

# The High Arcal School

High Arcal Drive, Sedgley, Dudley DY3 1BP

**Inspection dates** 12–13 November 2015

**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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Since the last inspection, rates of progress in all subjects, including English and mathematics, have improved significantly.
- This year, gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school are closing in all year groups and all subjects. The most-able disadvantaged pupils are making better progress than their peers.
- Teaching is consistently good because teachers in all subjects use assessment information effectively to plan learning that meets the needs of pupils. As a result pupils make good progress.
- The Principal and senior leaders have effectively communicated a culture of high expectations. They have a thorough understanding of the academy's performance because they have established rigorous systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning.
- Middle leaders are effective. They are well-supported to take a key role in monitoring the quality of provision in their areas of responsibility, using this to inform actions for further improvement.
- Governors are an integral part of the academy's focus on continual improvement. They challenge and question appropriately.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all marking is precise enough to ensure that pupils understand clearly what they need to do to improve their work.
- In some lessons, the most-able pupils are not directed well enough to the most challenging tasks.
- A very small number of older pupils do not behave as well as they could outside the classroom when supervision is at a distance.

## 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?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that all pupils make at least good progress, particularly the most able, by:
  - ensuring that when different levels of challenge are planned to meet the abilities of different pupils, completion of these is an expectation, not a choice.
  - ensuring that the comments teachers make when marking pupils' work always make it clear how pupils can improve their skills, knowledge and understanding.
  
- Further improve the conduct of the very few pupils who are adept at identifying opportunities to exhibit overly boisterous behaviour at break times, by
  - ensuring that the additional clubs and activities already provided by the academy include options that these pupils will find appealing.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- A carefully considered restructure together with well-chosen, targeted support has created an effective leadership team. The Principal and her highly committed senior leaders are ambitious for pupils and for the academy. This has been very clearly communicated to all staff, who support the drive to continually improve outcomes for pupils wholeheartedly.
- Middle leaders are very clear about their role and responsibilities and understand their primary focus on improving outcomes for pupils. They play an integral part in monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning within their areas. They use the information gathered to hold staff to account for pupils' progress and to inform their next steps to secure further improvement.
- Professional development for teachers at all levels is well planned and effective. The six-weekly monitoring cycle within the academy ensures that leaders can rapidly identify where a member of staff may need additional support and this is quickly put in place. Teachers can request training at any point in the year and the academy's calendar of training is regularly reviewed to ensure that it is meeting the needs identified. Teachers are very appreciative of the provision and the support they receive. They say that there is now a culture of 'no excuses, but no blame'. As a result, all staff feel able to raise any problems they may be experiencing because they know they will get the required help.
- The curriculum has been reviewed, reorganised and underpinned by a new assessment system so that it better meets the needs of pupils. For instance, all pupils now take separate sciences because it was noted that those taking core science did not do as well as their peers. There is a good range of subjects for pupils to choose from. The change to a three-year Key Stage 4, although in the early stages, is enabling the academy to offer an increasing number of additional courses in response to pupil requests.
- Pupils are able to participate in many additional activities to broaden their experience. There is a wide range of sporting, artistic and cultural opportunities, including art, science, dance and physical education clubs. The academy has recently established an entrepreneurs' club, which is very popular, and a robotics club. Pupils have the opportunity to join the 'Friday Band' and the Concert Band, which performs across the region, and they are enthusiastic about the regular drama productions throughout the year. Exciting opportunities are offered to pupils to visit other countries to support their learning. Work experience has been linked to the academy's exchange programme so that some pupils have been able to experience work abroad.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective because opportunities for developing understanding are threaded throughout the curriculum, enrichment days and tutor time, including a strong focus on promoting modern British values. Consequently, pupils demonstrate tolerance and respect for each other and for staff. This is particularly evident through the way in which pupils from the resource base integrate with, and are supported by, other pupils in the academy.
- There is an effective careers programme in place which includes visits from all the local colleges and sixth forms. Last year, pupils were able to visit the World Careers Day at the National Exhibition Centre. There is a school-based careers adviser who supports pupils throughout the year and regular enrichment days which, for older pupils, focus on specific career-related activities, including personal statements. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- Safeguarding is a high priority in the academy and is led very well by a vice-principal. All staff are appropriately trained and know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil. The academy's records show that where there is a concern, relevant action is taken rapidly and, where necessary, outside agencies are involved.
- Arrangements for checking on the quality and safety of alternative provision placements are thorough and effective.
- Pupil premium funding and Year 7 catch-up funding are used effectively and this is reflected in the improving rates of progress for both these groups of pupils. A recent development is the introduction of a software programme that will enable leaders to track very precisely which additional activities have had the most impact. This in turn will inform the future use of funding in order to tackle the pockets of underperformance that remain.
- The whole academy marking policy is well established and requires a range of assessment approaches with which all teachers comply. However, it does not yet provide high-quality examples of 'the three core elements' required so that teachers have models of good practice to follow when commenting on the next steps in learning for pupils.

### ■ **The governance of the school**

- Governors have worked with a will to ensure that they have the necessary skills and understanding to undertake their strategic leadership role effectively. They review their own performance regularly, and have reorganised their committees to better match the priorities of the academy. Governors consistently question and challenge any underperformance, and minutes show that they regularly check that actions taken are having an impact. Arrangements for performance management are well understood by governors, who take an active role in the process of ensuring that pay progression for teachers is linked to pupils' outcomes.
  - Governors are aware of how additional funding is spent and of the overall impact it has on improving rates of progress for groups of pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** is good

- Teachers know their pupils very well. They assess regularly and accurately, using the information to plan lessons and sequences of learning that meet the needs of pupils' different abilities. Consequently, rates of progress have improved over time and pupils currently in the school are making good progress.
- Teachers use questioning very effectively to help pupils develop their ideas and think carefully about their answers. For instance, in an English lesson, pupils were encouraged to explain their views about the ethics of war photography. They were expected to listen to others very carefully then use the academy's model of 'agree, build, challenge' to extend and refine their argument for or against.
- All teachers in the academy have good subject knowledge which they use very effectively to provide interesting and engaging learning activities. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons because their teachers help them to do the best that they can.
- Teachers in all subjects actively promote the development of literacy, for instance by modelling how views might be expressed, and expecting pupils to use standard English fluently where appropriate. In a mathematics lesson, pupils were required to use precise subject language to explain terms and methods very clearly to others.
- In many lessons, inspectors noted that teachers took every opportunity to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. For instance, in a physical education lesson, pupils were expected to collaborate and to support each other in achieving the targets set, while in a religious education lesson they were considering the similarities and differences in beliefs of different cultures and religions. Pupils speak of this as part of everyday life in the academy and say that they are expected to demonstrate respect and tolerance at all times.
- All teachers follow the academy's marking policy and inspectors noted that pupils were given many opportunities to be part of the assessment process so that they have a good understanding of why they are at a particular level or grade. However, not all teachers' comments are completely clear about what next steps pupils need to take in order to improve further.
- Teachers routinely plan lessons that include different levels of challenge for pupils of different abilities. However, in some lessons the most able are not required to complete the most challenging work and in these cases they do not always make the progress they could.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** is good

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils in the academy are confident learners who have a good understanding of what it means to be ready to learn. They arrive at lessons expecting to learn and duly do so. Expectations of behaviour are high and pupils consistently meet these. Inspectors noted that low-level disruption is rare.
- The academy places great emphasis on ensuring that pupils' well-being is at the core of what they do on a daily basis. Consequently pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. The academy's SAFE team, which includes pupils as well as staff, provides a comprehensive programme of safety sessions, delivered through a wide range of activities, that is well-matched to age and needs and regularly reviewed.

- Pupils are adamant that there is little, if any, bullying. They say that academy staff will not tolerate discriminatory language or actions and they were all very clear that if such an incident did happen, it would be dealt with very rapidly. Pupils noted that, 'it's OK to be different here' and provided several very salient examples to support their views.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The vast majority of pupils behave consistently well in and around the academy at all times of the day. The academy is calm and orderly. All pupils are polite to staff and to visitors and they are clearly proud of their school.
- Attendance has improved significantly for all pupils and groups of pupils and is now above the national average. This is as a result of the academy's investment in training specialist staff and the emphasis on attendance within the academy's rewards system, which is popular with pupils.
- The academy's Personal Learning Centre has had a very positive impact on reducing fixed-term exclusions through the provision of specialist support and guidance for those pupils who struggle to meet the high expectations of behaviour.
- A very small number of older pupils do not always behave as well as other pupils at lunchtimes in areas of the academy that are less visible to supervising staff.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

**are good**

- Rates of progress in English, mathematics and science have improved significantly since the last inspection and are in line with national averages. Consequently, pupils are increasingly well prepared for the next stages of their lives. Information about pupil destinations at the end of Year 11 compares positively with national figures. Monitoring of progress for current pupils shows that the upward trend is continuing for all pupils and groups of pupils.
- Rates of progress for disabled pupils or pupils with special educational needs have continued to rise rapidly. In 2015 the proportion making the progress expected of them increased by 11 percentage points. The proportion of these pupils making better progress than expected increased by 12 percentage points.
- The academy has used Year 7 catch-up funding effectively to provide focused support through a range of different activities. This included a very successful summer school, and creative use of incentives and rewards, together with targeted teaching to address gaps in understanding. As a result these pupils continue to make good progress.
- Pupils in the Autistic Spectrum Base make good progress from their starting points. They are very well supported by specialist staff to develop their learning and social skills. Consequently they are able to integrate with their peers in mainstream lessons, access a broad curriculum and achieve well.
- In 2014, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils, particularly the most able, was less than that for other pupils in the school and nationally. Attainment in English for disadvantaged pupils was two thirds of a GCSE grade behind others in the academy and other pupils nationally. In mathematics attainment was half a grade behind other pupils in the academy and nearly one GCSE grade behind other pupils nationally. In 2015, gaps in progress reduced substantially in English for all disadvantaged pupils and for the most-able pupils in mathematics. This year, the academy's monitoring suggests that gaps have reduced further in all year groups, particularly in Key Stage 3.
- Although there was a slight dip in the rates of progress in English for the most-able pupils in 2015, the academy's records show that similar pupils currently in the academy are on track to make good progress in all subjects, including English and mathematics.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137705
<b>Local authority</b>	Dudley
<b>Inspection number</b>	10004238

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,114
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Roger Beese
<b>Principal</b>	Jo Manson
<b>Telephone number</b>	0845 1550411
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.higharcacal.co.uk">www.higharcacal.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@high-arcacal.dudley.sch.uk">info@high-arcacal.dudley.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12 December 2013

## Information about this school

- The academy is slightly larger than the average secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is slightly above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils with a disability or special educational needs is well above average.
- The academy makes specialist provision for eight pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, funded by the local authority.
- The academy has established a Personal Learning Centre to support pupils who need additional help with behaviour.
- The academy makes very limited use of alternative provision. Too few attend to make further comment without identifying individuals.
- The academy has received support from the Tudor Grange Alliance through a school-to-school support agreement.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 36 lessons, six of which were seen together with senior leaders. They also made a number of short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with pupils, subject teachers, including those who are newly qualified teachers and trainees currently in the academy, senior and middle leaders and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised safeguarding documents and practices, policies, monitoring records, external review reports, minutes of meetings, the academy's self-evaluation and improvement planning and samples of pupils' work.
- The academy makes very limited use of alternative provision, but too few participate to make a comment without identifying individuals.
- The views of 12 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, alongside views gathered from parents by the academy.
- Inspectors also took account of 120 staff responses to the academy's own questionnaire.

## Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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