

Leasowes High School

Kent Road, Halesowen, B62 8PJ

Inspection dates 23–24 October 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement requires improvement. GCSE results in mathematics have risen this year, but previously not enough students have made sufficient progress in this subject.
- Although teaching is getting better too much teaching requires improvement.
- Teaching has not been consistently strong enough to ensure that all students, particularly the more able, make good progress during their time at the school.
- Teachers' expectations are not consistently high. Students are not always given work that matches their abilities. In a number of lessons students complete the same work and are not sufficiently challenged.
- The way that teachers use questioning does not always check students' learning or help them to develop a deeper understanding of key ideas.
- Some senior and other leaders have not taken full account of the effect that teaching has on students' progress over time, and as a result have been over generous in their evaluation of the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- Since the previous inspection more rigorous systems and policies to improve the quality of teaching have not been consistently applied by all staff.

The school has the following strengths

- Students behave well in lessons and around the school. They feel safe and have positive attitudes to learning.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress because of the well-targeted and sensitive support that they receive.
- Adults who work alongside teachers in lessons provide good support for individuals and small groups of students.
- Governors are knowledgeable and committed to improving standards of teaching and achievement. They know how well the school is doing and are challenging senior leaders to do better.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 39 lessons, nine of which were observed jointly with senior staff. A number of other lessons were visited briefly with senior leaders to look at students' attitudes to learning and sample the quality of the marking of students' work.
- Inspectors examined students' books, talked to students about their work and heard students read in lessons. They observed other aspects of the school day, including registration, students' behaviour at break and lunchtime, and students' arrival and departure from school.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, senior and other leaders, a cross-section of staff, and four groups of students. In addition, discussions took place with three representatives from the governing body, including the Chair of Governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 25 parents and carers who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire, and 68 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and reviewed a wide range of documents, including the school's own data on students' recent examinations and current progress, its self-evaluation and development plan, information on the work of the staff, training arrangements for teachers, checks on teaching, students' behaviour and attendance, the safeguarding of students and details of governance.

Inspection team

Ann Behan, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Stephen Munday	Additional Inspector
Patrick Walsh	Additional Inspector
Lesley Voaden	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Leasowes High School is a smaller-than-average sized secondary school. Numbers have fallen significantly since the previous inspection.
- The proportion of students supported by pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and students known to be eligible for free school meals, is above average.
- Whilst the majority of students are from White British backgrounds the proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average. The largest groups of these students are from Indian and Pakistani background.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A small number of students at Key Stage 4 receive part of their education away from the school site. They follow work-related courses at Stourbridge College. A further group of Key Stage 4 students are educated at Greenhill Alternative Learning Campus which Leasowes High School runs. Students from The Earls High School and St Michael's CE High School also use this facility.
- 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?

- Raise students' achievement, especially in mathematics and particularly that of the more able, through teaching that is always good or better by making sure that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve
 - all lessons are demanding and well paced so that students are able to maintain good levels of concentration and enjoyment in their learning
 - all teachers plan lessons that meet all students' needs and adapt their teaching according to students' progress during lessons
 - questioning is used to challenge and develop students' thinking and problem-solving skills to accelerate their learning and progress.
- Strengthen the quality of leadership and management by making sure that:
 - leaders at all levels are equally rigorous in evaluating the impact of teaching on students' learning in lessons and their progress over time, in order to accelerate improvement in students' achievement
 - school systems and policies are applied consistently by all staff.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because students have not made sufficient progress in mathematics over time. In 2012 the percentages of students making or exceeding expected progress were well below national figures. However, unvalidated results for 2013 show that there has been an improvement and evidence from the inspection and the school's monitoring show that better teaching in mathematics is improving students' progress.
- When students join the school in Year 7 their standards of attainment are broadly in line with those found nationally in English and mathematics, although there is variation with different year groups. By the end of Year 11 their standards in English are above average, but until 2013, standards in mathematics had been significantly below the national average.
- Although there was an increase in the proportion of students gaining higher GCSE A*–A grades in 2013, it is still not high enough. This is because teaching does not effectively enable the more-able students to do their best and attain the higher grades.
- Students' achievement in English has been consistently better than in mathematics. In 2012, the proportions of students making or exceeding expected progress were significantly better than national figures. However, a dip in 2013 GCSE results in English, and an improvement in results in mathematics, has brought students' progress in these subjects closer together.
- In 2012, students eligible for the pupil premium attained approximately a grade lower in English and approximately three quarters of a grade lower in mathematics when compared to other students in the school. However, in English they were approximately half a grade above when compared to similar students across the country, and in mathematics there was little difference. Unvalidated results for 2013 examination and data for current students show that the gaps between other students in the school and eligible students are starting to narrow, particularly at Key Stage 3.
- The percentage of students gaining five or more GCSE A*–C grades, including English and mathematics, improved in 2012 to be close to the national average. However, there is a dip in the 2013 unvalidated result which is similar to that of 2011.
- Since the previous inspection, even with the dip in 2013, overall GCSE results have improved and information on the progress of students currently in school shows that these improvements are set to continue.
- Until this year, some students have been entered early for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics. However, the school has decided that this has limited some students from reaching higher grades and in future all students will spend two years studying for English and mathematics GCSE examinations.
- Progress in lessons still varies too much across the school. This is because teaching is not consistently good. Too many lessons do not cater for different abilities, particularly the more-able students, and as a result these students make insufficient progress.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, those eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium, and those who speak English as an additional language all benefit from additional help and guidance. Their progress is checked regularly and extra support is given when it is needed.

As a result, these students make at least similar progress to their peers.

- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress because the school provides additional support for each student tailored to meet their particular needs.
- The attendance, behaviour and progress of students who are taught off the school site are monitored effectively and they make at least similar progress to their peers.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although it has improved since the last inspection, teaching has not been consistently good over time and too much teaching still requires improvement. As a result some students, particularly the more able, do not make sufficient progress.
- Teachers do not consistently plan activities which meet the different needs of students. In too many lessons the majority of students complete the same work regardless of their ability level. In these lessons there is a lack pace to learning and students are not challenged enough.
- The quality of questioning is not consistently good. In lessons that require improvement teachers often ask questions that are aimed at the whole class, that require little thought or explanation from students, and do not enable them to deepen their learning or understanding.
- Where teaching is more successful, teachers plan work that is challenging and use a variety of activities to engage students' interest. This was seen in a Year 7 English lesson where students were investigating fictional characters. The teacher used role play to engage students, there were opportunities for students to investigate and discuss ideas, to practise listening and speaking skills, and to develop their analytical thinking. The teacher's expectations were high, students were provided with excellent prompts to extend their learning, and progress was outstanding.
- The school has a policy to promote literacy across all subjects, and in many lessons students are given the opportunity to practise their speaking and listening skills, and are encouraged to use technical terms and words relevant to the subject. In the best lessons students are given good opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing linked to the topics being studied. However, this is not consistent across subjects.
- Much of the marking of work and feedback to students on how to improve are good. In the best practice teachers identify what students need to do to improve their work, allow students time to reflect on the feedback, and provide opportunities for students to respond to advice. However, there are inconsistencies across subjects.
- Support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is consistently good. Their progress is checked regularly and extra help is provided when it is needed. The skills of additional adults are used well to help these students and as a result they make good progress.
- Relationships are excellent in almost all lessons. The majority of teachers have good subject knowledge and in good or better lessons use this to engage and enthuse students in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Students are courteous and polite and treat adults, and each other, with respect. They say they enjoy school, feel safe, that staff care for them, and that they value the rewards system that has been introduced for good behaviour.
- Students' attitudes to learning are positive. Students concentrate well in lessons and complete their work with pride. When they are given the opportunity they work well collaboratively, are enthusiastic to investigate and share ideas, and enjoy working independently. Evidence indicates that students attending off-site provision behave equally well.
- Students have a good understanding of different kinds of bullying including racist behaviour and homophobia. They told inspectors that bullying is rare and, on the few occasions that it happens, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff.
- Students are encouraged to use modern technology safely and are well informed about dangers of the internet and cyber-bullying.
- The large majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View felt that students were well behaved and cared for, and that the school dealt with bullying effectively.
- In assemblies, lessons on 'Learning to Live', and across subjects, teachers give students a good understanding on how to stay safe. They cover a variety of themes about family issues, stages in growing up, the importance of healthy lifestyles and the dangers and adverse effects of drugs and substance abuse. Students are very positive and appreciative of this advice and support.
- Attendance is rising and has improved since the previous inspection from low to just below the national average. Exclusions have been high until recently, but the improved use of the off-site Greenhill Alternative Campus, and a greater emphasis on rewards for good behaviour, have had a positive effect and exclusions are now reducing.
- Behaviour and safety are not yet outstanding because where teaching does not fully engage or interest students some lose concentration.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because teaching and achievement are not yet good. Although gaps are narrowing there is too much variation in how well different groups of students progress in some subjects, and while the quality of teaching is getting better it is not consistently good across the school.
- Since the previous inspection senior leaders have introduced more systematic checks for monitoring teaching and learning and more detailed policies for teachers to follow. However, not all leaders are rigorous at making sure that all policies, for example regarding marking and literacy, are applied consistently by all staff.
- Senior leaders are aware of strengths and weaknesses of the school but their evaluations of achievement and teaching do not always take account of student progress over time, and as a result they are over generous in their judgements.
- The management of teachers' performance management is linked to training. Recently, more rigorous systems tackle any underperformance more swiftly and there is evidence to show that no members of staff are given salary increases unless their performance over time warrants

them.

- Throughout the year staff take part in training to meet their specific needs. There is a school focus on improving the quality of teaching, and in supporting leaders to improve their leadership and management skills. The impact of this is that teaching is improving, particularly in mathematics, and leaders at all levels are taking greater responsibility for monitoring the work in their areas.
- The curriculum provides appropriate courses for students in Key Stage 4, including well-managed off-site provision. In addition, there are many opportunities for students to take part in a number of educational trips and a variety of clubs and activities beyond the school day which contribute well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Additional funding received through the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up premium is used wisely to make sure that students get the help that they need. The school works hard to prevent discrimination and to make sure all students have an equal opportunity to succeed. It has identified that more-able students need to do better and has introduced a number of initiatives, including educational visits and extra lessons to raise their attainment.
- Staff morale is high. The responses to the staff questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the school and the drive for improvement. One member of the support staff wrote, 'Leasowes is a great place to work. I have the scope to use my skills working with the students in a supportive role and making a difference. This is a great environment for staff and students'.
- The school enjoys positive relationships with most parents and carers, and with different groups within the local community. It benefits from effective links with other agencies, schools and colleges, and local businesses. The school works well with local primary schools to aid good progression from Year 6 to Year 7, and provides opportunities for older students to gain independent help about different career choices as well as advice about careers through the school's 'Learning to Live' programme.
- There is a positive working relationship between the school and the local authority. The support provided by the local authority has helped the school improve the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics, effectively manage the financial and staffing implications of falling rolls, and improve the fabric of the building.
- Arrangements for ensuring the safeguarding of students meet statutory requirements, including risk assessments for students who are educated away from the school site.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is committed to providing the best education for students and makes sure that all statutory requirements are met. Governors have a wide range of skills through the training that they have received, through their experience as governors, and through their own experiences in education and business. This gives them a good understanding of the quality of teaching. They use national assessment data to compare the effectiveness of the school with others locally and nationally, and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They make sure that there are close links between the performance management of staff, the effectiveness of teaching and students' achievement, and salary awards. They know what the school is doing to reward good teachers and to tackle any underperformance. They have a good grasp of the school's finances and are carefully managing a falling roll to ensure that the school gets best value for money and stays within budget. They are keen to make sure that resources are used effectively to benefit students, including those for the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up.

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	103861
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	429956

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	816
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Gill Withers
Principal	Mr Neil Shaw
Date of previous school inspection	29 February 2012
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