

Wexham School

Norway Drive, Slough, SL2 5QP

Inspection dates 24–25 September 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.

- The standards achieved by students are rapidly rising because they make good progress. The proportion of students making outstanding progress is growing, including in English and mathematics.
- The sixth form is good and the students achieve well.
- The majority of teaching is good because teachers carefully match work to students' needs and abilities. Some teaching is outstanding. As a result, gaps in achievement between different groups of students are closing.
- The headteacher is a strong leader. She makes sure that all leaders, including middle leaders, take effective action to improve teaching and students' achievement.
- Governors know the school well and provide good challenge and support, with a clear focus on improving achievement and the quality of the teaching.
- The vast majority of students respect each other, behave well and are keen to learn.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- The proportion of students making outstanding progress is not yet high enough to ensure that the standards achieved by students are in line with national averages.
- A minority of teaching requires improvement because a small number of teachers do not challenge students effectively. In these lessons students make slower progress than in the vast majority of lessons.
- There is occasionally some low-level disruption by a minority of students when teaching is weaker.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 lessons. Four of these observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors analysed 38 responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and met with a small group of parents and carers to gather their views.
- The views of staff were gathered through talking to them throughout the inspection and analysing the 25 responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentary evidence provided by the school, including records of observations of lessons, information about the progress of students, a range of policies, minutes of governing body meetings, the school's own checks on how well it is doing, the school's improvement plan, attendance records and logs of behavioural incidents.
- Safeguarding procedures were checked.
- Inspectors looked carefully at students' work and teachers' marking. They also talked to groups of students, to students in lessons and to students around the school at break and lunchtime.
- Meetings were held with a variety of people, including leaders, governors and a representative of the local authority.

Inspection team

Matthew Haynes, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Baker

Additional Inspector

Heidi Boreham

Additional Inspector

Carol Worthington

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Wexham School is a slightly smaller-than-average non-selective secondary school with a sixth form in a grammar school area.
- The proportions of students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority and the children of services families), and of students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium, are well above the national averages.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported by school action is above average, as is the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. The school currently has a specially resourced provision for 19 students with autism. The provision caters for the same age range as the main school.
- The majority of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. About two-thirds of the students have a first language other than English.
- A small number of Year 10 and Year 11 students currently attend alternative provision for part of their education. They study Levels 1 and 2 BTEC qualifications in motor mechanics at 'Pitstop'.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' progress and attainment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise the standards that students reach so that they are at least in line with national averages by:
 - increasing students' rates of progress so that more students make outstanding progress
 - eradicating the small amount of teaching that requires improvement and increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching
 - eliminating low-level disruption in lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students start Year 7 with levels of attainment that are generally well below those expected for their age. The standards reached by students at the end of Key Stage 4 are rapidly rising because they make good progress overall, including in English and mathematics. Standards are below national averages, but the gap is closing.
- The provisional 2013 GCSE results show that the proportion of students who achieved five or more GCSEs at grade C or higher, including in English and mathematics, has increased significantly since 2012. This is because students are making much more progress. The school's accurate assessments of students' work show that the achievement of students in all year groups is good overall and improving.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Students follow appropriate courses because of the effective advice and guidance they receive. They are taught well and consequently they make good progress.
- A small but growing proportion of students make outstanding progress. Occasionally, however, students make slower progress because they are not challenged effectively in lessons.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs, including students with autism, achieve well because they are challenged and supported effectively by teachers and teaching assistants. Achievement in the specialist provision for students with autism is good because it is well led and managed.
- Students who are eligible for the pupil premium make good progress, including in English and mathematics. The gaps between their achievement and that of other students at the school are closing rapidly, and sometimes their progress exceeds that of other students. While they achieve on average half a grade lower in GCSE than other students in the school, their GCSE average points scores compare favourably with those of similar students across the country.
- Students from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those whose first language is other than English, make good progress and generally achieve well. As a result, all students have an equal opportunity to achieve.
- Students get effective extra help and support when they need it. This includes Year 7 students who start at the school with low levels of attainment in English and mathematics, including those eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium, students eligible for the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, students for whom English is an additional language, and any students who are at risk of underachieving. There is a wide range of interventions which have a positive impact on these students' achievement so that they make good progress, for example extra help in lessons, one-to-one support and small-group teaching.
- Certain carefully targeted students are entered early for GCSE English, mathematics or science examinations in Year 10. This helps stretch the more able students, since they often reach high standards and sometimes move on to study other courses. For example, students who achieved high grades in GCSE mathematics in Year 10 are now studying GCSE statistics in Year 11.
- The achievement of the small number of Year 10 and Year 11 students who attend 'Pitstop' for part of their education is good. This is because of the effective teaching and support they get.
- Students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics are developed well across the school. Students often improve their writing skills in a range of subjects across the curriculum. They apply their knowledge of mathematics in a number of other subjects, for example science. Many students read often and widely, and students who need extra support to improve their reading skills get it. The school's library is well resourced and used well by students.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is good and, as a result, students make good progress. A growing proportion of teaching is outstanding. Students recognise and value the good teaching they get, and the majority of parents and carers who contributed to the inspection think teaching is of high quality.
- Students are given work that is well matched to their abilities. They are given tasks that challenge them effectively so that all students are stretched, including the more able. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson the teacher meticulously adapted tasks to meet students' different needs.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. The best teachers show real passion for their subjects and develop a thirst for knowledge among students.
- Teachers know students well and question them skilfully to deepen their understanding. In the best lessons teachers challenge students to take risks in their learning, for example in a Year 10 mathematics lesson. This promotes students' thinking well and accelerates their progress.
- Teachers' marking and feedback to students are consistently good. Students are told what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Increasingly, students are given opportunities to act on teachers' advice to improve their work.
- In many lessons, students are required to assess their own work or that of their peers. This contributes to their good progress by helping them reflect clearly on their learning and what they can do to improve.
- A small amount of teaching requires improvement. In these lessons teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are not high enough. Students make slower progress because they are not engaged effectively with tasks that challenge and interest them. These lessons move at a slower pace and as a result students sometimes lose concentration and focus.
- Students' literacy skills are developed well across the curriculum, for example through the use of subject-specific vocabulary in many subjects. The widespread use of tablet computers throughout the school has a positive impact on students' learning, for example by supporting their reading and research skills.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed well in many lessons. For example, in a Year 9 history lesson students were highly engaged in discussing the moral and social issues surrounding slavery. 'Learning for life' lessons regularly deal with sensitive issues which help students explore different beliefs and cultures, for example in a Year 10 lesson where students considered the plight of women in Afghanistan.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to students' progress. They guide, question and support students effectively without doing too much for them.
- Homework frequently consolidates what students have learned in lessons and in some cases extends students' learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school, including in the dining hall at lunchtime, is typically good. The vast majority of students are keen to learn and they apply themselves well.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour, and the majority of teachers manage behaviour well. As a result, students' behaviour has improved since the last inspection. Most staff, parents and carers who expressed their opinions to inspectors agree that behaviour is good.
- Occasionally, however, a minority of students cause low-level disruption in lessons where teaching is weaker.
- Students report that bullying is rare. When it occurs it is dealt with quickly and effectively. One parent or carer reported that when her daughter was bullied 'the school was incredible' in the

way it swiftly sorted out the problem. Students know about the different types of bullying.

- There are very few racial incidents reported and they are minor in nature. Students respect the differences between people from different cultures and backgrounds. Relationships between different groups of students are good and the school is effective in dealing with discrimination in any of its forms.
- A growing number of students are trained as peer mentors or bullying mentors. They make a valuable contribution to ensuring good behaviour by helping to sort out problems between students before they escalate.
- Students' attendance is average and improving. Exclusions are low. Leaders and teachers work hard to keep students in school and learning.
- Students say they feel safe in school. They are taught how to stay safe, including online.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher successfully leads by example. Rapid improvements in teaching and achievement are linked directly to her strong leadership. She has high expectations of all leaders and teachers because she is determined that all students will achieve their best. She has created a strong senior leadership team that is effective in leading improvement across the school.
- Senior leaders have a detailed and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. They regularly check on the quality of teaching, make accurate judgements and give precise advice to teachers about how to improve. They expect all teaching to be at least good and they act swiftly to improve the small proportion of teaching that requires improvement. Senior leaders make sure that teachers get the training that they need. Consequently, teaching is now good overall and improving.
- Middle leaders rightly play a full part in improving teaching and students' achievement. They work closely with teachers to help them to improve, identify the best practice and share this effectively across the school. They are robustly held to account for students' achievement.
- The quality of information about students' achievement is excellent and is updated regularly. As a result, leaders act urgently and effectively when students are at risk of underachieving.
- The process for checking on teachers' performance is very rigorous. This ensures that teachers are only rewarded for good performance.
- The curriculum is well matched to students' needs and interests. In addition, there is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer for students, including sporting and cultural activities. Students get good quality advice and guidance about what courses to follow during Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
- The school communicates well with parents and carers, for example through regular newsletters, and via text messages and email. Parents and carers have regular opportunities to find out about how well their children are doing and they find these useful. The parent outreach worker does valuable work with parents and carers to help them support their children's learning. Most parents and carers who expressed a view feel that any concerns they have are dealt with promptly and effectively.
- Leaders have made good use of the support provided by the local authority. The Head of School Improvement visits the school regularly to monitor its progress. He has helped to increase the effectiveness of governors and middle leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors challenge school leaders effectively and hold them to account. The governing body has been strengthened since the previous inspection by governors who have strong educational backgrounds, including the Chair of the Governing Body. Governors regularly ask probing questions at meetings based on their accurate view of the performance of the school and their understanding of the relevant data. They understand what the strengths and weaknesses are of teaching and what leaders are

doing to reward good teaching and deal with underperformance. They make sure that the checks on teachers' performance are rigorous, and they manage the headteacher's performance well by setting her challenging targets. The governing body ensures good financial management. Governors know how the pupil premium is spent and what impact it has on students' achievement. They make sure that safeguarding arrangements are good.

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	110078
Local authority	Slough
Inspection number	428178

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community
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	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Lake
Headteacher	Mary Sparrow
Date of previous school inspection	30 May 2012
Telephone number	01753 526797
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Email address	post@wexham.slough.sch.uk

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