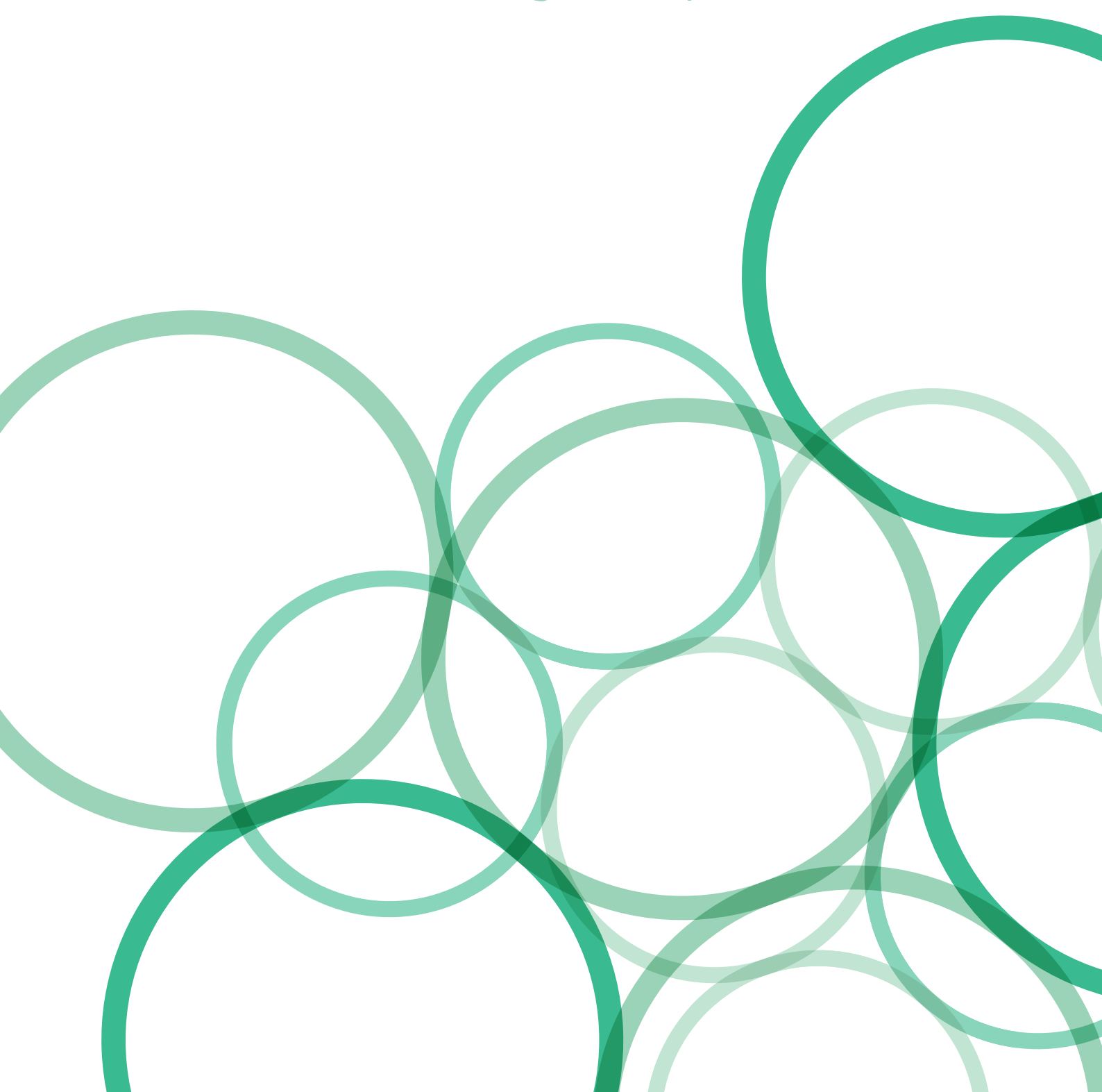


The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of  
**Education, Children's Services and Skills 2013/14**

## **West Midlands** regional report



# West Midlands regional report 2013/14



# Summary

The proportion of good or outstanding primary schools in the West Midlands continued to increase in the 2013/14 academic year. As in previous years, improvement in some local authority areas has been substantial. Almost eight out of 10 children in the West Midlands attend a primary school that is good or outstanding. Despite this improvement, almost 100,000 primary aged children attend schools that are less than good.

The West Midlands performs broadly in line with England as a whole at secondary level, with 70% of schools judged good or outstanding compared with 71% of schools nationally. However, performance in secondary schools is inconsistent across the region. This indicates that the chance of a child attending a good school often depends on the local authority area in which they live.

More than three quarters of children live in a local authority area where safeguarding arrangements are less than good and more than a third of children live in a local authority area where safeguarding arrangements are inadequate. More work to improve the performance of local authorities is crucial to ensure that all children in the West Midlands are safeguarded effectively and receive the care they deserve.

One in four children's homes in the West Midlands are not yet good. This weak provision is leaving too many children unprotected and unable to achieve well. Urgent and targeted action must continue and increase in this area to secure better services for children.

There has been a marked improvement in the performance of further education colleges in the West Midlands, with 74% of colleges now good or outstanding. Despite this improving picture, 12 colleges are still not good enough. There is therefore no room for complacency.



The potential for the radicalisation of pupils and the narrowing of the curriculum remain key areas of concern, particularly for Birmingham schools. The ineffective governance and leadership that have been observed in a number of schools may lead to the disassociation of pupils from the wider community. Any such disassociation must be challenged and reformed through our work.

This report advocates Ofsted's continued work in the West Midlands by:

- extending support and challenge for schools, headteachers and governors
- developing further support and challenge work with local authorities
- extending the work in further education and skills to include more robust challenge to governing bodies, to rectify key issues in teaching, learning and assessment
- seeking greater engagement from local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) in supporting providers to model their provision so that it meets local needs more precisely
- in social care, supporting and challenging the leadership capacity of the sector.

# State of the region

1. The proportion of primary school children now in good or outstanding schools has improved since 2012/13 in a number of local authorities. These improvements have been particularly marked in Herefordshire, Dudley, Wolverhampton, Coventry and Walsall, although Walsall and Wolverhampton remain low in the overall rankings of local authorities (see Table 1). However, children in the West Midlands still have a lower chance of attending a good or outstanding primary school than in most other parts of England. Almost 100,000 primary-aged children do not yet attend a good or outstanding school.
2. The proportion of good or outstanding secondary schools is lower than the proportion for primary schools, although it is in line with secondary schools nationally. Only five of the local authorities have shown improvement in this phase. In Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire and Stoke-on-Trent, over 110,000 students now attend good or outstanding schools – 6,000 more than last year. In the case of Stoke-on-Trent, this improvement has been from a very low base and the ranking of this local authority remains low. In Sandwell and Dudley, the ranking of secondary schools is very much lower than that of primary schools. The quality of the school or academy a pupil attends is still in many cases a matter of chance.
3. Across the range of attainment measures shown in Figure 2, the West Midlands is slightly below national levels.<sup>1</sup> Just over three quarters of children in the West Midlands achieved the expected level of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2. Just over half (54.2%) of pupils achieve at least five good GCSEs including English and mathematics. However, there is too much variation between local authorities when considering the range of measures. Solihull performs particularly well compared with its neighbours. Pupils in Sandwell, Walsall, Wolverhampton and Stoke-on-Trent perform much less well than their peers in other local authorities in the region and nationally.
4. In 2012/13, half of the 14 local authorities in the West Midlands were in the bottom 25% of all local authority areas nationally for the proportion of pupils achieving expected levels in reading writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2. However, in 2013/14 things look more promising. Only two local authorities in the West Midlands, Birmingham and Walsall, remain in this bottom 25%.

**Table 1: Percentage of primary and secondary pupils attending good or outstanding schools by local authority in the West Midlands**

Primary schools				Secondary schools			
Rank*	Local authority (education)	2014 %	Change from 2013 (%points)	Rank*	Local authority (education)	2014 %	Change from 2013 (%points)
24=	Worcestershire	89	▲ 6	26=	Telford and Wrekin	89	■ 0
60=	Solihull	84	▲ 1	46=	Worcestershire	83	▲ 2
60=	Dudley	84	▲ 12	46=	Herefordshire	83	▼ -6
68=	Herefordshire	83	▲ 11	59=	Solihull	80	■ 0
74=	Sandwell	82	■ 0	59=	Warwickshire	80	▲ 10
79=	Shropshire	81	▲ 7	77=	Shropshire	75	▲ 1
79=	Telford and Wrekin	81	▲ 7	88=	Birmingham	73	▼ -5
91=	Birmingham	80	▲ 1	92=	Staffordshire	72	▲ 4
103=	Warwickshire	78	▲ 5	109=	Wolverhampton	67	▼ -4
107=	Staffordshire	77	▲ 6	111=	Coventry	66	▼ -22
119=	Coventry	74	▲ 10	123=	Walsall	57	▼ -20
141=	Walsall	68	▲ 8	127=	Dudley	55	■ 0
141=	Stoke-on-Trent	68	▼ -3	132=	Sandwell	53	▼ -21
141=	Wolverhampton	68	▲ 11	134=	Stoke-on-Trent	52	▲ 18

\* Rank refers to the 2014 placing in relation to all 150 local authorities in England (excluding Isles of Scilly and City of London, which each contain only one school).

1. *Local authority interactive tool*, Department for Education; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait). All attainment and progress data is provisional data for 2014 unless otherwise specified.

## Schools

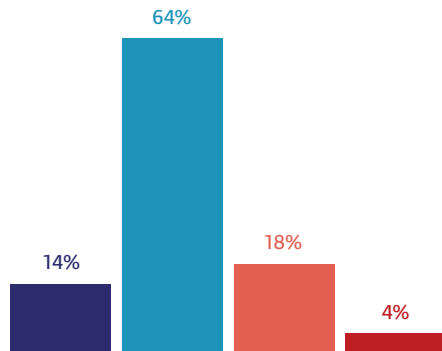
5. Since 2012/13, there has been a small increase in the proportion of primary schools where overall effectiveness has improved and is now good or outstanding. In contrast, the proportion of good or outstanding secondary schools has declined slightly, although it is still in line with the national figure. This means that over 28,000 more primary aged children attend a good or outstanding school than last year. The focus on schools that require improvement has seen 63% of schools that were judged to require improvement last year judged 'good' when re-inspected this year. Senior school leaders, governors and local authority officers have welcomed improvement seminars and a range of specific workshops led by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). Ofsted's West Midlands regional plan for 2014/15 targets local authorities where the number of good or outstanding secondary schools is too low.
6. The inspection of Walsall's local authority school improvement services highlighted a number of concerns. The local authority does not know its schools well enough and it does not act quickly enough to challenge weak leadership and effect improvement.
7. Senior HMI in the region meet regularly with local authority officers, providing challenge based on analysis of performance data and local knowledge. The focused inspections of schools in Wolverhampton and Staffordshire identified key weaknesses in the capacity of these authorities to monitor school performance effectively and identify and support their failing schools. As part of the first focused inspections of a multi-academy trust, Ofsted inspected six E-ACT academies in the West Midlands. These inspections highlighted the urgent need for E-ACT to improve the quality of teaching in its schools.
8. The number of academies in the West Midlands has grown rapidly in recent years (see Table 2). By August 2014, just over one in five of all schools in the region were academies (21% of schools). This is broadly in line with the proportion of academies nationally, which stands at 20% of all schools. At a local level, the extent of academisation varies considerably across local authority areas, from just 9% of all schools in Dudley to 39% of schools in Stoke-on-Trent.

**Table 2: Number of primary and secondary schools that are academies in the West Midlands**

Year	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Number of primary academies	0	18	61	170	245
Number of secondary academies	23	102	165	214	243

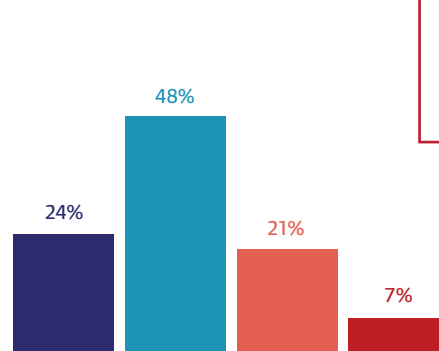
Figure 1: Inspection outcomes by proportion of pupils, children or learners at 31 August 2014

Primary schools

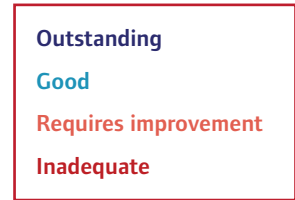


Overall effectiveness of primary schools in the West Midlands, latest inspection outcome at 31 August 2014 (% of pupils).

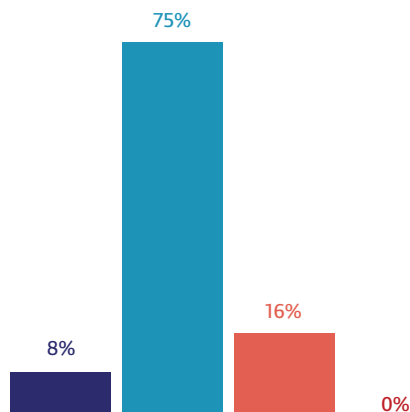
Secondary schools



Overall effectiveness of secondary schools in the West Midlands, latest inspection outcome at 31 August 2014 (% of pupils).

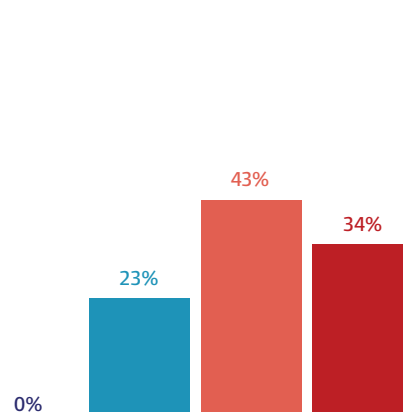


Colleges



Overall effectiveness of colleges in the West Midlands, latest inspection outcome at 31 August 2014 (% of learners).

Safeguarding



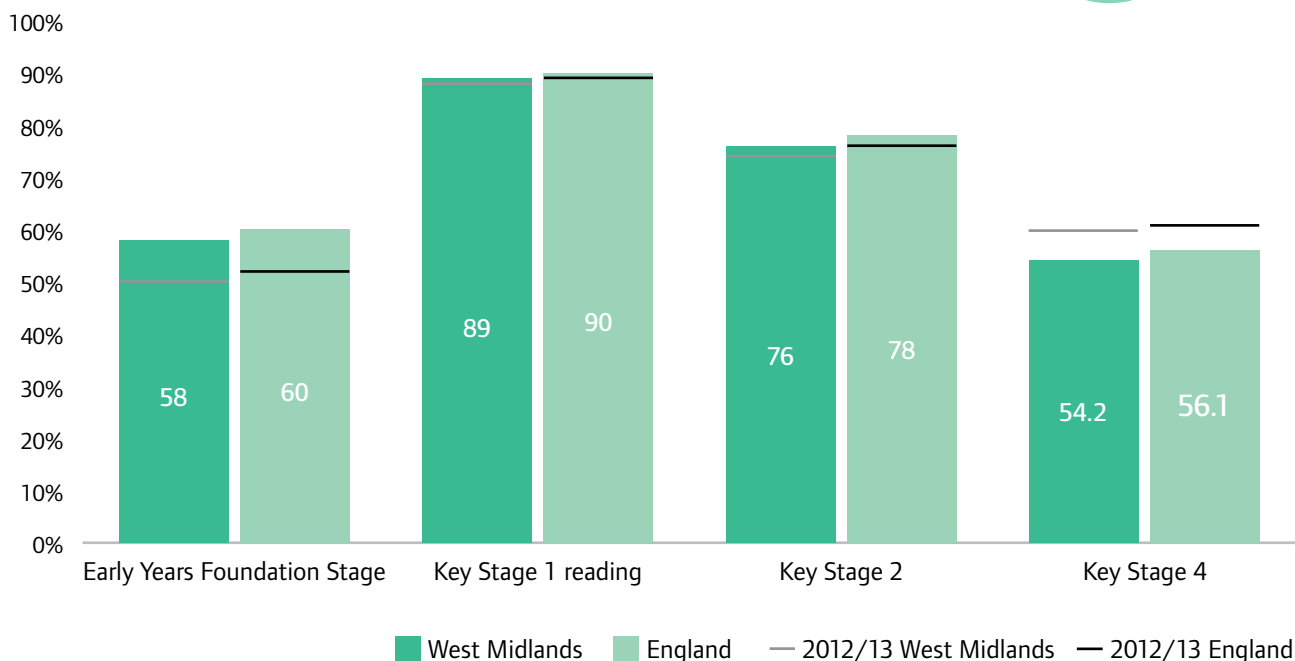
Effectiveness of local authority safeguarding arrangements, last inspection outcome at 31 August 2014 (%).



Explore inspection data directly at [dataview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://dataview.ofsted.gov.uk). Data View is a digital tool that allows Ofsted inspection data to be viewed in a simple and visual way. You can compare and contrast performance in inspections between regions, local authorities and parliamentary constituencies across all remits that Ofsted inspects.



**Figure 2: Pupil attainment at ages five, seven, 11 and 16**



Data for 2014 is provisional

Benchmark levels: Early Years Foundation Stage – achieving a good level of development (%)

Key Stage 1 – achieving at least Level 2 in reading (%)

Key Stage 2 – achieving at least Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics (%)

Key Stage 4 – achieving at least five GCSEs at grades A\* to C or equivalent, including English and mathematics (%)

All attainment and progress data are provisional data for 2013/14 unless otherwise specified.

Source: *Local authority interactive tool*, Department for Education; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait).

Explore how children and young people performed in assessments and tests at different ages and in different regions through our online regional performance tool; <http://dataview.ofsted.gov.uk/regional-performance>

9. HMI carried out inspections of 21 schools in Birmingham between March and May 2014. Fifteen of these schools were inspected at the request of the Secretary of State. Six were inspected because of Ofsted’s concerns about the effectiveness of safeguarding and leadership and management in these schools. Following the inspections, Ofsted published an advice note to the Secretary of State.<sup>2</sup> The evidence shows that:

‘...governors have recently exerted inappropriate influence on policy and the day-to-day running of several schools in Birmingham. In other schools,

leaders have struggled to resist attempts by governing bodies to use their powers to change the school in line with governors’ personal views. Birmingham City Council has failed to support a number of schools in their efforts to keep pupils safe from the potential risks of radicalisation and extremism. It has not dealt adequately with complaints from headteachers about the conduct of governors. Her Majesty’s Inspectors identified breaches of funding agreements in a number of academies. In several of the schools inspected, children are being badly prepared for life in modern Britain.’

2. *Advice note provided on academies and maintained schools in Birmingham to the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, as commissioned by letter dated 27 March 2014*, Ofsted, June 2014; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/advice-note-provided-academies-and-maintained-schools-birmingham-secretary-of-state-for-education-rt](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/advice-note-provided-academies-and-maintained-schools-birmingham-secretary-of-state-for-education-rt).



10. The inspections have created a high-profile agenda for change and have resulted in Ofsted reviewing the way it inspects the curriculum. The issues identified in Birmingham remain a significant concern. These inspections have called into question the nature and extent of the accountabilities associated with the high levels of autonomy currently enjoyed by academies. They also raise concerns about the effectiveness of the local authority to hold schools and governing bodies to account.
11. HMI lead training on evaluating school performance and work alongside senior school leaders and governors as they take a critical view of their own schools. Much of this work has taken place in south Birmingham and Herefordshire, which has increased management capacity in schools and in the respective local authorities.
12. Given its precarious position in both the regional and national tables, Stoke-on-Trent has been a major focus of HMI attention over the past 12 months. HMI wanted to know why educational outcomes in Stoke-on-Trent have been so poor for so long. Consequently, they undertook a series of forensic inspection activities designed to get to the bottom of what is going wrong in schools in this authority. They applied a fourfold approach to promote improvement. This included a focus on:
  - the teaching of reading in primary schools
  - reading and literacy in secondary schools
  - mathematics in secondary schools
  - developing subject-specific and leadership capacity within schools and across the local authority.

The findings have been shared with schools and the local authority to aid improvement.

### Initial teacher education

13. All initial teacher education (ITE) provision in the West Midlands is good or outstanding.<sup>3</sup> The region is well served, with substantial higher education providers of ITE. New school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) partnerships are proliferating in the centre and north of the region.

3. The requires improvement provider listed in statistics about the inspection outcomes of ITE providers at 31 August 2014 has since closed.



## Further education and skills


14. In Ofsted's 2012/13 West Midlands regional report, the poor performance of further education colleges was a key headline. Only 51% of colleges in the region were good or outstanding and the region had the highest proportion of inadequate colleges in the country. The approach of HMI to tackling poor performance started with supporting and challenging colleges to improve through a programme of individual improvement visits and an extensive seminar programme for college managers and governors. This seminar programme was based on common areas for improvement identified through rigorous analysis of inspection reports and performance data. In addition, extensive networking with the sector through stakeholder groups such as the Association of Colleges has helped to communicate and share the key messages and commitment to improve. This work has contributed to notable improvements in inspection grades, as confirmed by feedback from providers. At the end of 2013/14, 74% of colleges are good or outstanding, and none of the colleges are inadequate.
15. In independent learning and community learning and skills providers, performance has remained strong. Most providers (82%) were judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection. Of the 19 providers inspected in 2013/14, 12 were judged good for overall effectiveness. Six of these providers improved to good; five of these benefited from direct support and challenge work with HMI.
16. In spite of the notable improvement in college inspection grades, 12 colleges were judged as requires improvement for overall effectiveness at their most recent inspection. Inspection reports and letters from support and challenge work with providers that require improvement give a number of key messages. Where providers have not improved quickly enough, several factors have contributed to this. In a few cases, providers have taken well-conceived action to improve. Unfortunately, this has not had a consistent impact across the range of their work but rather has resulted in insufficient progress in improving teaching, learning and assessment or outcomes for learners. In these cases, quality assurance monitoring is not consistently rigorous in rooting out the causes of continuing weaker performance and resulting actions are not as sharply focused as they need to be. In other providers where progress has been slow, boards of governors or trustees do not always have the information they need to be able to hold senior leaders to account for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment or the performance of learners; they do not know what the gaps in their information and data are. In other cases, governors do not have the appropriate skills and expertise to enable them to fulfil their roles appropriately and governing bodies have not evolved to match the changing needs of the provider.

17. In smaller providers, inspectors raise questions about the capacity of the provider to improve. Leaders and managers struggle to find the time to step back from day-to-day problem-solving to seek out and act on the issues that are holding them back from improving the provision.
18. In teaching, learning and assessment, the main area for improvement continues to be teachers not planning well enough to challenge all learners to improve based on their prior skills and learning. Teachers do not make enough use of targeted assessment in learning activities to be able to measure individuals' learning and progress with sufficient precision. In work-based learning, challenges for providers persist around the coordination of on- and off-the-job learning, resulting too often in learners making slow progress.
19. The influence of LEPs is growing. However, further education is still under-represented on LEP boards in the West Midlands. Providers that have re-modelled their offer based on local employment needs are getting little practical support from LEPs. This is because LEPs' strategic priorities are broad and do not focus sufficiently on learners who need provision below advanced level as a first step. They have little focus on learners who are not in employment, education or training or who have left school with fewer than five GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics. They have been slow to reinforce the messages from the introduction of 16 to 19 study programmes. These include improving the availability and quality of work experience for learners and raising standards in learners' English and mathematics skills to enable a smoother transition into employment. These aspects of study programmes are significant areas for development for the further education sector overall.

## Social care

20. More than three quarters of children in the West Midlands live in a local authority area where safeguarding arrangements are less than good and one in every three where they are inadequate. This performance is unacceptable and a significant number of children and young people are not receiving the good services they require to be well protected and cared for. Most local authorities require improvement. In recent inspections, Coventry and Birmingham were both judged to be inadequate. Recent successes can be seen in improvements in Staffordshire where provision is now good. In Herefordshire the provision is no longer inadequate but still requires improvement.



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21. The West Midlands region has the second largest number of children's homes in the country, offering approximately 1,260 places, yet more than one quarter of homes are not yet good. This means that there are approximately 500 places available for children in provision that has not yet met the required standard. Since February 2014, we have taken action to close three children's homes. Helping to improve services for children and young people who need help, protection and care is our highest priority and we are doing this through providing challenge and support to local authority senior managers and their staff.
  22. Educational outcomes for looked after children and care leavers at Key Stages 1 and 2 are merely in line with national levels. At Key Stage 4 they are just above the national level.
  23. Ofsted will be publishing its Social Care Annual Report in spring 2015. This will set out the challenges for the sector and the priorities for improvement. For this reason we have not looked at the social care issues for the region in any detail in this report.

## Regional priorities

### Schools

24. Birmingham will remain a focus of our work in the region. Ofsted has created an additional Senior HMI role in the region to enable a more urgent and sustained focus on Birmingham schools. HMI will work closely with the local authority to ensure that the single integrated plan, developed following the recent Ofsted, Clarke and Kershaw reports, delivers better outcomes and a safer learning environment for Birmingham pupils.<sup>4,5</sup>
25. The success of peer-to-peer review, where headteachers develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of effective self-evaluation, indicates that this strategy should be extended to all local authority areas. This work has increased management capacity in schools and in the respective local authorities, giving confidence that leaders and managers have the skills and experience to improve the provision.

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4. *Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the 'Trojan Horse' letter*, July 2014; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/birmingham-schools-education-commissioners-report](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/birmingham-schools-education-commissioners-report).

5. Independent review into corporate governance at Birmingham City Council, Department for Communities and Local Government, due to publish December 2014; [www.gov.uk/government/news/independent-review-into-corporate-governance-at-birmingham-city-council](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/independent-review-into-corporate-governance-at-birmingham-city-council).

26. Ofsted has put plans in place to extend existing training and support for schools. The programme of 'Getting to good' seminars, which has proved so successful and has been welcomed by the sector, will provide the foundation for more focused improvement workshops. This will encompass specific themes or subjects identified through the scrutiny of inspection reports, by the ongoing scrutiny of performance data, or by local knowledge of schools' needs. We will deliver training to support school leaders at all levels to drill down into their data to gain a better understanding of how to improve school performance. Specific work with headteachers will enable senior leaders to gain a better grasp of self-evaluation. We will continue to work alongside particular local authorities in support and challenge.

## Further education and skills

27. The strategies adopted to date in further education and skills have proved very successful but have not eliminated provision that requires improvement. Individual visits to providers that focus specifically on the provider's key development areas from their most recent inspection have been collaborative and challenging. A regional seminar programme began in earnest in September 2013, with themes common to providers across the region. We will continue these throughout 2014/15 and will develop seminars already delivered on aspects such as improving the provision of English and mathematics and integrating the use of information learning technologies into teaching, learning and assessment.
28. For the remaining requires improvement provision to move to good, providers need to ensure that self-assessment and quality assurance are ruthless in rooting out the causes of continuing weakness. Providers must ensure that resulting action plans are fit for purpose in setting targets that allow them to make progress and establish the impact of actions. Governors need to identify what they do not currently know, ensuring that the information they receive enables them to take a forensic overview of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and its impact on outcomes for learners. They need to ensure that they hold senior management fully to account for the quality of provision.
29. In teaching, learning and assessment, teachers need be supported to plan learning that ensures that all learners make progress in their learning according to their potential. Initial and diagnostic assessment and prior attainment information they receive on learners are often excellent, but teachers too often fail to make sufficient use of these. Weaknesses in the use of targeted assessment mean that teachers do not always know very clearly what progress their learners are making. In work-based learning, on- and off-the-job learning is still not coordinated well enough in too many cases, so that learners do not make the progress they are capable of.



30. All LEPs need to ensure that further education is represented on their main board, so that they are not being held 'at arm's length'. They need to concentrate more on provision below advanced level for those learners who are not in education, employment or training or who have left school with fewer than five GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics. LEPs need to engage with the further education sector to help it model provision more closely to local employment needs and to work with employers to make available a range of high-quality work experience and apprenticeship opportunities.

## Social care

31. Helping to improve services for children and young people who need help, protection and care is our highest priority. We are doing this through providing challenge and support to local authority senior managers and their staff. Currently, too many social worker posts are vacant and too many poor quality managers move between local authorities without being challenged or supported to improve their professional practice. This has a significant impact on the quality of the children's services workforce in the region. Through inspection, our improvement role and work with the West Midlands Association of Children's Services, we will continue to offer support and challenge and broker information-sharing regarding good practice. We continue to challenge the sector to raise standards through ensuring that appropriate and targeted regulatory action is taken when providers fail to meet the standards required for children and young people who are in care provision.

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