

Nether Stowe School, a Specialist Mathematics & Computing College

St Chad's Road, Lichfield, WS13 7NB

Inspection dates 5–6 March 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and they make use of a range of resources to help their students enjoy learning.
- Since the previous inspection the school leadership has had a successful drive to improve teaching and achievement. As a result, most students make good progress from their starting points. In 2012, students' attainment was above average at age 16.
- The sixth form is good because students make good progress from their starting points and their success rates are in line with national averages.
- The extra help given to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well integrated into the daily work of the school so that these students make good progress.
- Students behave well in lessons and around the school. They say that they feel very safe. Most are enthusiastic about their time at school and arrive punctually and attend regularly.
- Systems for tracking students' progress are robust and help teachers' planning in a clear and structured way. Consequently most students, including those supported by additional funds (the pupil premium), make good progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding. As a result the proportions of students making and exceeding expected progress are not yet consistently above national averages.
- The role of leaders of subjects and other aspects of the school's work are not yet fully developed in making sure that policies and procedures follow best practice.
- Teachers' use of questioning does not develop pupils' thinking sufficiently to make the most of their learning.
- Teachers' marking does not always help pupils to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 38 lessons, several of which were observed jointly with the headteacher or other senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with pupils, leaders at all levels, teachers and the Chair of the Governing Body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including the school’s self-evaluation and improvement plan, minutes of meetings of the governing body, behaviour records, safeguarding records and documents relating to the management of teachers’ performance.
- Inspectors looked at information about pupils’ progress, scrutinised the work in pupils’ books and heard a sample of pupils read.
- Inspectors took account of the 54 responses submitted to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Matthew Spors, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jean Whalley	Additional Inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional Inspector
Rosemary Barnfield	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked-after children and those from service families, is well above the national average.
- The school offers a small number of students educational opportunities that take place off the school site. These include courses offered at Bridge Short Stay School.
- The school hosts a specially resourced provision for students with special educational needs which is managed by the local authority. This is a small unit catering for students with autism. The school accesses support from the 'Autism Resource' on a case-by-case basis for students on its roll.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of teaching that is outstanding by making sure that teachers routinely:
 - use questioning effectively to encourage students to think more for themselves and develop their skills in problem solving and reasoning
 - make their marking of students' work more effective by checking that students respond to comments made and complete their corrections, so conducting a dialogue with students
 - set tasks and provide support in a more timely way for students of different abilities so that all are suitably challenged, particularly the lower attainers.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by making sure leaders of subjects and other aspects of the school's work play a more effective role in driving improvement and in checking the impact of teachers' work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students achieve well in lessons because they are focused on learning and listen carefully to each other and the teacher. In a year 11 lesson students made good progress because they worked in groups to compare examples of everyday items from the last century and today, such as telephones and board games, and then used this skill to consider the context of Shakespeare's writing in the sixteenth century.
- Students' achievement has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Students enter the school with attainment which is broadly average. Standards by the end of Key Stage 4 have risen and are now above average.
- Standards in English and Mathematics continue to improve steadily. The proportions of pupils who are taught at the school who are making and exceeding expected progress compares favourably with national averages. However, there is still a small minority of students who could make progress which is more favourable than the national picture and there are not enough students exceeding the national figures for achievement to be outstanding.
- Students who are entered early for GCSE in Mathematics achieve well. Careful thought is given to when students are entered for examinations. The proportion of most-able students who make better than expected progress is high compared to national averages. Half of the students who enter the sixth form choose to study Mathematics.
- Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or work. Almost all students leaving compulsory education aged 16 in 2012 went on to further education, employment or training.
- Students who choose to join the school's sixth form rather than attend other post-16 provision in the district, do so with standards which are below average and make good progress as a result of good teaching. Levels of attainment at AS and A level GCE are average.
- A small number of students at Key Stage 4 are dual-registered with the school and the Bridge Short Stay School. Standards of attainment for students who are taught at the Short Stay School are below average at the end of Key Stage 4.
- Reading is promoted well across the school, through structured initiatives such as 'Drop Everything and Read' and intervention programmes to support weaker readers. Students who have fallen behind in their reading are supported well and make good progress.
- Students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium are well supported through targeted provision including one-to-one tuition and make good progress.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium and taught at the school make good progress because the money is spent on extra staffing and carefully targeted intervention support. Consequently the proportion of these students attaining 5 A*-C GCSEs including English and Mathematics and the average point scores gained in examinations show no significant difference from national averages. Those students eligible for free schools meals are behind those who are not by an average of one grade in English and Mathematics, but this is closing rapidly over time. In Year 11 there were no students in local authority care or whose parents were serving in the armed services.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is rarely less than good and at times it is outstanding. Most learning has good pace and involves varied tasks. Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve and develop a climate for learning which makes lessons enjoyable. A year 11 student said, 'Teachers make it easy to understand what we are learning about....we learn as we go and we don't get bored'.
- In an outstanding Mathematics lesson students developed their ability to reason and work independently. Through a carefully constructed set of activities and excellent questioning the teacher teased out from students how they could explore a method and then challenged them to use this to solve problems about shapes and angles.
- Learning is well planned, taking into account previous assessments and individual students' needs. Students often check their own and each other's work using strategies such as 'green pen' and check lists of success, and through this process deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers and other adults in classrooms support students well so that the majority make good progress. Occasionally students are not provided with sufficient guidance in how to structure their thinking, and as a result progress is slower, particularly for lower attainers.
- Positive and supportive relationships between staff and students are well established so that most students develop into confident learners. In an outstanding English lesson a group of less-able students progressed exceptionally well and were able to discuss Shakespeare's use of language with clarity.
- Some inconsistencies remain in lessons. Teachers' questioning techniques are not consistently well developed and as a result teachers do not always stretch students' thinking, develop ideas or adjust tasks accordingly. In a few lessons, teachers are spending too long in talking to the whole class and some students begin to drift off and do not make as much progress as they should.
- Teachers generally mark and assess students' work regularly. However teachers do not always give constructive feedback and discuss ideas for improvement with students and provide them with further opportunities to improve their work, to support faster progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The vast majority of students enjoy learning and work hard. Behaviour is good with few disruptions to learning.
- The school is calm and orderly. Most students enjoy coming to school and feel that there have been significant improvements in the way students behave and the relationships between teachers and students since the previous inspection. A group of students commented that 'teachers are relaxed but disciplined'.
- The system of rewards and sanctions is well understood by all students and they are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions. The school's 'credit and debit' system which incorporates 'share price' has been particularly effective in reducing internal sanctions such as detentions. Students with particular behaviour difficulties are well supported. The effectiveness of this

support is evident in improved interest and participation in education of the students identified in case studies.

- The school has successfully improved attendance rates over time and reduced the number of permanent exclusions. Attendance is now average and exclusion rates are below national.
- Students say that they feel very safe in school. The school makes sure that students are well aware of different types of bullying and they do not feel that bullying is an issue at the school.
- Most parents who responded to Parent View agreed that their children feel safe, are encouraged to behave well and are well looked after at school.
- The school has a structured programme of activities in tutor time, personal, social and health education and assemblies, during which students are taught how to keep themselves safe. Most recently Year 7 and 8 pupils watched an engaging theatre production concerning e-safety, which increased their understanding of the need to stay safe online.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher knows her school well and has brought about significant improvements since the last inspection. School-improvement planning is rigorous and linked to accurate and regular checks. Arrangements for the management of the staff's performance are well organised. There are effective links between pay and progression through the salary levels.
- The range of subjects taught is broad and balanced. It provides a wide range of opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Recently, for example, 15 students from Year 10 and Year 11 took part in the 'Staffordshire Challenge', completing eight separate challenges including carrying out research into their local area and showing that they had learned something new. The school is inclusive and gives all students equal opportunities.
- Students from Year 8 led an assembly about 'Comic Relief' and discussed how they had raised money for charity and the importance of taking part in helping others at a local and global level. Work is on-going to develop students' awareness of other cultural traditions, for instance through a link with a partnership school in Ghana.
- There is a strong commitment to training and professional development for teachers and this is closely linked to the school's quality assurance systems and improvement planning.
- The school has procedures and practice that make sure students and staff are safe. The levels of care and support for all students are key strengths of the school's practice. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The local authority has provided a light-touch level of support to this good school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body contributes effectively to the management of the staff's performance and has a good understanding of students' attainment by the end of Year 11 and Year 13 as well as students' progress. Governors know about the quality of teaching and how the school rewards good teaching and tackles any underperformance. Governors make sure that legal requirements are fully met, including safeguarding arrangements. Governors make regular visits to the school, monitor the school's work and track the impact of new initiatives. The governing body

maintains a good professional dialogue with the headteacher and uses the information it receives to play an active role in holding teachers to account.

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	124409
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	406242

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	635
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Warren Bradford
Headteacher	Ruth Poppleton
Date of previous school inspection	16 March 2011
Telephone number	01543 263446
Fax number	01543 414602
Email address	office@netherstowe.com

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

