

Pershore High School

Station Road, Pershore, WR10 2BX

Inspection dates 16–17 July 2013

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	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress and achieve well. Standards by the end of Year 11 are above average.
- Leaders and staff have responded swiftly to the below expected examination results in English in 2012. Students' progress has improved over the year and their achievement is now good.
- Teaching is good with some outstanding practice. Teachers know their subjects well and are skilled in using questioning to extend students' learning.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students make rapid progress from their starting points. They benefit from a wide choice of courses that appeal to their interests.
- Students' behaviour is excellent. They are polite and courteous and are extremely supportive of each other. They gain tremendous confidence through participation in the school's programmes to build their leadership skills.
- Leaders have worked successfully to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching. The school has effective and well organised systems for managing teaching and learning.
- Students are able to choose from a wide variety of subjects and courses. There is an excellent choice of activities outside the classroom and these enrich students' learning.
- Governance is strong. Members of the governing body are skilled and knowledgeable, providing support and challenge to school leaders. They make a valuable contribution to the school's ongoing improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to make sure that all students make rapid progress. At times, teachers do not check students' understanding thoroughly enough during lessons, so that students move on to new tasks before they are ready.
- Students are not always given enough opportunities to discuss their learning during lessons.
- The quality of marking and feedback varies. Not all staff have fully adopted the school's marking policy and, as a result, students are not always clear about precisely how they can improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 36 lessons and five tutorial sessions. Four of these observations were carried out jointly with members of the school’s leadership team. One inspector also carried out a series of shorter visits to lessons.
- There were no students from Year 11 or Year 13 on site during the inspection.
- During both days of the inspection, the school ran a series of induction activities for students currently in Year 7 at other schools who will join Year 8 in September 2013. Inspectors observed some of these activities.
- Meetings were held with staff, groups of students and five members of the governing body. A telephone discussion was held with the School Improvement Partner.
- Inspectors took account of the 59 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Responses to questionnaires completed by 71 staff were also analysed and considered.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including national published assessment data and the school’s own data, the school’s self-evaluation, improvement plans, safeguarding policies, behaviour policies and records and documents relating teachers’ performance management.

Inspection team

Julie Price Grimshaw, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Robert Steed	Additional Inspector
Jeffery Plumb	Additional Inspector
Gerard Gast	Additional Inspector
Gwendoline Onyon	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Pershore High School is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school converted to academy status in July 2011. When its predecessor school, also known as Pershore High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- Almost all students are from White British backgrounds. There are no students at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is broadly average.
- The school has an Autism Base providing specialist support for up to 15 students with autism spectrum disorder.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below average. This is additional support for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with a parent in the armed services.
- Approximately 26 students from Key Stage 4 attend alternative provision at South Worcestershire College and the Pershore campus of Warwickshire College. They follow vocational courses including animal care, land based studies, motor vehicle maintenance and hair and beauty.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for secondary schools, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching, so that all students make rapid progress, by making sure that:
 - all teachers carefully check students' understanding during lessons so that they are moved on to new tasks at the right time
 - students are given enough opportunities to discuss their learning during lessons
 - teachers' marking and feedback are of consistently high quality so that students understand exactly what they need to do to improve.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school with standards that are broadly average. They make good progress during Key Stages 3 and 4 and standards by the end of Year 11 are now above average in English and mathematics.
- Students' achievement in art, and in design and technology is strong, with the proportion of students gaining the highest grades at GCSE being above the national average.
- In 2012, the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C was below average because a large number of students did not gain the expected grade C in English. School leaders and staff responded very swiftly and students' progress has accelerated over the past year. Information on students' achievement, together with evidence from students' work, shows that standards have risen and are now at above average levels.
- Students' achievement in the sixth form is outstanding. They make rapid progress in Years 12 and 13 and achieve exceptionally well at AS level and A2 level as well as on other programmes.
- The school enters some students for GCSE English before the summer term in Year 11. The decision to do so is taken carefully and does not disadvantage students.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress and achieve well. Their achievement has improved over recent years. These students are encouraged to develop their thinking skills and find things out for themselves. For example, in an outstanding mathematics lesson observed during the inspection, the teacher and teaching assistants helped students to make rapid progress by setting suitable tasks and giving just the right amount of support.
- Students in the Autism Base also achieve well as a result of the good quality specialist support that they receive. These students are integrated well into mainstream lessons throughout the school. The attention given to ensuring that all students make progress reflects the school's strong commitment to promoting equal opportunities.
- Students who attend alternative provision make good progress. Their achievement on these vocational courses is carefully tracked by the school.
- Those eligible for support through the pupil premium are making good progress. Currently, these students are approximately two-thirds of a grade behind in English and a grade behind in mathematics by the end of Year 11. The gap between these students and their peers is narrowing as a result of the additional support and resources funded by the pupil premium.

The quality of teaching is good

- There is a positive climate for learning in all classrooms. Teachers plan work that is set at the right level of difficulty for individual students, with a variety of tasks to keep students motivated. The majority of teachers take care to set work that challenges the most able students.
- Many teachers use questioning skilfully to extend students' learning and encourage them to

develop their thinking skills. At the beginning of lessons, teachers give clear guidance on what students must do to be successful.

- Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects. So too, teaching assistants with expertise in particular subjects are often allocated to those departments so that they can offer high quality support to a range of students within a group. This was evident in an English lesson observed during the inspection where students were supported well by an expert teaching assistant. As a result of this guidance, related specifically to their English skills, they made good progress.
- Students say that they learn best when they have the chance to discuss their learning in detail and this was a prominent feature of the outstanding lessons observed during the inspection. However, students are not always encouraged to speak at length about their learning and this can prevent them from making the progress of which they are capable.
- Where teaching is best, as in many sixth form lessons, teachers have very high expectations of their students, who are encouraged to be very actively involved in finding things out for themselves. Teachers check students' understanding frequently, re-shaping tasks and explanations if necessary, to make sure that learning is secure and leads to excellent progress.
- Occasionally, some teachers do not check students' understanding carefully enough during lessons and, at times, students are moved on to new tasks before they have completed the current task to a high standard. This hampers their progress as they are not able to build on secure knowledge and understanding when moving on to a new activity.
- The quality of marking varies. Some written feedback is excellent and gives students clear and helpful advice. However, not all teachers follow the school's policy on marking and their written feedback is less thorough, which can limit the pace of progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students have good attitudes to learning and behave exceptionally well around the school. They have impeccable manners and are extremely welcoming and polite to visitors. Students are proud to attend the school and many were keen to tell inspectors how much they are enjoying their time there.
- Students are kind, helpful and respectful towards one another. They say that bullying, in any form, is simply not tolerated, either by staff or by the students themselves, and that they are committed to 'looking after each other'.
- Tutor groups are mixed-age, with each group consisting of students from Year 8 to Year 13. Students say that they like this approach as they have opportunities to learn from each other. For example, one Year 10 student said 'You can ask the older ones for advice as they've already been through the exams, but you can also give advice to the younger students when they need it'.
- An outstanding feature of the school's work is the way in which it promotes the development of leadership skills amongst students. Sixth form students relish the opportunity to become sports leaders and many students benefit from the work of the school's 'leadership academy.' The success of this approach was seen in the work of the Year 12 students who, during the inspection, confidently managed a range of excellent induction activities for the incoming Year 8 students.

- Students have a very secure awareness of how to keep themselves safe. They say that they feel completely safe in school. Staff provide high quality care and support for all those who need it.
- Attendance is typically above average, but attendance rates fell to broadly average over the past year. This was largely due to transport difficulties linked to severe weather during the winter months. Punctuality to lessons is excellent.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong leadership. His ambitious vision for the school's future is communicated clearly to other leaders and the staff. Senior leaders have a very accurate awareness of the quality of the school's work. This is shown, for example, in the swift way in which leaders responded to the below average attainment in some subjects last year. Their success in tackling this issue shows that there is strong capacity for further improvement.
 - The school has established good systems for managing the quality of teaching and learning. Staff have specific targets that help them to improve the quality of their work and thus raise students' achievement. Senior staff are skilled in observing teaching and learning and give helpful feedback. As a result, the quality of teaching continues to improve.
 - The School Improvement Partner provides valuable support to senior leaders and governors. The school has also maintained a good relationship with the local authority.
 - The school offers a wide range of courses and subjects, both in the main school and the sixth form. The choice of programmes on offer is reviewed regularly, being driven by students' needs and interests. Literacy and numeracy skills are promoted well across different subjects.
 - There is an excellent variety of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Staff run various revision and homework clubs and there is an extensive range of sporting activities, including an equestrian team. The orchestra and choir have performed at Worcester Cathedral, there are numerous trips to art galleries and museums and many students participate in the school's debating society. These activities, together with the school's international links, promote spiritual, social, moral and cultural development particularly well.
 - The school benefits from partnerships with external organisations, including other schools. Induction arrangements are excellent and help incoming students to settle very quickly. Relationships with parents are good, as shown in the overwhelmingly positive responses to the Parent View questionnaire.
- **The governance of the school:**
- The governing body is closely involved in all aspects of the school's work and makes an important contribution to school improvement. Governors provide both support and challenge to school leaders. They have a secure understanding of information on students' achievement and know how well the school is performing in comparison to others. Governors visit lessons and individual governors are linked to particular subject departments.
 - Governors have an accurate overview of the quality of teaching across the school. Through the 'learning links' group, they gather students' views and discuss potential improvements to learning with both students and staff. Governors are very familiar with the school's systems for managing staff performance and make sure that there are secure links between the quality of teachers' work and pay awards.

- The governing body manages the school budget well. There is a designated governor responsible for checking on the impact of pupil premium funding and reporting back to the full governing body. Governors fulfil all statutory responsibilities, including those related to safeguarding.

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	136925
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	412862

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	12–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1178
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rob Phillips
Headteacher	Clive Corbett
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01386 552471
Fax number	01386 555104
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