work and spoke to pupils about what they were learning. In addition, 115 pupils from across all year groups, including Year 11 and Year 13, responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- Inspectors met with focus groups made up of pupils from different year groups. Inspectors also spoke with many pupils in and around school and in lessons.
- Inspectors met with the chief executive officer and school improvement partner of the Mercian Academy Trust. Inspectors also met with members of the governing body, including its chair, members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders and teachers. Teachers gave their views through 107 responses to the online questionnaire.
- The views of parents were evaluated through the 126 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 121 responses to the Parent View free-text service. School leaders also provided inspectors with their own parent questionnaire responses.
- A large number of school documents were scrutinised by inspectors, including school leaders' self-evaluation, the school development plan, minutes of governors' meetings, safeguarding folders and data about attendance and pupils' progress.

Inspection team

Richard Gill, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Elaine Haskins	Ofsted Inspector
William Keddie	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Ellis-Martin	Ofsted Inspector
Tracey Lord	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018