

# Allestree Woodlands School

Blenheim Drive, Allestree, Derby, DE22 2LW

## Inspection dates

14–15 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching, students' achievement and the school's leadership all require improvement.
- Whilst there are some 'high-flying' students who are rightly celebrated, generally, students do not do as well as they could and should, in their subjects, including mathematics, when set against their starting points on entry to the school.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent and does not ensure that the large majority of students consistently make good or better progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding across the range of subjects they are taught.
- The school's leaders at all levels have not secured the improvements necessary to ensure students throughout the school receive a good quality of education.

### The school has the following strengths

- The sixth form is good. Students achieve well and the very large majority of them go onto their chosen university, employment or further education and training provider.
- Arrangements to support the learning and progress of students in the hearing impaired unit and those learning English as an additional language are good.
- Behaviour is good and the school has a friendly, safe and welcoming feel about it.
- Students are articulate, considerate and reflective and actively fundraise, volunteer and mentor younger students.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons taught by 37 different members of staff at the school, of which 13 were joint observations with either the headteacher, or one of the two deputy headteachers. Inspectors also visited: the hearing impaired unit; the learning hub, which provides support to students for whom English is an additional language, disabled students and those with special educational needs; an assembly; and several tutorial sessions. Inspectors also explored different areas of the school site during lessons and at break and lunchtimes.
- Meetings or discussions were held with the Chair of the Governing Body with the vice-chair and two other members, several senior staff including the headteacher and deputy headteachers, assistant headteachers, several directors of learning, the acting head of the sixth form, the acting special educational needs coordinator and a bilingual interpreter. Inspectors also spoke to five different groups of students and took account of several emails from parents about the school's work.
- Inspectors took account of the 81 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), along with an analysis of the school's own parental questionnaire. Inspectors also evaluated questionnaire responses from 35 school staff.
- The inspection team examined a range of school documentation including: documents about safeguarding and child protection arrangements; development policies and self-evaluation plans; lesson and departmental plans; records of lesson monitoring and checks on students' work and the minutes of meetings, including those of the governing body. Inspectors also looked at records relating to behaviour and attendance. They considered the school's arrangements for making best use of pupil premium funding, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, those whose parents are in the armed forces and for students known to be eligible for free school meals.

## Inspection team

John Young, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Helen Martin

Additional Inspector

Carol Worthington

Additional Inspector

Victoria Bishop

Additional Inspector

Thelma McIntosh-Clark

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Allestree Woodlands School is a larger than average-sized secondary school with a sixth form. The School converted to become an academy on 1 March 2012. When the predecessor school, Woodlands School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- The very large majority of students are White British and live locally. The remaining small numbers of students originate from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages such as Indian Chinese and Eastern European. The proportion of students who are believed to speak English as an additional language is low.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium is below average. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below that found nationally. These needs range from physical disability and hearing impairment to autistic spectrum disorder and behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion of students supported at school action is similar to most schools nationally. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or who have a statement is lower than average.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for students with special educational needs, a hearing impaired unit, on site, which currently caters for 13 deaf students who attend for a few sessions a week. For most of the week these students are taught alongside other students in the school.
- A small number of Year 10 and Year 11 students attend a range of work-related courses at Rolls Royce engineering company, a partner school, and companies providing construction, motor vehicle maintenance, and hair and beauty courses in Derby. These students typically access these courses one day a week and are taught in the main school for the rest of the time.
- The school provides a range of extended services such as study support and community access to their facilities. The school works collaboratively with a network of other secondary schools in Derby to improve the range of courses available to students.

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

- Increase the effectiveness of teaching throughout the school so that the very large majority is good or better by:
  - eliminating mediocre teaching and learning and establishing the most effective approaches in the school as the norm in every classroom
  - ensuring teachers' planning is consistently high quality, takes full account of students specific needs and abilities, and is always challenging and pitched at the right level for them
  - removing the inconsistencies in the quality of marking and feedback so that all students know exactly how well they are doing and precisely what they need to do to reach or exceed their targets in each of their subjects.
- Ensure that the achievement of the very large majority of students is consistently good or better in every subject they are taught in key stages 3 and 4, but especially in mathematics by:
  - raising students' attainment in those subjects where standards are not high when compared with national averages, including mathematics
  - ensuring that all groups of students, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, minority ethnic students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good or better progress relative to their starting points on entry to the school
  - systematically developing students' literacy and numeracy skills in all lessons

- increasing the effectiveness of procedures to identify early those students at risk of underachieving or who are already underachieving, and the actions taken, to swiftly get them back on track.
  
  - Improve the efficiency and impact of leadership so that the necessary improvements in the quality of provision and students' outcomes are secured and sustained by:
    - senior leaders and members of the governing body taking whatever steps are necessary to increase their strategic influence and more successfully drive through the improvements required in the quality of education the school currently provides
    - making certain that leaders at all levels, through existing systems for monitoring, evaluation and performance management are more regularly and more rigorously influencing, supporting and holding staff to account for the quality of their work so that identified weaker elements of teaching are swiftly addressed and improved
    - ensuring all staff recognise the vital role they have in securing whole-school improvement and that staff consistently adhere to and apply school improvement policies and procedures.
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## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils **requires improvement**

- Typically, students join the school in Year 7 with above average knowledge and skills in most subjects, and maintain above average standards as they go through the school. The Year 11 who took their exams in 2012 started Year 7 working at broadly average levels, made average rather than good progress and achieved standards broadly in line with the national average, including in English and mathematics. Students have not made good progress over time because the teaching and support they received was not effective enough. Subjects like applied science and business studies have underperformed over time. In 2012, progress was comparatively slow in some of the subjects taken by a lot of students, like mathematics, physical education (PE), French, information and communication technology and resistant materials when compared with their performance in the highest attaining subjects like German, history, art, biology, chemistry, physics and graphics.
- The progress of students studying work-related courses such as engineering, hair and beauty, construction and motor vehicle maintenance, part-time, is closely monitored and they achieve well, including suitable City and Guilds qualifications or apprenticeships at the prestigious Rolls Royce engineering company.
- A small number of students are entered early for core science and units in PE and humanities. There is no evidence that this prevents them reaching their potential as most reach their targets.
- Initiatives to boost the progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, Eastern European students learning English as an additional language and students funded by the pupil premium are effective and are closing the gap with other students, but they still lag behind and these students do not make good progress. Indian and Chinese students outperform other students.
- The school's usually reliable assessment information and inspectors' lesson observations indicate that most students in the school are on track to reach their challenging targets in most subjects, including key subjects such as English and mathematics. However, the school knows that to encourage good progress they must identify earlier and help more effectively students at risk or who are already underachieving and increase the effectiveness of subjects where progress is slower.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good when set against students' starting points. Their attainment is high and the ratio of students gaining the highest grades is above the national average. This is a success story for the school as previously students made only mediocre progress on average.

### The quality of teaching **requires improvement**

- Teaching is too variable across the school. Too much of it is mediocre to be good and it is not enabling students to consistently make good or better progress in each of their subjects.
- Staff are knowledgeable, conscientious and keen to improve their teaching. However, the difference between the most and least effective teaching in the school is vast and needs closing.
- Good or better teaching gave students clear success criteria, and had skilful questioning, and practical, progressively harder activities. Students were made to think critically and discuss and evaluate their own and others' work. The teacher intervened to correct misconceptions that arose, which collectively helped students acquire and deepen their understanding of complex knowledge and skills in a range of subjects.
- Weaker teaching did not have the features identified above. The school's leaders and managers know that they must eliminate mediocre practice, and remove the inconsistencies in planning, marking and feedback, which can lead to work not being pitched at the right level for students and/or students not being certain about what they must do to improve the quality of their work.
- The school's efforts to promote the teaching of literacy and numeracy in other subjects requires

improvement, despite having coordinators for each area.

- The support for disabled students, those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language is good and is helping these students, including those who are part of the hearing-impaired unit, make big gains in their learning. The specialist help available includes teachers of the deaf, a bilingual interpreter, skilled teaching assistants and the dedicated resource areas for the said groups.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good and students profit from stimulating, thought-provoking and suitably demanding lessons, which capture and sustain their interest and allow them to make effective progress in developing their knowledge and skills. Effective lessons are characterised by students problem-solving and working in teams and staff using practical activities to help students consolidate their understanding of key concepts or theories.
- The subjects and courses available in the sixth form meet students' needs, reflected by good retention and completion rates for courses, and students' success in moving onto higher and further education, employment or training. Students benefit from a range of extra activities including involvement in a World Challenge expedition to Madagascar, sporting, musical and charity events.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Students, including the different groups of minority ethnic students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs relate well to each other and staff. Incidents are rare and students say that bullying of any sort, including racist or cyber-bullying, is not an issue and that they feel safe in school. Of the parents and carers and staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaires, 95% feel that students are safe at the school.
- The atmosphere in lessons and at social times is typically amicable, relaxed, orderly and respectful. Most students have very positive attitudes to learning and stick to the behaviour and safety rules in place. They know how to keep safe. Behaviour is usually well-managed. But, on a few occasions standards slip when students are not given suitable work or find tasks boring. Also, some staff have different thresholds of what constitutes acceptable behaviour which leads to some inconsistency of approach.
- Attendance and rates of persistent absence are average for most students. Punctuality to lessons is good. However, the attendance of students known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than their peers. To tackle this issue and raise levels of attendance generally, the school has recently appointed a Student Attendance Engagement Officer, whose work is already paying dividends with evidence of improvements in the attendance of targeted students.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is outstanding. Students are serious about their futures. They are extremely attentive and responsive in lessons. Relationships between students and with staff are excellent and the mutual respect is obvious. They set a good example to younger students and are good ambassadors for the school. Sixth form rates of attendance are high.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- The School is ambitious, wants the best for its students, is on an 'improvement journey' The school has taken steps to strengthen the impact of leaders and managers over the past 15 months and it is noticeable that the work of leaders and managers has become sharper over this period, but their effectiveness is not yet good. Leaders at all levels work hard but their impact in the main school has not been good, which is reflected in the key areas requiring improvement. The quality of teaching is monitored and staff have received training and coaching which has led to more lessons being judged good or better. Leaders' self-evaluation is mostly accurate and they have identified suitable priorities and an action plan to tackle weaknesses, but improvement to date has not been fast enough to lead to good progress.

- Whilst senior staff enjoy the full support and confidence of governors, they recognise that collectively they must improve their effectiveness to improve the school further. Leaders at all levels are not consistently thorough in holding staff to account, for example, by ensuring all staff follow agreed whole-school policies and improvement measures, and so are not having enough impact in ensuring the quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school. Their capacity to do so is indicated by improvements in teaching already achieved, and the improvements to the sixth form and students' good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
  - Leaders have built a positive ethos in the school and staff and students say they are proud to belong to the school community. The parents and carers that completed the online questionnaire largely support the school. However, some felt that the homework provided was not always appropriate, and that the school did not always respond positively to concerns they raised.
  - Performance management is taken seriously and arrangements take full account of the new Teachers' Standards. Leaders have prevented staff from progressing up the pay spine where they were deemed to be undeserving.
  - The courses and subjects that students can choose to take are well matched to students' needs and interests. Academic and work-related options are balanced by more artistic subjects such as music, art and drama. In addition, there are visits and visitors, special events, work experience and theme days linked to students' areas of study, and extra-curricular activities which students take advantage of in numbers.
  - Alternative off-site provision is effective. These courses support students' academic needs and career aspirations. The school also works with a consortium of local schools to share resources and enhance the course options of students.
  - Pupil premium funding is used appropriately to improve targeted students' social, mental and physical health, give financial aid, offer breakfast and closely track the progress of the students; a summer school to boost students' English and mathematics skills has taken place.
  - Students' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is promoted effectively. Consequently, students are eloquent, thoughtful and insightful. They understand global issues, know right from wrong, and have a good awareness of cultures distinctly different to their own. They throw themselves into fundraising, volunteering, mentoring younger students and house activities.
  - Safeguarding procedures are robust. The arrangements for safer recruitment of staff, child protection, risk assessment and site security are rigorous. Designated staff are well trained.
  - Leadership of the sixth form is good, demonstrated by students' good achievement, above average attainment, and sixth form students ringing endorsement of the quality of education they receive. These outcomes are underpinned by: good teaching and effective student support and guidance; many extra-curricular opportunities and courses that are appropriate to the intake; and rigorous monitoring and refinement of procedures to increase their impact further.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - Members of the governing body's collective expertise, experience and evident ambitions for the school's future ensure that they discharge their duty to monitor, question and strategically influence the school's development, and fulfil their statutory requirements, appropriately. Scrutiny of the minutes of meetings show that governors are asking searching questions of the school's senior leaders about: student achievement; budgetary matters; staff training and the quality of teaching and the curriculum; staffing and personnel issues; safeguarding matters and premises management. Training has enabled them to better interpret student progress data and assess the extent to which the school is tackling key priorities. Governors are linked to a department, subject or school improvement priority area. This has given them a good insight into what is happening in the school, particularly in terms of the quality of teaching and how effectively pupil premium funding is being spent. Governors understand performance management, and monitor the links between salary progression and/or promotion, and staff performance.
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## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137911
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	402777

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Academy Trust
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1223
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	185
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev William Bates
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alan Brady
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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