

# The Dormston School

Mill Bank, Sedgley, Dudley, DY3 1SN

**Inspection dates** 13–14 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires special measures.

- Students do not make enough progress by the time they complete GCSE courses in Year 11. Standards are too low in English and mathematics, and too few students gain five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics.
- The school has not done enough to reduce the gaps in attainment and progress between disadvantaged students and other students.
- There is too much variability in the progress of different groups of students because there is a lack of consistency in teaching quality across subjects and year groups.
- Teaching is inadequate because too much work is not well planned or appropriately matched to students' level of ability.
- Whole-school policies are not always followed by all staff. As a result, the quality of teachers' marking and feedback is too variable.
- Leaders and managers have not made the improvements to teaching and learning that are essential to ensure that students' achievement improves rapidly.
- Checks on the quality of teaching do not always focus on the progress students make or provide teachers with opportunities to improve their teaching.
- Governors lack a detailed understanding of the school's most important weaknesses and do not challenge school leaders effectively.

### The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Students feel safe and are well cared for.
- The choice of subjects available in Key Stage 4 is wide and varied. Students' needs are met effectively and imaginatively through alternative course options.
- Students' attitudes to learning are good. They arrive punctually to lessons and attendance is improving.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 43 lessons, of which eight were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made a number of shorter visits to lessons to look at specific aspects of students' work.
- Meetings were held with school staff, including subject leaders and senior leaders, three groups of students, a representative of the local authority and the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors took account of the 52 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) and other communications with parents and carers, such as letters, which helped inspectors to focus on particular aspects of the school's work.
- Inspectors considered the 10 staff questionnaire responses.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school, spoke informally with students and looked at a number of documents, including the school's policy on how it manages and improves teaching and decides on pay. Records relating to attendance, behaviour, minutes of governing body meetings and documents relating to safeguarding were also examined.

## Inspection team

Simon Blackburn, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Anna Fisher	Additional Inspector
Patrick Taylor	Additional Inspector
Kevin Harrison	Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.*

### Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average secondary school.
- Most students are White British. The proportion of students who come from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average and the proportion of students identified as speaking English as an additional language is also below the national average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium (those known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority and those with a parent in the armed services) is below average.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is below the national average as is the proportion supported through school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school uses Dudley College as alternative off-site provision to support its students. Other students take part in vocational training arranged at a range of providers.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to raise standards and students' achievement by ensuring that teachers:
  - consistently plan and deliver lessons that provide suitable challenge for all the students by using all available data about students' progress
  - encourage students to take responsibility for their learning through greater opportunities for group work and problem-solving activities
  - use the students' own good responses to problems or provide models of good practice so that students can assess their own progress against the best
  - use questioning more effectively to probe and deepen students' understanding
  - use their marking to correct basic errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar and then check that students improve their work as directed
  - consistently give students written feedback that shows them what they need to do to reach the higher levels
  - give students time to reflect on, and respond to, comments about their work.
- Improve leadership, management and governance at all levels by:
  - ensuring that the checks made on teaching focus on the quality of learning and the progress made by students rather than the activities they undertake
  - making sure that the leaders and managers who check on the quality of teaching are properly trained and can make accurate judgements
  - providing guidance and support to teachers to help them improve their practice, including the

- chance to see the best teachers teaching
- checking on the implementation and impact of whole-school policies, especially the marking policy
- undertaking an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved
- taking rapid action following the review to improve governance so that governors are able to ask challenging questions and hold the school to account for improvements in teaching and students' achievement.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- Students join the school with attainment that is typical for their ages. The Year 11 students who took their GCSE examinations in 2011 and 2012 made much less progress than similar students nationally. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades at A\* to C including English and mathematics was below the national average in 2012.
- In 2012, too few students of middle ability achieved the GCSE grades of which they were capable. Girls do better than boys, although both underachieve overall. There is no difference in the progress of students from different ethnic backgrounds.
- The progress of students who are disabled or those who have special educational needs varies too much. These students make better progress in English than in mathematics, where their progress is inadequate, but progress in the current Year 11 is not as good as progress in Year 10.
- The achievement of students eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is inadequate. There was a gap of about a grade per subject in 2012 between this group and other students. Only 29% of this group made the progress they should in English and just 17% in mathematics. Pupil premium funding is not sufficiently well targeted to meet the needs of eligible students, with the result that these students currently in the school do not do as well as their peers.
- The Year 7 catch-up premium funding has been used to provide reading support, with the result that some lower-attaining students' reading ages have increased considerably.
- The school enters students early for mathematics and English. Those who are successful in gaining at least a C grade are then expected to continue to work towards achieving the highest possible grade of which they are capable; this leads to higher attainment for some students.
- The small number of students who attend courses at the local college or with other providers make good progress. The school can point to examples of students who have succeeded as a result of the opportunities these courses offer.
- There have been improvements in the progress of students in some subjects, most notably science, modern foreign languages, history and geography. This is as a result of a concerted effort by subject leaders to use the data they have about students' progress to plan extra lessons and activities to make sure that students make faster progress. This approach is not taken in all subjects.

### The quality of teaching

### is inadequate

- Weaknesses in teaching over time have resulted in students being unable to acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding that they need to be successful.
- Teachers do not always use all the available information about students' progress to plan and deliver lessons that stretch everyone. Too often, one task is given to all students and some find it too difficult while others are not challenged enough.

- Where teaching in lessons requires improvement or is inadequate, teachers often spend too long explaining and do not allow students enough time to complete tasks individually or to work together on problems. As a result, students do not practise their skills and develop their understanding and this limits their learning.
- When students complete work to a high standard or demonstrate high skill levels, some teachers do not capitalise on this success to show other students what can be achieved or to discuss how other students can improve their own work.
- The quality of marking is variable. In science, the school's marking policy is used by all teachers and students receive good-quality feedback about their work as well as precise information about how to improve. However, this is not the case in all subjects across the school or within subjects. Opportunities for students to review their own progress and that of other students were often missed. Teachers do not have a routine expectation that students will read and use the comments they make about their work.
- Teachers do not always ask students to correct basic errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar and, when they do, the corrections are often not carried out so that the same errors appear again and again in students' work.
- The quality of questioning used by teachers is variable and too often is not planned to stretch students or deepen their understanding. This is in contrast with the best practice, where teachers skilfully question and challenge students to provide fuller explanations; this improves their learning and understanding. In these lessons, students' active participation is encouraged through work with their peers as well as working on their own. For example, in a Year 10 philosophy and ethics lesson, questioning was both targeted at certain students, and probing. In addition, students who were more advanced in their learning were well supported with excellent additional materials to promote rapid progress.
- There were indications during the inspection that the quality of teaching is improving as a result of a more systematic approach to checking lessons and identifying what teachers need to do to improve. These improvements have not ensured that students currently in the school are making adequate progress.

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

- Students behave well around the school, treating each other with respect and showing courtesy to adults and visitors. They enjoy socialising with each other and use the communal spaces around the school well.
- Parents who expressed a view through the Parent View website are generally positive about behaviour at the school, and this is supported by the school's own parental surveys. In formal discussions with students, inspectors found that they understand the different forms of bullying, including homophobic and cyber-bullying, and know how to keep themselves safe from these. Students say that bullying is rare and the school does a lot to raise their awareness of the issues. There are 'anti-bullying ambassadors' drawn from the student body who help in this task.
- Thorough tracking of students' behaviour across the school ensures that students take responsibility for their behaviour and that teachers are consistent in their classroom management.
- Students' attitudes to learning are typically good. Students arrive punctually to lessons and there

are only occasional incidents of low-level disruption to learning. Students understand and appreciate the system of rewards and sanctions that the school operates.

- Attendance is improving slowly and is in line with the national average. Some groups' attendance, for example those students eligible for support through the pupil premium, has improved faster than the general trend as a result of rigorous checks. Persistent absence remains above the national average but the exhaustive work the school does with families is beginning to reduce the number of days missed.
- The use of fixed-term exclusions fell below the national average in 2012 as a result of innovative responses to disruptive behaviour and the effective use of internal withdrawal procedures.
- The behaviour and attendance of those students attending courses away from the school site is checked carefully and well managed.

### **The leadership and management are inadequate**

- Leadership and management are inadequate because leaders have not ensured that teaching and achievement improve rapidly. As a result, students' progress in many subjects continues to be too slow.
- Leaders and managers have not acted with sufficient urgency to deal with all of the recommendations from the previous inspection in 2010. They have not done enough to ensure that the level of challenge for all students is high, and so achievement has not improved sufficiently.
- Senior leaders who jointly observed lessons with inspectors generally made accurate and rigorous judgements. However, the school's records of the quality of teaching do not focus well enough on the progress students make and pay too much attention to the activities teachers ask them to undertake. As a result, judgements about teaching over time are generous and the senior leadership team has an inaccurate picture of the quality of teaching in the school. A wide range of managers and leaders observes lessons and the training they have received has not ensured that they make consistently accurate judgements on the most important elements of lessons.
- Some of the leaders' observations contribute to the performance management process that is aimed at helping to improve teaching quality and to inform pay progression. However, the targets that are set for teachers are not carefully and precisely worded to ensure that leaders and managers can hold teachers to account for the quality and impact of their work.
- The performance management system, together with the general timetable of continuous professional development for teachers, does not allow teachers to see the best teaching that the school has to offer and so improve their practice.
- The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.
- The quality of leadership in subjects and in other areas is variable. Leaders do not systematically check that policies and procedures are being followed or how effective they are. Leadership of science and modern foreign languages is stronger than other areas because good use is made of data about students' progress and policies are followed consistently resulting in better outcomes for students.

- Senior leaders have improved tracking and monitoring systems. They have a clearer picture of where there is underachievement and steps are being taken to address this, but achievement is still not improving fast enough.
- Targets for students are being made more challenging, especially in Key Stage 3, but the school does not use the information about the progress students are making towards the targets to identify and address individual underachievement with enough rigour.
- The school has used the funding received from the pupil premium to finance staffing to support improvements in behaviour and attendance rather than having a direct impact on achievement. As a result, eligible students are making differing amounts of progress in different subjects and across year groups. Leaders have not evaluated the impact of the spending.
- Action plans identify the correct priorities for improvement and the most recent versions have more clearly focused success criteria so that governors can judge progress in key areas for improvement.
- The curriculum offers a broad range of subjects in Key Stages 3 and 4 that are well matched to students' interests and abilities. Programmes are individually designed for students who have particular needs and the school sources work-related experiences for students in the local community. 'Preparation time' each morning, assemblies and many lessons provide students with opportunities for reflection and develop students' respect for other peoples, values and cultures. Special multicultural days celebrate different cultures and encourage students to appreciate the diversity of British society. While the broad scope of the curriculum offers an interesting education to students, individual elements are not being planned and taught well enough to ensure students' achievement improves rapidly.
- The local authority provided light-touch support to this previously good school and has helped the school to review its provision in the light of the 2012 GCSE examination results.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Until recently, the governing body relied too heavily on the information it receives from senior leaders and has not done enough to challenge leaders and hold the school to account for the performance of its students. A concentration on 'headline' attainment figures has meant that poor rates of progress went unchallenged for too long. The governing body has not ensured that rigorous performance management, related to rewards for good teaching and the efficient deployment of resources, has led to improved outcomes for students. They have not ensured that teachers' pay rises are linked to the quality of their work. Governors have tried to ensure that the allocation of pupil premium funding was closing the gaps in attainment for eligible students but it has not been effective in overcoming the barriers to learning for those students it is intended to support. The governing body ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.



## 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>	103855
<b>Local authority</b>	Dudley
<b>Inspection number</b>	412470

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1091
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Pauline Gregory
<b>Headteacher</b>	Stephanie Sherwood
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 January 2010
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