

Hanley Castle High School

Church End, Hanley Castle, Worcester, WR8 0BL

Inspection dates 2–3 May 2013

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Not previously inspected | |
| | 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.

- Overall, students make good progress. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, including English and mathematics, is consistently above average.
- Teaching is good because teachers use a variety of resources to motivate students.
- In English and mathematics standards are above average because teaching is always good and often outstanding.
- There are examples of outstanding teaching across several subject areas, including: drama, physical education, music and biology.
- Behaviour and safety are good because students are well cared for and supported in their learning.
- Leaders' plans for improvement identify the right priorities. Leaders have established strong systems for improving teaching and achievement and are bringing significant improvements to the school.
- The governing body has secured the school's financial stability. Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Numbers have increased rapidly because students enjoy their learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always plan activities which meet the needs of every student. In a few instances, all students complete the same work.
- Students supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding) are only just beginning to catch up with other students.
- The quality of teachers' marking is not always sharp enough for students to be clear about how to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 lessons, eight of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, groups of students, the Chair and other members of the governing body and spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the views of the 91 parents who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire. They analysed the results of the staff questionnaire to which 49 replies were received.
- Inspectors analysed the 2012 examination results and the published results for previous years. They looked at the school's data on students' progress, lesson plans, minutes of meetings and records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance. They also reviewed the school's checks on how well it is doing and school improvement plans.
- During the inspection, a visiting group of 21 Chinese exchange students from Suzhou language school participated in lessons.

Inspection team

Lisa Fraser, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Raye Allison-Smith

Additional Inspector

Tracey France

Additional Inspector

Colin Logan

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Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most 11–18 secondary schools.
- The large majority of students are from White British backgrounds and the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, from service families, and for students known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of educational needs is below average.
- Hanley Castle High School converted to become an academy school in August 2011. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Nine Key Stage 4 students attend off-site alternative provision, which includes courses at the Youth Development Centre in Worcester and the Bridge Education Centre in Hanley Swan.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding overall by ensuring all teachers:
 - use information about students' abilities to plan work which is tailored to meet all students' needs
 - mark work regularly and in sufficient detail so that students know exactly what they need to do to achieve a better grade.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - monitoring the progress of students supported by the pupil premium closely and instigating targeted plans to support them where appropriate.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics are above average for their age when they join the school, although there is some variation across year groups. By the time they reach the end of Year 11, the proportion of students achieving five A* to C GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, is above average.
- In mathematics, standards are well above average and students make consistently good progress. This is a result of outstanding subject leadership which focuses on securing teaching that is at least good across the department. Students do not sit their GCSE mathematics examination early and attain more A* and A grades than the national average.
- Standards in English language and literature and physical education are well above average because teaching is at least good and sometimes outstanding in these subjects.
- Until recently all students studied a language at Key Stage 4. Large numbers in Year 9 now opt to continue their study. Inspectors observed students making good progress in language lessons.
- Students' achievement on a range of BTEC courses is also good.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers because the school's Aspire Department ensures they receive the correct support with either phonics (linking letters with the sounds they make), spelling, numeracy or behaviour which meets their individual needs.
- The gap between students supported by the pupil premium and their peers is now closing but students remain three terms behind in English and mathematics. There is evidence that the school is beginning to use additional funding more effectively to provide additional small group teaching and to give students one-to-one support to boost their literacy and numeracy.
- Nine students attend alternative off-site provision. Their attendance and progress are monitored closely by the school. These students achieve well.
- 'Year 7 catch-up funding' is beginning to help students to accelerate their progress because an additional member of staff has very recently been employed to give extra support with literacy and numeracy. Students say this is making a difference to their confidence levels.
- In the sixth form students make good progress in a broad range of courses including both traditional A level and vocational subjects. In drama and theatre studies students' achievement is outstanding. Sports leadership and Duke of Edinburgh awards recognise students' wider achievement.

The quality of teaching is good

- The great majority of the teaching observed during the inspection was good or outstanding. This closely matched the school's own view of teaching.
- In the best lessons, relationships are strong and teachers make good use of a range of

resources, including information technology. The variety of activities teachers plan engages and motivates students. Students make excellent progress in these lessons because the level of challenge is high. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson, the teacher's outstanding subject knowledge inspired students and boosted their confidence to work well independently and exceed their target levels.

- Teaching across several subjects makes a positive contribution to students' social, moral and cultural development. In English students enjoy debates on topics such as animal rights. In a Year 11 science lesson students made good progress in their understanding of the political, social, economic and environmental issues connected to the oil industry.
- Although students receive good quality verbal feedback from teachers on what they need to do to improve across the range of subjects, the quality of marking varies. Students do not always know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work. In some subjects, marking is not regular enough.
- In a few lessons, teachers do not plan work which meets students' needs because it is too easy for some students or too difficult for others.
- Very effective teaching means that students' attitudes to learning in the sixth form are outstanding and their achievement is good. In a Year 13 economics lesson students made outstanding progress because there were numerous opportunities to team up in pairs and small groups to discuss how to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students have exceptionally positive attitudes to learning across the school. They participate enthusiastically in activities in lessons, are keen to do well and enjoy working collaboratively. Students get on well with each other and with staff because they are polite and well-mannered. Learning in lessons is rarely interrupted.
- Around the school and at break and lunchtimes, students behave in a mature and responsible manner. They demonstrate high levels of respect for the school environment.
- Attendance is broadly average and improving as a result of good work to support students with attendance issues.
- Students say they feel safe in school and enjoy their lessons. Parent surveys confirm that care and support for students are good. Older students appreciate the extra help and advice they receive from form tutors. Students at Key Stage 3 are well-motivated by the school's rewards systems.
- Bullying is not common and school leaders are working hard to minimise the few instances of cyber-bullying which do occur.
- Close working partnerships with the local authority and family support services support students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable.
- The active school council makes sure that senior leaders listen to students' views. Students have opportunities to develop leadership skills, for example by taking on college captain roles.

- Behaviour is good but not outstanding because younger students need to develop the same levels of independence and motivation demonstrated by their older peers.
- Sixth formers are positive role models. They take an active role in school life by reading with younger year groups and helping out with extra-curricular activities, sports days and charity events.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are good overall because of leaders' close attention to improving the quality of teaching, and because they have made sure that some aspects of the school's work are outstanding.
- The headteacher provides a clear vision and direction for the school. She is ably supported by an experienced senior team. Leaders have the full backing of parents and all members of staff.
- Senior leaders' assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate. School leaders are aware that the progress of students supported by the pupil premium must be monitored more carefully to make sure they achieve as well as their peers.
- Joint lesson observations undertaken during the inspection indicate senior leaders' judgements of teaching are accurate. Senior leaders have not been afraid to make difficult decisions to raise standards. As a result, leaders have been successful in eradicating inadequate teaching.
- Systems for monitoring the quality of teaching are well established and link closely to Teachers' standards. Both senior and subject leaders are fully involved in observing lessons and sampling students' work. As a result, leaders are effective in holding teachers to account. Some subject leaders take an active role in introducing new initiatives across the school.
- Highly effective use of data is made to track students' achievement in English and mathematics. Leaders are beginning to track students' performance across the range of other subjects with the same close attention to detail.
- School improvement plans are detailed and focus on the right issues but do not always identify measurable outcomes. Leaders' evaluation of success is therefore very occasionally not sharp enough to be sure all plans are having the very best effect.
- The range of subjects is good and meets students' needs. At Key Stage 4, students mainly study GCSEs but can also choose from some work-related courses when selecting their options. All students in Years 10 and 12 complete work experience placements which prepare them well for their future careers and employment.
- Leadership of the sixth form is strong and, because results have steadily improved over recent years, student numbers are rising rapidly. Increasing numbers are now continuing their studies at a range of universities, including Oxford and Cambridge.
- Arrangements to support students make the move from primary school are outstanding because events are well-planned and each student receives individual support and guidance.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported by the school's impressive number of overseas study visits and student exchanges with schools as far afield as

Sweden and Tanzania. Students regularly raise money for charities and there are many opportunities to get involved in the local community, including recent work with community archaeologists to uncover evidence of Roman habitation in Hanley Castle. There is a wide range of after-school activities and clubs. Students have the opportunity to participate in many high-achieving competitive sports teams.

- In the past, the school has received an appropriate level of 'light touch' support from the local authority to reflect its good standards and record in inspection. These good links have been maintained since the school converted to academy status.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body provides a good level of challenge to the school. Governors have a sound knowledge of published school performance data and understand there is an achievement gap for students supported by the pupil premium. Link governors are identified on the school's improvement plan and contribute to raising standards in all areas of the school's work. Governors are exceptionally well-briefed by senior leaders on the school's arrangements for the management of teachers' work and the link between good teaching and salary progression. Financial plans are well-scrutinised by governors and as a result the school's finances are now much more stable. Governors seek to update their knowledge and skills regularly and attend annual safeguarding training. The governing body makes sure that arrangements for keeping students safe are secure, including when they are attending off-site provision.

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

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| Unique reference number | 137101 |
| Local authority | Worcestershire |
| Inspection number | 413445 |

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

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| Type of school | Academy converter |
| 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 | 940 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 195 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Jeff Robinson |
| Headteacher | Lindsey Cooke |
| Date of previous school inspection | 4 February 2009 |
| Telephone number | 01684 593241 |
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