

Harmonize Academy

7, Phillimore Road, Liverpool, L6 6DL

Inspection dates 25–26 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Outstanding 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Typically students enter the academy with a record of poor attendance and behaviour and underachievement in education. They leave with improved skills in literacy and numeracy, much improved attendance and behaviour and with better possibilities for their futures.
- The Principal and his staff are passionate and highly skilled in establishing a learning community where students can build self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Academy policies and procedures are well defined and consistently applied across all provision.
- Academy self-evaluation and systems are robustly focused on how student outcomes can be improved.
- The curriculum provides students with the opportunities to develop their core skills in literacy and numeracy as well as an increasingly broad range of subjects and activities.
- Governors bring expertise and vision to their duties and are a strength of the academy.
- The academy's work with external agencies to ensure the well-being and safety of its students is highly effective.
- The promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is integral to the academy's values and is interwoven throughout the curriculum.
- Students behave well and learn respect for each other and adults.
- Pastoral care for students is outstanding and is strongly focused on tackling individual student needs.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are highly skilled classroom practitioners that imbue students with the confidence and desire to be better learners.
- The quality of the cooperation between teachers and teaching assistants in enhancing student learning and progress is exemplary.
- Students make rapid progress in their learning and this is maintained throughout their time at the academy.
- The provision in performing arts is outstanding.
- All Year 11 students in 2013/14 progressed into education, training or employment.

Information about this inspection

- Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) observed a wide range of lessons taught across the academy to Year 9, 10 and 11 students. Several lessons were observed jointly with the Principal. The inspector observed several enrichment activities.
- HMI looked closely at samples of students' written work across a range of subjects and year groups. He also watched behaviour around the academy including observing students at the breakfast club.
- HMI held meetings with senior leaders, groups of teachers, and a group of students. The inspector met with the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor, the Commissioning Leader for Liverpool City Council's Alternative Provision Team and the Virtual Headteacher for Looked After Children for the City of Liverpool.
- HMI scrutinised a wide range of documentation including: self-evaluation and development plans; data relating to students' attainment and progress; information on attendance; documents and records about behaviour and safeguarding; records of the monitoring of teaching and learning and of performance management and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- There were too few responses to the online questionnaire (Parents View) to be analysed by Ofsted. HMI reviewed the academy's own records of parental and student feedback. He also took account of 12 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Patrick Geraghty , Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Harmonize Academy opened as a Free School for Alternative Provision in April 2013. Harmonize Academy grew out of Alternative Educational Provision run by Liverpool Lighthouse since 2004.
- The academy enrolls highly vulnerable young people who have been or are in danger of being excluded from mainstream schooling. Typically these young people are enrolled with a record of poor achievement and attainment in schooling, low levels of literacy and numeracy, a record of poor attendance and behaviour and with a marked detachment from education and learning.
- There are currently 65 students enrolled in Years 9, 10 and 11. Students are taught in mixed-ability classes which are kept to a maximum of eight students.
- Of current students some 20% have attended the academy for 26 weeks or more; a further 14% have attended for between 16 and 25 weeks; and 66% have joined the academy since September 2014. A few students choose to return to their mainstream (commissioning) school because their behaviour has sufficiently improved.
- A large proportion of students are disadvantaged and supported by pupil premium funding (additional government funding).
- The majority of students are White British and a small number speak English as an additional language.
- The percentage of students with special educational needs is above average.
- The following schools have commissioned places at the Harmonize Academy with all students dual registered: Hawthorne's Free School, St Francis of Assisi Academy, North Liverpool Academy, St Ambrose Barlow, Archbishop Blanche, Holly lodge, Litherland High School, Hillside High School, University Academy, Lord Derby Academy and Savio High School. Forty eight places have been commissioned from Liverpool City Council's Alternative Provision Team for students that have been permanently excluded from school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further enhance enrichment activities in order to:
 - broaden the curriculum offer in sport and improve students' participation in sport
 - improve library provision and promote a 'reading for pleasure' culture among students
 - develop oracy and listening skills through the promotion of such activities as public speaking, debating and philosophy groups and in doing this develop opportunities for deeper thinking, enquiry and the development of junior leadership skills
 - promote links with business and industry to better understand the importance and organisation of employment and the world of work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Governors, leaders, managers, teaching and support staff are highly effective in working to ensure that students have the possibility of overcoming a very poor legacy of learning, challenging home and community circumstances and low expectations.
- The Principal leads with a passion for establishing better life chances for all students who are enrolled at the academy. His calm but firm approach to codes of behaviour and developing positive attitudes to learning are very well supported by his senior leaders and staff. Strong and purposeful senior leadership has a positive impact on building a learning community with increasing aspirations and improving self-confidence.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and realistic. Areas for improvement are identified and actions are taken to tackle them. Every aspect of self-evaluation is focused on how student outcomes can be improved. The use of data at all levels is comprehensive and well-focused. The tracking and monitoring of student progress is thorough and informs learning activities and individual intervention programmes.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is strong. High-quality continuous professional development further harnesses teachers' skills and ensures that they know their students and their learning and support needs. Teachers and teaching assistants are given time on three days per week to reflect upon their teaching and to talk about how teaching and learning can develop and improve and best meet the needs of students.
- Academy policies and procedures are well defined and consistently implemented across all academy provision. Induction programmes ensure that students 'buy into' the behaviour, respect and work ethos cultures which are so central to the academy's work.
- The curriculum has a strong focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills. Science and information and communication technology broaden the curriculum further and this is also enhanced by personal development sessions and a daily enrichment programme. While enrichment programmes are of a high quality, academy leaders acknowledge that the offer needs to be broadened with the addition of more sport and programmes to build students' formal speaking, listening, leadership and employment related skills.
- Connexions staff visit the academy regularly to promote careers guidance. Year 11 and 10 students expressed growing ambitions to progress into education and training; they are developing a positive vision for their futures.
- The promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is integral to the academy's values. Assemblies, enrichment activities and events cover such aspects as radicalisation, addiction, e-safety, child sexual exploitation and safety and the nature and responsibilities of citizenship within a democratic society. Religious Education is taught through the Archbishop of York Youth Trust Young Leaders Award.
- Effective use is made of the pupil premium funding. Tracking the progress of disadvantaged students and providing opportunities for them to improve their skills and learning experiences are thorough. Disadvantaged students make rapid progress during their time at the academy.
- Performance management is robust. High levels of accountability are balanced by quality coaching support. Academy appraisal systems are comprehensive.
- Academy links with many external agencies to better support the well-being and progress of their students are excellent. Parents and carers are kept well informed on the progress of their sons or daughters and are highly supportive of the academy's work.
- The academy has maintained an effective working relationship with the local authority. Liverpool City Council's Alternative Provision Team expresses very high confidence in the quality of provision their placed students receive at the academy.
- The academy's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements. Staff and governors receive suitable safeguarding training.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are a strength of the academy and bring a very wide range of professional experience which enhances and informs the academy's development and drive. They have a very strong commitment to the academy's ethos of 'A Vision for Life' and its objective of transforming life chances for its students.
 - Governors understand the effectiveness of teaching within the academy and its impact on students' achievement.
 - They have good oversight of the academy's finances, including how pupil premium funding is used and the impact this is having on the achievement of disadvantaged students.

- Governors monitor academy performance management very well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Many students enter the academy with significant behavioural issues. The induction period into academy life places a great emphasis on students understanding and 'buying into' the academy's behaviour and respect code.
- When student behaviour becomes disruptive it is quickly, sensitively and justly tackled. Consequently, occasional poor behaviour does not impact on the learning of others. Teachers, teacher assistants and senior staff manage students' behaviour exceptionally well.
- Students have embraced a culture of respect and responsibility. They talk positively about the contribution that the academy is making to their progress as better learners and in giving them greater ambition for their future lives. Positive and confident relationships between students and students and adults are a strength of the academy.
- Students' behaviour in lessons, at break and around the site is good. Students engage in constructive conversations with staff at the breakfast club, and during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Permanent exclusion is very rare and none has occurred within this academic year. Temporary exclusions have been reduced and are used as a means for the students to refocus and reflect on the academy behaviour and respect code.
- Attendance has rapidly improved since the inception of the academy although it remains below the average for mainstream schools. However, individual student attendance figures represent highly significant improvements when set against their historic records.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. The academy has developed excellent working relations with a number of external agencies that enhance the safety and welfare of its students. These partnerships enhance the ability of academy staff to understand the challenges that their students face outside academy time.
- In particular the academy has established strong working relations with the police and community organisations on the negative impact of the local 'gang culture' on learning. Records show that they immediately take action to involve support services and other appropriate agencies when any potential problems are detected.
- A psychologist visits the academy weekly to work with students who require therapeutic and more intensive pastoral support. Work with external agencies provides additional expertise in such areas as child protection. Specialist groups visit the academy to enhance its work on safety including work on local gang cultures and addiction.
- Students say they feel safe within the academy and expressed high confidence in academy staff. Students feel safe from bullying and demonstrate respect and consideration for each other. Students have a clear understanding of how to improve their own safety. Focused sessions on internet and social media safety are part of the personal development programmes.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding because across the entire academy curriculum students make very strong progress, are actively engaged in learning and are given exceptional direction and support by staff.
- There is a very strong focus on the learning of each individual student. Many students do not come to the academy or into lessons as willing and eager learners but nevertheless they become more committed to learning.
- High expectations and aspirations are promoted and students respond with enthusiasm and consistently make good progress. Often learning is promoted through challenging problem-solving activities. Teachers have a very sharp focus on progress.
- Student attitudes to learning are transformed as they become eagerly engaged in algebraic problems or in writing a poem or in debating about discrimination or in performing an improvisation on addiction. At the heart of this outstanding provision are the uniformly high level skills and commitment of teachers and teaching assistants.

- Learning in performing arts is outstanding. Student commitment and energy towards these subjects are exceptional. Their work in these subjects greatly enhances their self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Student work is frequently marked and feedback helps them to assess their progress and move further forward in learning.
- Literacy and numeracy are well promoted across the entire curriculum. Student reading ages markedly improve as do their writing skills. Academy leaders acknowledge that the next step in literacy is the promotion of a 'reading for pleasure' culture. There is a buzz and intensity in mathematics lessons. A number of students spoke openly about the conversion in their attitude to mathematics and how they have learnt so much during their comparatively short time at the academy.
- The academy organises many initiatives to enrich literacy and numeracy. Recently a team of university students worked very successfully on a project to improve Year 11 students' English and mathematics through the Team-Up Cabinet Office sponsored charity. Local poets and writers regularly work with students on how better to express feelings and ideas through written language.
- The quality of the cooperation between teachers and teaching assistants in enhancing student learning is exemplary. They work together in a seamlessly interwoven pattern that cements highly focused and orderly learning settings. Their management of student behaviour and ability to focus student energies into learning is first rate.
- Enrichment activities provide an excellent supplement to the strong focus on the core subjects. They promote literacy, numeracy, enjoyment and the development of self-confidence. Above all, students enjoy these activities whether they are promoting footballing, circus, dramatic improvisation, music or cooking skills.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- On entry students prior attainment is very low. Students rapidly make up lost ground in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Within a short period a significant majority are making progress at a faster rate than their peers in mainstream schooling. This accelerated progress is maintained throughout their time at the academy.
- As a result of this rapid progress, nearly three-quarters of students gain five GCSEs across a range of subjects often in a very short period. An increasing number of students are gaining grades A* to C in GCSE English and mathematics. A small but significant number of Year 10 students gain foundation and intermediate qualifications in performing skills, music technology, personal, social and health education and travel and tourism.
- Over 50% of students in Year 11 joined the school in the September of that year and an additional number enrolled later. Academy data indicate that the longer a student is enrolled in the academy the better their progress and outcomes.
- The academy's assessment data indicate that there are no gaps between the achievement of different groups of students. Students with special educational needs make better progress than their peers reflecting the excellent and well-focused additional one-to-one support that they receive. Looked after children also make significant progress.
- Disadvantaged students make similar progress as others attending the academy.
- Very few students who join the academy could be categorised as 'more able'. However the rapid progress that some make and maintain over time enables them to move onto level 3 courses at general education or specialist colleges or GCE A-level courses at sixth form colleges. These students are given additional support to promote their high aspirations and to enable them to succeed.
- Many students excel in the performing arts. Academy provision across the performing arts is outstanding. Additional work each Saturday in creative writing, improvisation, performance skills, and play reading and exploration is taken up by nearly a third of students and is run in collaboration with the Liverpool Everyman and Liverpool Playhouse theatre companies.
- Literacy and numeracy are embedded across the curriculum. Students make rapid progress in literacy and numeracy. Students learn to enjoy writing and become enthusiastic about number, many for the first time in their educational lives.
- All students in the 2013/14 Year 11 cohort progressed to college courses, or good training or employment prospects.
- All the parents who returned an academy questionnaire agree that their children make good or better progress.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	139114
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	449901

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	12–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	65
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Modupe Omideyi
Headteacher	Stephen Daley
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0151 203 1934
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	stephen.daley@harmonizeacademy.org

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