

Mount Gilbert School

Hinkshay Road, Dawley, Telford, TF4 3PP

Inspection dates 27–28 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The quality of teaching varies too much to support good learning. In too many lessons, the tasks set are not interesting enough, and teachers do not use resources such as computer technology to support teaching and learning.
- Staff do not always use the information they have about students' progress well enough to plan lessons at the right level of difficulty.
- In some lessons, teachers talk too much and do not ask enough questions that encourage students to work things out for themselves or deepen their understanding.
- Students' achievements, although improving, are not yet good. Some of the actions taken to improve teaching and learning have not yet had a full impact.
- While the school has improved the attendance of many students, attendance is still too low because some students still find it hard to come to school regularly.
- Until recently there was not enough time for learning and the range of qualifications offered was too limited. This meant some subjects were not taught in enough depth, and students' skills were not steadily built up.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths, and have set exactly the right priorities for improvement.
- Students feel safe, and their behaviour and attitudes to school have improved hugely and are now good. The new behaviour policies are being applied well by all staff, and staff have improved their skills in managing behaviour.
- Leaders are taking effective action to improve teaching and students' achievement.
- Extra funding is used well to make subjects more interesting and relevant, support individual students and accelerate their progress in reading.
- Families praise the way staff keep them informed and are helping their children to improve their behaviour and aspirations.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 13 lessons, of which four were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, she made a number of short visits to lessons, looked at pupils' work and discussed it with them.
- Meetings were held with pupils, governors, a local authority adviser and the school's staff, including senior leaders. The inspector met with a small number of parents and visited alternative off-site provision made for older pupils.
- Parents and carers did not make any submissions through the online Parent View, although their responses to recent surveys conducted by the school were considered, as were questionnaires completed by almost all staff during this inspection.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including: the school's self evaluation and its planning for improvement; its safeguarding documentation and records relating to behaviour and attendance; and the data the school keeps on students' current progress and achievement.

Inspection team

Susan Lewis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a small school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Students can join the school at any point between Year 7 and Year 11; many have had disrupted schooling before arriving at Mount Gilbert, often having been persistent absentees or excluded from their previous schools.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs and the majority have one or more additional needs such as autistic spectrum disorders, attention deficit and hyperactive disorder, speech and language difficulties or dyslexia.
- Almost all students are boys. A very small number of girls were on the roll of the school at the time of the inspection. The very large majority of students are from White British backgrounds. A very high proportion of students are known to be eligible for the pupil premium. This provides extra funding for students in care or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Most Key Stage 4 students, particularly those in Year 11, attend alternative off-site provision for part of their timetable; occasionally younger students also attend such provision.
- The school has had considerable changes in its governance and leadership since the last inspection and several long-term staff absences. The headteacher was appointed in September 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by making sure that:
 - when planning lessons, all teachers take account of students' current levels and targets, not only in their subjects but also in their individual education plans
 - teachers make better use of technology and more varied resources and teaching styles, to hold students' interest and attendance in lessons, and enhance their progress and independence in learning
 - lessons are not too teacher dominated, and teachers' questions and the planned activities encourage students to work things out for themselves and deepen their understanding
 - lessons get off to a brisk start and no time for learning is wasted
 - students' writing skills are supported systematically in subjects other than English, including through the use of information and communication technology (ICT)
 - the good work being done to support individual students' literacy skills is built on in lessons, and that students have regular, planned opportunities to practise these skills in all subjects.
- Improve attendance by:
 - monitoring carefully the impact of the reward system and the alternative provision on students' attendance, and adjusting them accordingly
 - identifying strategies with the local authority and other agencies before and after admission to show how students with a history of persistent absence will be supported back into education and school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards are rising by the end of Year 11 but achievement is not yet good because, throughout the school, not enough students make more than the expected progress. However, the proportion is increasing and more are doing well in subjects such as mathematics and reading because the school has focused on improving these subject areas. Progress in writing, though adequate, is not as strong because in lessons other than English, students do not have enough opportunities to extend their writing skills.
- Good improvements in the range of subjects and accredited courses has made them more interesting for students and helped to improve achievement in Key Stage 4. Almost all now gain a recognised qualification in English and mathematics and a few achieve the higher levels. This is because the teaching of these subjects has improved and teachers have raised their expectations of what students are capable of achieving. Improvements in behaviour mean that students are much more ready to learn and are more ambitious.
- The majority of students in Key Stage 3 make at least expected progress and a significant proportion exceed this, particularly in mathematics and in reading. This is because the school is now quick to identify their levels and needs, and adapts teaching well to meet them. The pupil premium is used to provide individual help and guidance where necessary, and this is helping to narrow the gap so these students are catching up with others in their reading and writing.
- Progress is similar for all groups, but is adversely affected by some students' poor attendance. Students who are the most vulnerable and those who have additional special educational needs achieve as well as others; individual students sometimes make good or outstanding progress because the school has introduced some good ways of teaching literacy and provides therapy and support to help students to manage their anger and control their behaviour.
- Subjects such as physical education and the humanities are used well to interest students, and are combined effectively with visits and enrichment activities. The school guides students carefully in choosing from a range of subjects that they can study at Key Stage 4, so more students are on target to achieve GCSE or equivalent levels in subjects such as history, food technology and art, as well as English and mathematics.
- Alternative provision is used well by the school to supplement the range of courses on offer and to ensure students have accredited work-related skills in areas such as motor vehicle maintenance. Students who are less interested in other lessons say they value these courses and feel they will help them decide what they want to do in later life.
- Students of all ages, and parents and carers, are clear that the improvements in teaching and the curriculum are helping them to make better progress. One student said, 'I can see the point now and you know the teachers think you can do even better.' A parent said of their child, 'He is doing things I never thought he would achieve. He is reading and writing now when he would not even try before.'

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good across the school. This is because not all teachers plan lessons that take full account of students' different levels and needs, or challenge and engage students sufficiently well.

- When students' learning is less than good, it is often because the lesson does not get off to a brisk start and the tasks set do not initially appeal to them. Sometimes the teachers rely too much on low-level tasks such as matching prepared statements and pictures and sticking them into books. These occupy students' time but do not demand enough from them.
- The school has introduced new ways of planning which expect teachers to make clear what each different group will learn, but staff do not yet use them consistently well. This means that students themselves are not always clear about what they are expected to learn.
- In the best lessons, teachers' skilful questioning helps students to be actively involved in their work and work things out for themselves. It also challenges them to achieve even more. In an excellent mathematics lesson, the questioning and follow-up work was carefully adjusted to each student's targets and helped them to understand the formulae for working out areas and perimeters.
- Carefully thought-out independent work at each student's level is also a developing strength. Good questioning in an English lesson enabled the teacher to clearly check on students' learning and, for example, the ways they were linking their studies of *Macbeth* and *Of Mice and Men* to identify common features and themes. The lesson built well on students' previous learning as well as showing them how they could achieve even more.
- Most teachers make good use of the school's marking policy to give valuable feedback to students on their written work. At its best, this shows students what is good and what they need to do to improve their work.
- Parents are pleased with the many ways in which individual teachers 'go the extra mile' to help their children learn. They particularly value the strong relationships that teachers develop with their children, the improving ways in which behaviour is dealt with, and the support for students' basic skills such as literacy.
- The new approaches and extra time given to literacy and mathematics are already paying off. These are well taught in English and mathematics lessons, but not systematically planned for in other subjects or directly related to students' targets. This means opportunities to promote these in other subjects are missed, for example when teachers read or write for students or when students complete the same worksheet or matching and sticking activities.
- Students value lessons in which they are given more opportunity to contribute, and particularly where they can make more use of practical resources and ICT. There are times when the resources are not interesting enough or the teacher talks for too long. In these lessons, students' learning slows.
- The good range of subjects and courses on offer includes a good balance of basic skills and enrichment activities, including opportunities off-site. On the improved range of accredited courses, students are rising to the increased challenges that teachers set for them. A higher percentage of Key Stage 4 students are taking GCSE or equivalent courses than ever before, and are on track to achieve passes. Students now take work-related qualifications in subjects such as bricklaying and painting and decorating in the school's new on-site skills centre.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Leaders have worked hard to promote high expectations of behaviour and improve staff

confidence in dealing with this. This is reflected in students' significantly improved and now good behaviour, despite their often very challenging needs.

- There has, for example, been a dramatic reduction in temporary exclusions over the last academic year and similar reductions in incidents. A few students still find it difficult to stay in class but they have been provided with strategies and systems that help them to remain in school and get back into class as quickly as possible.
- Parents report a remarkable improvement in students' attitudes to school and learning, and say that the school's new ability to manage their child's behaviour has 'given me my life back'. They are confident that their children are safe and relish the calls from school that praise their children's behaviour rather than simply alerting them to problems.
- Students say they feel safe in school and they know the rules are there to help them. Although bullying does exist, students know that staff will sort it out fairly and that the rewards and sanctions system helps everyone. They have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying and homophobic bullying.
- Good personal, social and health education and effective individual support help to promote students' ability to deal with different social situations and take account of the needs of others.
- The large majority of students behave well in lessons and around the school. A few need more constant supervision, but even when they are in difficulties they do not disrupt the learning of others but take themselves off into the corridors or the 'turnaround room' where staff support them and return them to classes as soon as possible.
- A range of enrichment and work-related activities, including off-site provision, charity work, residential opportunities and work experience, support students' teamwork, social skills and awareness of others' needs. Students' behaviour at these is often praised by outside agencies and individuals.
- Attendance is low. A very few students who were persistent non-attenders before being put on the school roll rarely attend. This lowers attendance overall, although the school tries repeatedly to engage these students and their families. Other students improve their attendance over time, although a significant minority still attend much less than they should.
- The school has worked hard to improve attendance through the introduction of new courses and work-related opportunities. As a result, attendance for almost all students has improved since joining the school. An increasing proportion attend all the time because, as one student said, 'What we do is more interesting and we know the teachers want us to do well. The small groups help me.'

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has demonstrated outstanding leadership and determination in pursuing her clear and ambitious vision for the school. This is shared by all staff and is being put into practice with the good support of governors and the leadership team.
- Improvement planning identifies the right priorities, and has rightly focused on ensuring poor behaviour was dealt with and that learning and progress in subjects had a higher priority with students. These priorities have already improved students' interest and motivation to learn, and standards are rising as a result.

- Good progress has been made in monitoring teaching and learning, and feeding back the results. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated and an increasing proportion is now good or outstanding. Staff targets and responsibilities are now much clearer and a spirit of accountability is being promoted. There are some good examples of teachers planning carefully how to challenge students from different groups and backgrounds so that all can do equally well, although this is not yet consistent in all planning.
- The pupil premium has been used well to improve the attendance, involvement and progress of individuals and students. It has funded extra resources, students' access to residential visits, summer clubs and activities, and individual teaching, particularly to help students improve their literacy skills faster. Students appreciate the opportunities that they have now for one-to-one support from a teaching assistant, and one said that it is 'really helping my reading'. It is making a difference and closing the attainment gap between these students and others. The summer and residential activities are praised by families as keeping their children in touch with school and enabling them to continue learning.
- Good, carefully-chosen use of training, local authority support and redeployment of staff are also improving students' progress. Experienced and higher-level teaching assistants are used well to strengthen teaching teams where teachers are less experienced. In Key Stage 4, the partnership working with other providers and colleges and the wider range of courses are preparing students more successfully for the next steps of their education.
- Safeguarding procedures are thorough. The school works very well with other professionals and is quick to draw in and offer support to students whose welfare is at risk. Families praise the 'whole family' approach of the school and the ways in which it provides a listening ear.
- The school receives good support from the local authority, which has recognised the complexity of students' needs and is reviewing the school's finances so that funding reflects them more accurately. It provides effective advice and support to subject leaders.
- The good range of additional activities now offered to students includes sports leadership opportunities, residential visits, overseas visits, clubs and outdoor 'Forest School' activities. These and the strong personal, social and emotional curriculum support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Although there are vacancies on the governing body, governors bring a good range of skills and a good level of challenge to the school's work and are very knowledgeable about its strengths and challenges. They understand the school's performance data, including how it compares to other similar schools, and know what needs to be done to raise achievement further. They check up on how the pupil premium is being used and have already explored its effectiveness. Governors visit the school regularly to explore such issues as behaviour and teaching themselves. They question the headteacher on the impact of the management of performance and are careful to explore its implications for salary progression. Governors have made good use of available training to ensure that they support the school but also play a suitably critical role.

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	132122
Local authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	402539

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	41
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Evans
Headteacher	Lisa Lyon
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2009
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