

The Edge Academy

946, Bristol Road South, Northfield, Birmingham B31 2LQ

Inspection dates

13–14 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Over time, leaders had failed to tackle widespread weaknesses in the quality of teaching and the management of pupils' behaviour. Consequently, pupils' outcomes are poor, and behaviour is inadequate.
- Significant staffing upheaval, particularly at leadership level, has brought considerable disruption to the running of the school. This has had a detrimental effect on the school's effectiveness.
- Despite recent improvements to safeguarding procedures, weaknesses remain. This leaves pupils vulnerable.
- The quality of teaching is inadequate. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, make insufficient progress over time.
- Pupils' progress is seriously hampered by their lack of attendance. Many pupils attend on a part-time basis and the exclusion rate is extremely high when compared with the national figure.
- Leaders do not use funds in a targeted way to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils. As a result, these pupils do not make good progress.
- Leaders do not monitor and evaluate the quality of the school's work with sufficient rigour to bring about rapid improvement.
- Teachers do not address pupils' gaps in their basic literacy skills. Therefore, too many pupils leave school unable to read fluently and with good understanding.
- The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education (SMSC) is piecemeal and does not prepare pupils well for their future.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed principal has an accurate understanding of the school's weaknesses. Aably supported by active governors, he is working hard and has swiftly begun to change practices for the better.
- Staffing has stabilised and recent appointments have added strength to the quality of teaching.
- Governors have been relentless in their quest to eradicate weak leadership. They are instrumental in driving forward improvements.
- The school now has the right people in the right places to bring about positive change. The much-needed transformation has begun and is gathering momentum.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring, without delay, that all safeguarding procedures are adhered to by all staff consistently
 - implementing an effective approach to assessment which provides accurate, validated judgements
 - developing and implementing an effective system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching
 - implementing fully the planned changes to special educational needs provision, ensuring that the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are met
 - inducting and supporting new leaders so they have a demonstrable impact, beyond their own classes, on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - ensuring that funding for disadvantaged pupils is carefully targeted and accounted for, and enables them to make rapid progress.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - developing effective strategies for behaviour management which are consistently applied by all staff
 - significantly reducing the rate of exclusion
 - staff seeking pupils' views about their current placement, well-being and progress, then using this information to inform pupils' next steps
 - ensuring that pupils receive effective careers information, advice and guidance so they can make informed decisions about their future
 - ensuring that the provision for pupils' SMSC development is well planned and embedded across the wider curriculum
 - making learning activities more relevant and engaging so pupils are inspired to learn and remain focused.
- Significantly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make at least good progress by:
 - ensuring that all staff have the highest possible expectations of all groups of pupils
 - providing a structured programme of training and support for staff to help them develop their teaching skills
 - ensuring that all staff use assessment information well to determine pupils' starting

points and plan effective learning tasks which enable pupils to make good progress over time

- identifying and addressing gaps in pupils' basic literacy skills through a carefully planned programme
 - ensuring that teachers set work that provides pupils, particularly the most able, with an appropriate degree of challenge to enable them to achieve their potential.
- Ensure that all pupils attend school regularly and arrive to school on time.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Since opening in September 2015, the school has suffered various setbacks in trying to get established. Initially, the school was housed, temporarily, in unsuitable accommodation. A lengthy period of weak leadership and significant staffing turbulence followed. Consequently, over time, the school has failed to achieve its aim of meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils who are at great risk of permanent exclusion from mainstream education.
- Leaders have been unsuccessful in establishing and maintaining high expectations of the quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour. However, in the current academic year, staffing is more stable. The new principal has made a series of leadership appointments to help place the school in a stronger position. Newly appointed leaders have already made their mark and are bringing about positive changes. Gradually, aspects of teaching are beginning to show signs of improvement.
- Leaders have not ensured that the school's agreed safeguarding arrangements are shared with and implemented by all staff, including supply staff. Pupils' high levels of absence from school and regular truancy from lessons add to their vulnerability. Consequently, safeguarding is ineffective.
- Leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning is significantly underdeveloped. Teachers are not given enough advice and guidance about how to improve their teaching. As a result, the quality of teaching is typically poor and not improving quickly enough. However, recent appointments to middle leadership positions have helped to raise the bar. Some pockets of effective teaching now exist across the school.
- The curriculum does not provide pupils with an appropriate range of opportunities to help them develop academically and socially. Pupils' SMSC development is limited. For example, the school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme is not well planned and lacks progression. Taught during form time, it does not ensure that pupils receive, and take on board, guidance about fundamental British values. For example, inspectors witnessed several occasions when pupils showed a lack of respect towards others, including being verbally abusive or making derogatory homophobic comments.
- Leaders do not use additional funds effectively to benefit the needs of disadvantaged pupils. Nor do they collect any information about the success of intervention programmes on pupils' achievement. Therefore, leaders do not have a coherent understanding about the impact of pupil premium funding on pupils' academic and personal development.
- The school's assessment system is not fit for purpose. It is unreliable and does not provide leaders and governors with useful, accurate information about pupils' progress and attainment. Teachers' assessments of pupils' work are not moderated robustly to ensure accuracy of judgements. New leaders recognise weaknesses in assessment and have already started to explore alternatives with other, successful, secondary schools.

- The new principal, with the support of governors, has helped the school to turn a corner and started to address some deep-rooted weaknesses. He has placed a high emphasis on improving pupils' outcomes. However, leadership capacity remains fragile due to staff absences and a much-reduced senior leadership team. The governing body has already recruited and appointed senior leaders for September 2018.
- The principal, working in partnership with the governing body, has embarked upon a root and branch review of all aspects of the school's provision. Where appropriate, leaders and governors have commissioned the services of external partners to assist with validating leaders' judgements. The principal has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. He has worked hard to create, and quickly implement, an appropriate plan of action to begin addressing many of the school's systemic weaknesses.
- The inspector recommends that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers until further notice.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is clear about what the school needs to do to improve. In the last two years, it has commissioned several external reviews in order to get an accurate view of the school's position. Governors have been relentless in their determination to deal with any underperformance. They acted swiftly and decisively to address previous weaknesses with the school's leadership team. This has resulted in an almost completely new senior leadership team.
- Governors show absolute commitment to the school improvement strategy. They work closely with senior leaders, providing respectful challenge and support. By their own admission, they have been too 'hands-on' in the past and involved too much in operational matters. However, this was to some extent necessary, to mitigate some of the effects of fundamental failings in leadership. Now they take a much more strategic position. They recognise that there is still considerable work to do before the school offers a high-quality learning experience for all pupils. Governors, rightly, have confidence in the new principal, although they continue to monitor the school's outcomes closely.
- The principal provides the governing body with informative reports about the school's performance. Governors regularly visit the school to ensure oversight of the school's work. For example, they conduct interviews with pupils to gather their views about school life and then use this information to hold leaders to account. Governors have established strong links with other good alternative providers to assist with developing and strengthening the school's practice. Governors are open to support and acknowledge the school's weaknesses.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Despite leaders' recent efforts to remedy many shortcomings in the school's safeguarding practices and procedures, weaknesses remain. This means that leaders do not adequately safeguard pupils. Some staff do not adhere to agreed protocols to

keep pupils safe. Therefore, a culture of safeguarding has not yet been fully embedded throughout the school.

- Leaders do not ensure that essential information about safeguarding procedures is always shared with supply staff. For example, leaders had not informed all temporary staff about the fire evacuation plan or which members of staff they should report any safeguarding concerns to.
- However, inspection evidence confirms that the new leadership team is quickly addressing outstanding safeguarding issues. Staff now receive safeguarding training in accordance with Department for Education guidelines which has helped to build their knowledge and understanding about a range of safeguarding matters. As a result, they are clear about how to report concerns, and do so promptly. Those responsible for safeguarding work alongside other agencies to seek advice and support for pupils in their care. Leaders are tenacious in following up referrals when the response from other agencies is slow.
- Leaders have recently revised and improved the recording of safeguarding concerns and incidents. Leaders use this information well to identify training for staff.
- Leaders carry out all required pre-employment checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching, although now starting to show some signs of improvement, is inadequate because it is not tailored to the specific needs of pupils. Too many pupils fail to make acceptable progress and attain good outcomes.
- Teachers rarely use pupils' assessment outcomes to plan high-quality learning tasks which engage and challenge pupils. Activities are often mundane, pitched at a basic level and fail to enthuse pupils to learn. Teachers' expectations are simply too low. Several pupils said they find much of the work easy and this is evident in their books.
- Particularly in relation to the lower-attaining pupils, the teaching of basic literacy skills is ineffective. Teachers do not routinely help pupils to overcome spelling, grammar and punctuation errors in their writing, or provide specific teaching of reading skills to help these pupils read at an age-appropriate level.
- Leaders acknowledge that the work teachers do to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities requires significant improvement. Leaders have taken some initial action and appointed a member of staff to manage provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. There are some early signs that their work is raising staff awareness of the barriers to learning experienced by these pupils.
- The majority of teachers do not challenge the most able pupils sufficiently well. These pupils are often set tasks which they can already do. This is because teachers have not considered pupils' previous knowledge and skills when planning learning. They make slow progress as a result.
- Up until very recently, teachers had not been given constructive feedback on the quality of their teaching. They had not been shown how to improve. However, teachers are committed and keen to develop their practice. It is only more recently that they have started to receive, and act upon, advice about improving their practice.

- Leaders have introduced a set of 'non-negotiable' expectations for teachers which are helping to bring about greater consistency in the quality of teaching. However, not all teachers are yet following these expectations.
- There are some pockets of effective practice where teaching is engaging and well planned, and takes into account pupils' prior knowledge. Where this is the case, pupils learn effectively. For example, in key stage 3 pupils developed their teamwork skills through a fun, practical, problem-solving activity which helped them build resilience and develop their verbal communication skills successfully.
- The teaching of art is a strength. Pupils are taught to explore creatively a wide range of media, learn about different artists and develop their practical skills progressively. They are taught subject-specific vocabulary and use this with confidence to describe their work. Pupils produce art work of good quality.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Shortfalls in the school's safeguarding practices mean that pupils are potentially left at risk. For example, teachers do not always check where pupils have gone to when they leave the classroom without permission.
- Too many pupils display poor attitudes to learning and choose not to participate productively in lessons. Instead, pupils cause wilful disruptions to the learning of others. This prevents those who want to learn from learning.
- Despite many pupils having social, emotional and mental health difficulties, they do not receive the proper pastoral support to meet their complex needs. While there are occasional workshops related to their personal development, there is not a targeted, planned approach to addressing pupils' individual difficulties.
- Leaders do not ensure that pupils receive quality, impartial and independent careers guidance and advice. Pupils get little opportunity to talk to staff about their future aspirations and plan next steps to achieve success. Consequently, some pupils have little confidence in their ability to achieve well in the future.
- Leaders keep accurate records of bullying incidents. Pupils are confident that bullying is dealt with quickly by staff. Leaders' strategies to tackle bullying are working. Records show that incidents of bullying are falling over time.
- Many staff work hard to develop positive, trusting relationships with pupils. They use their skills to defuse potentially difficult situations well. However, due to inconsistencies in the way some staff apply the school's behaviour policy, too many pupils show a lack of respect towards staff and ignore their requests to get on with their work.
- Prior to the Year 11 pupils leaving school this year, a sizeable proportion of pupils attended alternative provision full time. Pupils show better rates of attendance at this provider compared with school. They acquire useful practical skills and qualifications in bricklaying. Leaders have carried out appropriate safeguarding checks on the alternative provider.

- Leaders have organised a new enrichment programme this academic year which has been positively received by pupils. They engage in a wide range of activities including swimming, model aeroplane workshops, badminton and fishing. Pupils learn new skills and build their self-esteem.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate. Leaders have not yet established effective strategies to consistently manage pupils' challenging behaviour. Persistent off-task behaviour, refusal to work, frequent swearing and walking out of lessons without permission is commonplace. Teachers attempt, with the help of support staff, to coax pupils back into class, but all too often, this is not achieved without significant loss of learning.
- Teachers' success in supporting pupils to manage their complex behaviours is mixed. Several pupils commented that their behaviour has deteriorated since they started at the school. They say that this is because it is accepted practice to swear frequently in lessons and truant from the classroom. Leaders are tackling this. Pupils' comments varied from, 'Here, everyone is influenced by everyone' to 'Teachers help me to improve my behaviour because they listen to me.'
- Pupils' attendance is very low and not improving quickly enough. Almost nine out of 10 pupils are persistently absent. This is exacerbated by the significant number of pupils who attend school on a part-time basis, and the very high number of fixed-term exclusions. Presently, on average, there are five exclusions per week.
- Leaders have recently appointed an attendance officer with specific responsibility for improving pupils' attendance. This is already beginning to make a positive difference. Leaders' initiatives to increase pupils' attendance are proving beneficial. For example, pupils on part-time timetables have had their hours in school gradually increased, and those pupils with good attendance receive recognition through rewards.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not make good progress over time in most subjects because of weak teaching and disruptive behaviour. Consequently, attainment by the end of Year 11 is consistently low. Most pupils underachieve considerably from their starting points and are woefully ill-prepared for the next stage of their education.
- In the recent past, leaders' low aspirations resulted in pupils attaining low-level qualifications which did not serve pupils well in achieving their aspirations. Many of these pupils attained at least age-related standards at the end of key stage 2, although joined the school with gaps in their knowledge due to an unsettled period at their previous secondary school. However, staff do not identify these gaps well enough and put in place appropriate units of work to help them catch up. This holds pupils back from catching up.
- The most able pupils fail to make the necessary progress over time and attain the higher grades at GCSE. This is because they are not challenged in their work. Too many tasks are simplistic, not matched appropriately to pupils' needs and abilities and

require minimal thought. In 2017, despite many pupils being of average ability, no pupils achieved a pass grade in GCSE in English and/or mathematics.

- Most pupils leave Year 11 with some level 1 and/or level 2 qualifications. However, in 2017, no pupils attained five good passes at GCSE, including in English and mathematics. Pupils usually go on to further education, training or employment when they leave school.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities do not make good progress from their starting points. Teachers do not plan bespoke programmes for these pupils to help them overcome their identified barriers to learning. Too many pupils with low-level reading ability do not make the necessary gains to become competent readers before leaving school.
- Where teaching is effective, this is reflected in better outcomes for pupils. For example, Year 11 pupils attained well in GCSE art examinations in 2017.
- A small number of pupils have successfully reintegrated back into mainstream schools following their placement at The Edge Academy. Their home schools report favourably on pupils' ability to settle in, with improved behaviour.

School details

Unique reference number	142071
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10048372

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

Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	82
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Stanley Tucker
Principal	Andrew Wakefield
Telephone number	0121 5335858
Website	www.theedgeacademy.co.uk
Email address	info@theedgeacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Edge Academy opened in September 2015 as part of The Edge Academy Trust.
- The trust board consists of nine board members, more commonly known as the governing body.
- The academy is an alternative provision free school which works with pupils who are at risk of permanent exclusion. The aim of the alternative provision is that pupils will reintegrate successfully into a mainstream school. Placements are intended to be relatively short-term.
- The school uses one alternative provider. It sends a large number of pupils, mainly in Year 11, to Southside Construction in Rednal, Birmingham.

- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average, including the proportion who have an education, health and care plan.
- The principal took up post in May 2018.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching across the school in a range of subjects. Some observations were undertaken jointly with members of the leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the principal, middle leaders, the attendance officer and both teaching and support staff. An inspector met with several members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair.
- An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from the company that provides school improvement services to the school.
- Inspectors talked in small groups or individually with pupils to gather their views about school and their learning.
- A wide range of school documentation was scrutinised, including school policies, the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school's strategic improvement plan, and information relating to pupils' achievement and progress. School records relating to child protection, behaviour and attendance were also examined.
- There were no parent responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, nor were there any responses from the pupils' questionnaire. Inspectors took into account 20 responses received from the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Tim Hill, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sarah Ashley

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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