

Grace Academy Coventry

Wigston Road, Coventry, West Midlands CV2 2RH

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders, governors and the trust have been too slow to address low standards of teaching and poor outcomes for pupils since the last inspection. They have failed to bring about much-needed improvements in the school.
- Pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and the most able, have underachieved considerably across a range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science, humanities and languages over a sustained period of time.
- Teaching over time has been ineffective. The current quality of teaching is starting to improve but is not yet sufficiently strong to address the gaps pupils have in their knowledge, skills and understanding. As a result, many pupils continue to underachieve.
- Leaders in the past have not accurately evaluated the quality of teaching in the school. Consequently, they were not able to tackle any underperformance effectively. Current senior leaders' analysis of teaching is more robust and key weaknesses are prioritised.
- The academy trust and academy improvement board have not acted swiftly enough to stabilise staffing at the school in a time of severe turbulence. Consequently, two years later, the school is still having recruitment issues and many pupils do not benefit from consistent teaching.
- Leaders' assessment and tracking of pupils' achievements are becoming more accurate, especially at key stage 4. Previously, leaders have not been able to interpret the information and intervene quickly enough to improve pupils' outcomes.
- The quality of teaching in the 16 to 19 provision is not consistently good. Students do not achieve as well as they should.
- Newly appointed senior leaders have a more accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have put a range of improvement strategies in place which are slowly starting to impact positively on certain aspects of the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is strong. Pupils benefit from a range of activities both inside and outside of the classroom, which they value.
- Leaders' actions to reduce exclusions and improve attendance are effective. As a result, attendance is now broadly in line with national averages for all groups of pupils.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in order to improve rapidly pupils' outcomes, especially disadvantaged and the most able pupils, by ensuring that:
 - all leaders systematically evaluate and track the performance of groups of pupils to identify trends and patterns more quickly and then take action
 - accurate assessment information is understood by teachers and pupils
 - leaders use teachers' assessments of pupils' progress to intervene quickly to close any gaps in knowledge, skills and understanding
 - recently introduced improvement strategies are embedded and lead to improved outcomes for pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that all groups of pupils, including students in the sixth form, make rapid progress from their different starting points by ensuring that teachers:
 - use assessment and other information to plan activities that enable pupils and students to close the gaps in their learning rapidly
 - have consistently high expectations of pupils' and students' progress and what they can achieve
 - consistently apply school policies to ensure that teaching leads to strong outcomes for all groups of pupils and students.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Since the last inspection, the school has undergone a period of great turbulence in staffing. For example, the current principal is the third since January 2016. There has been a large turnover of staff, ongoing weaknesses in teaching and slow actions taken by the trust. These issues have resulted in poor outcomes for pupils over a sustained period of time and in a large number of subjects, including English, mathematics, science, humanities and languages.
- The trust has not acted quickly enough to address recruitment issues at the school. Consequently, non-specialist or cover teachers teach many lessons. Staff, parents, carers and pupils express a concern about the negative impact that the many different teachers are having on pupils' learning. One pupil commented that it is very difficult to build meaningful relationships with staff when they are always changing.
- Leadership of teaching is not yet effective. Consequently, the quality of teaching remains inconsistent. Teaching is not sufficiently strong to improve rapidly pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in a wide range of subjects. Pupils, especially in key stage 4, express concerns that they have large gaps in their learning and they feel unprepared for their forthcoming examinations. For example, the school's achievement information shows that more than two thirds of Year 11 pupils are unlikely to achieve a strong pass in mathematics.
- Leaders' use of tracking and assessment information has been weak. It has not allowed them to act quickly enough to address any underperformance or provide additional support to pupils who have fallen behind. As a result, outcomes across the vast majority of subjects are poor. Newly introduced systems to track pupils' performance, although more robust, do not yet take full account of different pupil groups. Leaders are not able to spot quickly any trends or patterns in underperformance.
- The school's curriculum, although meeting the needs of pupils in key stage 4, is not sufficiently broad and balanced. Pupils, especially in key stage 3, do not have full access to a range of subjects. For example, music is only offered to a very small number of pupils outside of timetabled lessons. Leaders have in the past reduced the number of subjects on offer in response to severe staff recruitment issues.
- Senior leaders' tracking and analysis of the quality of teaching have been ineffective. As a result, teaching has declined and pupils make poor progress. The newly recruited principal and senior leadership team have begun to address the many areas in which the school needs urgent improvements. For example, staff training is now bespoke to teachers' needs and is based on identified areas of weakness. Teachers comment on leaders' impact on the school, including higher expectations and more rigorous action taken in response to poor behaviour. However, it is too early to see the impact of these strategies on pupils' achievement. Consequently, the quality of teaching remains inconsistent.
- Middle leaders, of whom the majority have been appointed since the last inspection, are now beginning to take ownership of their subjects. They have begun to monitor closely teachers' performance and pupils' achievements. They provide senior leaders

with more accurate information so that interventions can be put in place more swiftly. Although it is too early to see the effect of these actions on pupils' outcomes, middle leaders note that there is now a much clearer focus on improving the quality of teaching than in the past.

- Leaders' spending of the pupil premium funding has not been effective. Disadvantaged pupils have continued to perform poorly across a range of subjects. In some cases, their performance in 2017 was in the bottom 10% nationally. Current tracking of pupils' achievement does not take sufficient account of disadvantaged pupils. As a result, leaders are not able to identify quickly how well disadvantaged pupils are doing.
- Staff who completed Ofsted's online survey were predominantly negative in their comments about the many changes and turbulent times the school has experienced. Many would welcome more clarity from senior leaders on the ways in which assessment data is collected. Senior leaders do not ensure that teachers know what information to gather, nor that it is understood by staff and pupils alike.
- Newly appointed senior leaders' efforts to improve attendance and reduce exclusions have been effective. As a result, fewer pupils miss parts of their education and attendance for groups of pupils is broadly in line with national averages.
- Leaders' work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is strong. The programme to promote this aspect of the school's work is embedded well across the curriculum and further through additional activities. These include outside speakers, bespoke assemblies and focus days. Pupils value these sessions and speak highly of them.
- The leadership of the sixth form has high expectations of students. Students are on the right courses and destinations are strong. For example, all students who left the sixth form in 2017 went on to appropriate destinations. However, leaders are yet to improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning.
- Leaders' use of alternative provision is effective. Pupils are placed appropriately and this enables them to do well. Leaders monitor and check carefully the attendance, well-being and progress of pupils when they are educated away from the school.

Governance of the school

- The school operates an academy improvement board (AIB). The trust is working to increase the number of members on the board to five to provide the capacity to hold leaders to account for the school's performance more effectively.
- Members of the board, although dedicated and proud of their school, have not been effective in holding school leaders to account for the low outcomes for pupils and the weak quality of teaching. In the past, they have not provided sufficient challenge to bring about much-needed, rapid and sustainable improvements.
- The work of the AIB in recent months has been more effective. Members have taken a more active role in checking the validity of available information. As a result, they now have a more accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They understand the issues the school has faced in the past and now validate the information provided by leaders as a matter of course.

- Members of the board are beginning to discharge their statutory duties with diligence. They check that safeguarding arrangements are robust and ensure that systems to manage teachers' performance focus on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Board members agree that, due to the poor-quality provision at the school in the last two years, they have had to take on a managerial role. With the appointment of the new leadership team, members are confident that the school currently has the capacity to make the necessary improvements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff work together to create a culture of safeguarding which is underpinned by regular training for every member of staff at the school. Staff agree that pupils are safe and that leaders make pupils' welfare and safety their priority. Parents agree that their children are happy and feel safe when at school.
- The safeguarding team works constructively with relevant external agencies. Staff are persistent when they are concerned about a pupil's welfare and follow up concerns with these agencies as necessary.
- Pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. They understand the risks surrounding online safety and social media, for example.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching over time is weak. It is not sufficiently strong to enable pupils to close gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. As a result, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and the most able, do not make the progress they should. Consequently, they underachieve in many subjects, including English, mathematics and science.
- Teaching is not consistent and does not support pupils making strong progress. For example, misconceptions are not addressed quickly enough and become errors in pupils' work over time. Errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation are left uncorrected, which results in pupils' literacy levels remaining lower than they should be. At times, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. As a result, pupils do less work than they are capable of.
- Leaders' analysis of assessment information is confusing to both pupils and teachers. Consequently, pupils are unsure of what the information they have been given means, and what they have to do to improve. This is unhelpful to pupils and inhibits their progress.
- Pupils, especially in key stages 4 and 5, have large gaps in their learning due to a sustained period of poor teaching and staff absence. As a result, they feel unprepared for their forthcoming examinations and the next steps in their education.

- In conversation with inspectors, pupils commented on the large number of different teachers they have had over a short period of time. They say that building relationships with teachers in some lessons is difficult because of this.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities say that they appreciate the extra help they get in lessons as it enables them to learn well. However, the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is not monitored effectively enough to allow leaders of that area to evaluate how interventions support their overall performance. Historically, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have performed poorly.
- Leaders and teachers lack understanding of the different degrees of language acquisition. This does not allow them to sufficiently evaluate what support and help they need to provide for pupils who speak English as an additional language. As a result, not all pupils benefit from the most appropriate support to enable them to become quickly proficient in English.
- Due to the high turnover of staff and the resulting lack of communication about pupils' work, learning in pupils' books is duplicated and/or not well matched to their learning needs and abilities. Consequently, some pupils produce work of poor quality. Most-able pupils do not benefit often enough from work that stretches and challenges them. As a result, their outcomes are weak.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. As a result, pupils' work lacks pride and they do less well than they are capable of.
- There are examples of effective teaching in the school, particularly in the sixth form and in science lessons. Some staff demonstrate strong subject knowledge and use questioning effectively in lessons. Pupils say that they feel teaching is starting to improve.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils comment that bullying continues to occur at the school. They have a view that it is dealt with by staff, but not always consistently. Parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, agreed with this view. However, parents feel that their children are safe when at school.
- The curriculum underpins pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well. Pupils learn about these topics in a variety of settings, both in and outside of the classroom. For example, pupils spoke about recent assemblies and work completed on radicalisation and extremism.
- The pastoral support provided by the school is strong. Pupils, parents and staff are unanimous in their praise for the help, support and guidance pupils receive when appropriate. The school has created an inclusive ethos where every pupil is valued and cared for.

- Leaders monitor carefully the well-being and behaviour of pupils who attend alternative provision. They track pupils' attendance and progress. Leaders choose the courses for these pupils based on their interests and individual needs. This ensures that pupils access appropriate learning which prepares them well for their working life. Leaders keep in regular contact with these providers to ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for. Leaders also liaise closely with parents of pupils at these settings and inform them how well their child is doing.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Most parents, pupils and teachers who either spoke to inspectors or responded to Ofsted's online questionnaires identified concerns about behaviour at the school. During discussions with inspectors, a number of pupils explained that behaviour has started to improve.
- Behaviour in lessons is mostly conducive to learning. However, pupils' attitudes to learning vary across the school. When pupils do not have work which is effectively matched to their learning needs, or are taught by temporary teachers, they lose concentration. As a result, lessons can be disrupted by inappropriate behaviour which wastes learning time.
- Leaders' records and analysis of behaviour show that incidents of poor behaviour have decreased. As a result, markedly fewer pupils are excluded from school and miss parts of their education. However, low-level disruption does still occur, especially in lessons where staff are either new or only at school for covering lessons.
- Leaders' efforts to improve attendance have been effective. Attendance at the school has improved and is now broadly in line with national figures for all pupil groups. Persistent absence rates for all pupils have decreased.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Outcomes for pupils, especially for those who are disadvantaged and the most able, are weak. Over the last two years, pupils achieved well below the national average compared to pupils with similar starting points.
- Leaders, members of the board and the trust have acted too slowly to address poor standards in outcomes for pupils. Consequently, pupils continue to underachieve in a wide range of subjects across year groups and key stages.
- Pupils' progress in a number of subjects, including, for example, English, science and humanities, is weak. Leaders and teachers acknowledge that this is largely due to poor teaching and high staff turnover.
- Leaders' analysis of current assessment information suggests that progress is improving across subjects.

- The school's systems for analysing and monitoring assessment and measuring achievement in key stage 3 provide more compelling evidence of improvements in learning than in key stage 4.
- Inconsistencies in teaching result in great variation in the quality and quantity of work that pupils produce. In many lessons and in many books, especially in key stage 4, it is evident that pupils are not making as much progress as they should. Pupils have very little confidence that they are able to close the gaps in their learning in order to complete their upcoming examinations successfully.
- The achievement of pupils at alternative provision is carefully monitored and analysed. The curriculum for these pupils has appropriately been adapted to prepare them well for their next steps in education.
- The school's provision for independent careers advice and guidance is successful. Pupils receive information about options available to them, especially in key stage 4 and in the sixth form, and learn how courses lead to possible career pathways.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is not yet consistently good enough to ensure that students make accelerated progress. High staff turnover in the past has led to students missing elements of their learning, not having specialist teachers for parts of their courses and ineffective teaching. As a result, students in the sixth form do not make the progress they should.
- Outcomes in the sixth form remain low. Current students in Year 13 are not making good progress in a variety of vocational and academic subjects. This is because teaching is not sufficiently strong to allow students to catch up. Students say they are concerned about this.
- Leaders have recently introduced improvements in the sixth-form assessment system. Changes include ways to better pinpoint where interventions have the most impact on students' outcomes. It is too early for leaders to evaluate the positive impact of this on outcomes for students.
- The leadership of the sixth form is relatively new. Leaders are ambitious for their students and have plans in place to develop a highly successful sixth form. They are clear about the strengths and prioritised accurately those weaknesses that need addressing most urgently.
- Students have access to a range of activities which supplement their academic studies. For example, they are encouraged to undertake a work experience placement linked to their future career aspirations. Effective careers education enables students to make informed choices about their futures. All students who completed their courses in 2017 moved into higher education, training, employment or apprenticeships. Students feel that the school prepares them well for their next steps.
- Leaders have recently introduced more stringent entry requirements to the sixth form. As a result, more students follow courses that are appropriate to their needs, abilities

and interests. A larger proportion of students now continue with their courses from Year 12 into Year 13.

- Students are complimentary about their sixth form. They feel safe and are clear on how to keep themselves and others safe, including on social media platforms. Behaviour of students is positive. They dress smartly in business wear, which they say prepares them for life after school.

School details

Unique reference number	135335
Local authority	Coventry
Inspection number	10042869

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy
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	569
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	46
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mrs Christine Staley
Principal	Ms Anu Monga
Telephone number	02476 589 000
Website	www.graceacademy.org.uk/coventry/
Email address	coventry@graceacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 January 2016

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average secondary school.
- The school is a member of the Grace Academy Trust. The school operates an AIB which currently has three members.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 4 academic performance results in a relevant three-year period.

- In 2016, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations set for pupils' attainment and progress. In 2017, the school met these standards.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- Full-time off-site alternative provision is currently provided for five pupils in key stage 4 at Coventry Extended Learning Centre, Herewell College and Henley College.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation. This included the school’s self-evaluation and action plans, minutes of meetings of the trust board, school policies, information about pupils’ attainment, progress, behaviour and attendance and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 58 lessons and parts of lessons across a wide range of subjects, and observed some lessons with a senior leader. They observed pupils’ behaviour between lessons and at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors evaluated the work in pupils’ books and folders in lessons across a range of year groups, including the sixth form.
- Inspectors held meetings with board members, senior and middle leaders and teachers, including those that are newly qualified and those new to the school. Inspectors also met with the chief executive officer of the Grace Academy Trust.
- The views of parents were considered through 45 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire, as well as 31 free-text comments parents provided.
- Inspectors considered 44 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire for staff.
- Pupils met with inspectors in four separate focus groups. Inspectors held numerous informal discussions with pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Bianka Zemke, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Andy Fisher	Ofsted Inspector
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Julie Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector

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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.

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