

# Droitwich Spa High School and Sixth Form Centre

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	136927
<b>Local Authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	384801
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 October 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	James McNeillie HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	12–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1395
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	276
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rosemary Taylor
<b>Headteacher</b>	Natalie Waters
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	N/A
<b>School address</b>	Briar Mill Droitwich Spa WR9 0AA
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<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	5–6 October 2011
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. They observed 50 lessons, or parts of lessons, and met with students, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including that relating to students' achievement, safeguarding procedures and the school's improvement plans. In addition, inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire from 293 parents and carers, 107 staff and a sample of students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Are all groups of students making at least satisfactory progress?
- Is the provision for lower ability students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities good enough?
- Is the quality of teaching challenging enough to ensure all groups of students can make the most progress?
- How effectively are leaders at all levels demonstrating the capacity to reduce the variation in outcomes for different groups of students and sustain improvements?

## Information about the school

This is a larger than average-sized secondary school serving the town of Droitwich Spa and surrounding villages. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, although increasing. Most students are from White British backgrounds and very few have English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special education needs, is below average.

The school has been a specialist sports college since 2000 and converted to academy status in July 2011. The school also holds a national Healthy Schools award.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**4**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) 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 in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the progress made by all groups of students, and in particular, in mathematics.

The progress all groups of students have made over time has been too slow. Their progress in mathematics is of particular concern as this has been well below that expected for four consecutive years. Students' overall attainment is rising and is broadly average, as indicated by data including the proportion of students achieving five GCSEs at grades A\*-C including English and mathematics. Their rates of progress are also increasing although variable. Progress in English is now at least satisfactory, as confirmed in 2011 examination results and lesson observations during the inspection. The progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also too slow. Individuals with a statement of special educational needs make better progress than all their peers but those identified with specific behavioural needs make the least academic progress. The progress students make in the sixth form is improving and is satisfactory overall.

Students enjoy school and feel safe; most of the parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire also shared these opinions. Students' enjoyment of school is demonstrated in their above average levels of attendance, some positive attitudes to learning in lessons and their willingness to engage well in discussions on a range of topics. They also make a strong contribution to the school and wider community, for example through their work in raising money for a local hospice and involvement in the school's evaluation of effective teaching.

The school's curriculum is contributing well to students' personal development and well-being. It is having a positive impact on the attendance, behaviour and attitudes of some of the school's most disaffected students. The range of vocational qualifications is selected carefully and well matched to the individual students and is demonstrating positive outcomes. The sports specialism contributes well to the development of students' leadership skills and their understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. Although achievement is inadequate, the curriculum is judged as good due to these strengths in promoting students' outcomes and because of the impact it has on students' improving, although variable, achievement.

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The quality of teaching is satisfactory and, combined with the good curriculum and targeted support for individuals, is contributing to improving achievement. When teaching is at its best, there is a clear focus on learning, teachers regularly use assessment during lessons and there are high expectations and challenge for all groups of students. This good practice is not consistent. Actions taken as a result of the school's monitoring of teaching and learning have resulted in the reduction of inadequate teaching. However, the impact on improving the overall quality has been limited by insufficiently focused action planning and monitoring. During the inspection, some examples of good and outstanding teaching were observed. Opportunities for this practice to be systematically shared are developing but not yet securing better progress for all.

Leaders are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have addressed some of the issues which are slowing the progress of students. For example, particularly slow progress of lower ability students in the previous academic year was tackled successfully, resulting in better examination results for this group in 2011. In addition, the curriculum has been expanded to meet fully the needs of students at risk of leaving school with no qualifications. The school is demonstrating satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement because of accurate self-evaluation, a rise in students' overall attainment, and a reduction in gaps between progress made by different groups of students in the school, as well as in comparison to students nationally.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Increase the rates of progress for all groups of students and in particular students' progress in mathematics by:
  - raising students' attainment in all subjects
  - ensuring consistently high expectations of students' potential for achievement
  - meeting the academic needs of all students and in particular those with identified behavioural needs.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching and use of assessment by ensuring:
  - lessons have a consistently clear focus on and high expectations of students' learning, thereby maximising progress for all groups
  - teachers regularly assess students' levels of understanding during lessons and modify tasks and activities when appropriate to ensure sufficient challenge for all groups of students.
  
- Increase the school's capacity for sustained improvement by:
  - sharpening the actions taken to improve teaching as a result of its own monitoring and evaluation
  - extending the current opportunities for sharing good and outstanding practice in teaching and use of assessment.

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## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**4**

Students' achievement is inadequate because, from broadly average starting points, they have not consistently made expected progress. This inconsistency is evident in the fluctuations in attainment in recent years and in current well below average attainment in mathematics. The progress of students following vocational qualifications is better with some making good progress. The school's own tracking systems indicate that the current progress of younger students is at least satisfactory, including in mathematics.

When they are given opportunities to engage actively with learning, students enjoy the lessons and learn well. One particularly vivid example of this was noted in a Year 10 history lesson focused on the Treaty of Versailles. Students worked together, taking on identities of different people from the time. As a result of this opportunity to fully engage with learning, students could go beyond the use of description to impressive evaluative statements in a practice examination response. When learning is less engaging or relevant to students, they are more passive and sometimes become unsettled.

Students demonstrate good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in their interactions with each other, discussions in lessons and the positive contribution they make to their own and other communities. For example, in a Key Stage 3 religious education lesson, students could discuss philosophical issues related to relationships and love with maturity and good insight. Students established and maintain the school's 'peace garden'. The well-respected school council consciously supports less well known charities. In addition, students demonstrate good leadership qualities such as organising and leading the school's middle school transition sports day. Although they experience a predominantly monocultural school population, students understand and respect a range of different cultures and belief systems. Many students have positive attitudes to learning, show respect for each other and their environment, and often this behaviour contributes well to learning. Behaviour around the school is orderly and courteous. The school's exclusion rates, while falling, are higher than those nationally. Overall, therefore, students' behaviour is satisfactory.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

The majority of lessons are planned to take account of students' prior knowledge and skills but teachers' effective use of assessment to support learning during lessons is less consistent. This means that when planned work is too difficult or not challenging enough, alterations are not made and therefore progress slows. A striking example of effective use of assessment was observed in a Year 8 English lesson. Throughout the session, the teacher used student responses as opportunities to check understanding of and progress towards the learning objectives for the lesson. The result was that students understood how well they were learning and could explain what else they needed to do. Where teaching is less effective, such assessment opportunities are either omitted or too superficial, therefore not helping teachers or students understand how much progress is being made. Where lessons do not have sufficiently high expectations of what students are learning, rather than doing, there is also less progress.

The school's curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of the students. It is also regularly reviewed, although the full impact of this in improving academic outcomes is yet to be seen. Opportunities are available for students to take vocational qualifications in school or in a further education provider, and the school provides programmes that enable students to gain extended work experience. As well as ensuring these students gain meaningful qualifications, the impact of the curriculum can also be seen in their improved engagement with and attitudes to learning. In addition, the curriculum contributes to the school's higher than average proportion of students who are in education, employment or training once they have left school. The school is aware that there is still work to be done to ensure that those students with behavioural needs make better academic progress, commensurate with their starting points. Although achievement in mathematics is low, students' application of numeracy skills is better as seen in a science lesson where students were using calculations to explain energy usage. The school's introduction of a structured reading scheme in Year 8 is having a good impact on the development of students' literacy skills.

Pastoral support for students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable is well

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coordinated and managed effectively by school leaders. The school is able to point to some striking examples of where these individuals, as a result of good work with external agencies and support from the school’s structures and provision, have been able to catch up with missing work and become reintegrated into the school population. Transition into school is strong and students value the advice and guidance they receive. Support for all groups of students’ academic progress is not as well targeted or effective.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>3</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

In recent years, the headteacher has tackled a deficit budget, made some significant staffing changes and radically restructured the leadership team. Staff morale is high. As a result of decisive actions, the decline in students’ achievement is being reversed. Target setting is challenging and is a contributing factor to high expectations set by senior leaders. Middle leaders share in the school’s vision and most contribute well to the school’s overarching priorities.

Leaders know the precise groups of students that are making the least progress, both academic and personal. Where targeted action has been taken, the impact can be seen in the more effective promotion of equality of opportunity. For example, overall attendance has risen and the percentage of those who are persistently absent has reduced considerably. In addition, exclusion rates are falling and gaps between the achievement of particular groups of students are being reduced. Members of the governing body adequately challenge and support the school. They are involved in the self-evaluation process and have an honest and realistic view of the school’s and the governing body’s strengths and areas for development.

Safeguarding procedures are good; the school adopts recommended good practice and monitors its policies and procedures well. Positive work with a range of external partners supports safeguarding arrangements and care for those students most at risk. Engagement with parents and carers is satisfactory. The school has taken some decisive steps through offering evening classes and opportunities to engage some of those parents and carers of students who are at risk of underachievement. The school has ensured students have a clear understanding of local and international communities, for example through links with schools in Europe, Africa and India. There are fewer opportunities for students to have first-hand experience of multicultural Britain, although they know that a short train journey will take them to



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a large city where many languages are spoken.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>4</b>

## Sixth form

Overall, standards on entry to the sixth form are average and by the end of their courses, students meet their expected targets and make satisfactory progress. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some outstanding teaching seen, for example in English and modern foreign languages. Typically, the best lessons were planned to reflect the different levels of ability in the class, included imaginative group work and high quality delivery of course content that challenged and captured students’ imagination and curiosity. This contrasted sharply with weaker teaching where opportunities were missed for extended and targeted questioning to challenge higher attaining students.

Students say they enjoy being members of the sixth form and the guidance and support they received are effective, as shown in retention rates. They take a good and active part in the everyday life of the school and are positive role models for younger students. The curriculum is supporting the needs of the majority of students. Leadership of the sixth form is now more ambitious and there is a strong drive to raise achievement further. The involvement of students working in partnership with teachers to comment on and explore the characteristics of effective learning is a good development.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	3

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Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

## Views of parents and carers

Of those parents and carers who responded to Ofsted’s questionnaire, the very large majority stated that they were happy with their children’s experience at school. A small minority of respondents stated that the school could do more to help them support their children’s learning and take account of their suggestions and concerns. School leaders, including governors, valued this feedback. A small minority also raised concerns about how well the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. The inspection team explored this thoroughly and the inspection evidence confirmed that behaviour was satisfactory overall, with some strengths but a higher than average number of students who were excluded. The inspection evidence also concluded that behaviour around the school site was positive and calm.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Droitwich Spa High School and Sixth Form College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 293 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1395 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	88	30	187	64	14	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	82	28	191	65	7	2	2	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	80	27	163	56	24	8	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	57	19	182	62	20	7	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	52	18	186	63	11	4	2	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	52	18	173	59	35	12	5	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	12	197	67	29	10	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	65	22	175	60	15	5	3	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	64	22	174	60	20	7	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	56	19	155	53	36	12	7	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	13	160	55	42	14	4	1
The school is led and managed effectively	54	18	180	61	25	9	7	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	82	28	177	60	15	5	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



7 October 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Droitwich Spa High School and Sixth Form Centre, Droitwich Spa, WR9 0AA**

Thank you for the time many of you gave to talk to the inspection team when we visited your school.

We were impressed by how well you contribute to the school and its wider community through, for example, the work done by the school council. We also judged that your attendance was above the national average. Well done and you can help the school to improve by continuing to come to school regularly. You told us that you feel safe at school and we agreed that the school does well in keeping you safe and secure.

We have judged that the progress you make while at school, and in particular, the progress you make in mathematics is inadequate. For this reason, we have issued your school with a 'notice to improve'. This means that inspectors will visit your school again soon to see how well things are improving.

We have asked the school to help each of you, including those students who have trouble managing their behaviour, to gain higher results in all subjects by improving the quality of teaching you receive. To do this, we have suggested that teachers help you to focus more on what you are learning in lessons and that they assess more regularly how well you are making progress so that they can make changes if necessary. We have also suggested that teachers should be given more opportunities to learn from the best teachers in the school. You can help by responding positively to these higher expectations.

We wish you luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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