

Heart of England School

Gipsy Lane, Balsall Common, Coventry, CV7 7FW

Inspection dates 13–14 November 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		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Attainment is well above the national average and standards have risen each year.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs do particularly well in Key Stage 3.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Consequently, students make good progress in most subjects and are willing to try their best.
- The school is a welcoming community in which students feel valued and safe. Attendance is high, reflecting students' enjoyment of school. Students are courteous towards staff, visitors and each other.
- The headteacher and other school leaders have unswerving determination to ensure all students achieve as well as possible. The school is skilled at training staff, and teaching has improved. Teachers are keen to learn from each other. Staff morale is high.
- Governors know the school very well and give excellent challenge and support to leaders.
- The sixth form is outstanding. It is a popular choice among students at age 16. Students make excellent progress due to the extensive range of subjects offered, strong teaching and impressive care, guidance and support.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet generally outstanding and a small proportion requires improvement.
- Teachers do not always plan learning to match students' individual abilities to ensure their best possible progress.
- Teachers do not always check students' understanding during the course of the lesson. As a result, some teachers do not adapt their plans to help students make further progress.
- Although some teaching uses different ways to inspire students to learn, this practice is not yet widespread across the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 49 lessons taught by 48 teachers. Four lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also made shorter visits to a number of lessons.
- Inspectors attended an assembly and listened to some Year 7 and Year 8 students read. Inspectors saw students' written work during lessons and, with school leaders, looked in greater depth at a selection of students' books.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other school leaders and staff, and five members of the governing body.
- Inspectors read the responses to the questionnaires completed by 80 members of staff.
- The inspection team considered the views given in the 135 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and the very small number of letters sent by parents.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including the school's checks on how well it is doing and its plans for improvement. They looked at records of the quality of teaching and checked the school's information about students' progress over time. Inspectors looked closely at how the school keeps its students safe and the records of students' behaviour and attendance. They also considered minutes of the governing body.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Cooper, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Huw Bishop	Additional Inspector
Ann Andersen	Additional Inspector
Robert Bourdon-Pierre	Additional Inspector
Sajid Gulzar	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a larger-than-average secondary school for students from Years 7 to 13. Most students are White British.
- Heart of England School converted to become an academy school in July 2011. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good. It is not linked to a wider trust and uses the services of the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above the national average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (the additional funding provided by the government for looked after children and students known to be eligible for free school meals and others) is below average.
- An increasing proportion of students join the school other than at the usual starting times.
- A small number of students attend work-related courses part-time, off the school site, at Solihull College and CTC Kingshurst Academy.
- 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?

- Bring the quality of teaching to that of the best, so that all students make excellent progress, by:
 - making sure that teachers plan lessons which focus on meeting students' individual learning needs
 - ensuring that teachers frequently check the progress students are making in lessons, so that they can adjust learning to help students achieve as well as possible
 - increasing the range of teaching techniques in the classroom, so that teachers use innovative approaches more frequently to deepen students' understanding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students start at the school with standards that are above average in English and mathematics. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE qualifications at grades A* to C including English and mathematics, and those achieving the English Baccalaureate, are above average. Results have risen each year.
- Key Stage 3 lays a good foundation for students' progress, especially in mathematics. Students make slightly less progress in English. Over both key stages, students achieve well in both English and mathematics.
- In 2012, the proportion of Year 11 students making good progress in English was higher than that expected nationally. In mathematics, students made at least the progress nationally expected by the end of Key Stage 4, but higher-attaining students made better progress than other groups. Preliminary results for 2013 show that all groups of students made good progress in English and mathematics. The school's information suggests that current Year 11 students are also on track to achieve well in both subjects.
- The two groups of students entered for biology, chemistry and physics achieved high grades in 2012. The remainder of the year group did relatively well in the core science examination but made less progress in additional science. Recognising that separate sciences would provide greater challenge for some students, the school increased the number of entries in 2013, leading to an overall improvement in science results compared with those of 2012.
- In 2012 and 2013, half of the Year 11 students were entered early for GCSE mathematics, which motivated them to improve their grades in the summer examination. The other half of the year group, including the more-able students, did not take the examination until the end of Year 11. This allowed students to gain higher grades, preparing them well for further study. The school no longer intends to enter students early for any examinations.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve well. They make good progress, especially at Key Stage 3, because teachers and other adults support them well.
- Students who join the school other than at the usual times are helped to settle quickly and make good progress.
- A few students attend work-related courses away from school for one day each week. The school checks their progress and attendance regularly. In 2013, all these students gained English, mathematics and other qualifications at school, moving on to post-16 education or employment.
- The pupil premium funding has paid for many different activities for eligible students, including extra tuition, mentoring, revision guides and school visits. In 2012, the gap in attainment between eligible students and others was half a grade in English and one grade in mathematics. In 2013, the gap widened slightly in English, although all students made better progress. In mathematics, the gap narrowed to just under one grade. In Key Stage 3, gaps are closing quickly, with Year 9 pupils eligible for the funding making better progress than their classmates.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is used to pay for small-group sessions in English and mathematics. Almost all pupils eligible for the extra help in 2013 quickly reached Level 4 in both subjects.

Pupils feel that the catch-up has helped them to improve their work in lessons. Pupils read confidently.

- Students make outstanding progress in the sixth form, reaching standards which are well above the national average in most subjects. There is a rising trend in the percentage of students, including the more-able, gaining the highest grades in both A- and AS-level subjects. Students eligible for free school meals do just as well as their classmates.
- The outstanding guidance to students when choosing their subjects means that the drop-out rate during the sixth form is very low and most students achieve extremely well. Students do equally well in the work-related qualifications. Skilful extra tuition helped all of the small number of students who had not yet gained A* to C grades in GCSE English and mathematics achieve these qualifications. The number of students gaining places on sought-after courses at universities is increasing.

The quality of teaching is good

- The school has focused relentlessly on improving the quality of teaching, and removing any weaknesses. As a result, most of the teaching is typically good, with a smaller proportion that is outstanding. Consequently, students respond positively in lessons, achieve well and attain above-average results. Most parents agree with inspection findings that their children are taught well and make good progress.
- Very positive relationships between staff and students are a strong feature of teaching, and most students told inspectors that they enjoyed their lessons.
- In lessons where students make the greatest progress, teachers are skilled at using the information they have about each student, together with excellent subject knowledge, to plan learning which is suitable for each student's needs. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson, students rose to the challenge of acting as 'lead learners' in their groups, helping their classmates get to grips with new figures of speech in the text *Never Let Me Go*. This helped all students in the class to make outstanding progress.
- While most teachers plan work that is sufficiently demanding for students, this is not the case in all lessons. As a result, students, including some of the more able, occasionally do not make as much progress as they could. Teachers do not always find out during the course of the lesson how much students understand and, therefore, do not adjust the learning enough to help students make even more progress.
- The range of teaching techniques used in lessons varies too much. In the very best lessons, teachers use creative approaches to teaching which help students enjoy their learning and make considerable progress. For example, in two Year 7 Spanish lessons where the teaching was outstanding, teachers used imaginative and fast-paced activities to help students become confident in the new phrases. As a result, students proudly showed how fluent they had become in talking about likes and dislikes, showing excellent attitudes to learning. However, not all lessons have such inventive approaches.
- Teachers mark students' work thoroughly, giving detailed comments on it and often providing time for students to improve it. All students know their targets and are clear about what they need to do to reach the next grade or level.
- The teaching of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good and

enables them to make good progress. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and give helpful individual support to these students – and to others – to ensure all achieve well.

- Teaching in the sixth form is never less than good, and is usually better. For example, in a Year 13 sociology lesson, students bounced ideas off each other to check their understanding of the topic 'moral panics'. Students shared their learning, with the teacher stepping in only where extra help was required. Teachers mark students' work carefully, setting out clear steps to improvement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students are polite and considerate towards staff, other students and visitors to the school. They move in a sensible and orderly way through the school buildings and around the site.
- Students show great respect towards each other and work harmoniously with their classmates. In lessons, students were seen helping each other out when, very occasionally, a few did not know exactly what to do.
- Students are eager to learn, and they flourish especially where they find the work particularly interesting and are enthused by the learning. Even where teaching is, occasionally, not as successful, students are always willing to take part and make a positive effort. They have mature attitudes to learning, which contribute considerably to their achievement.
- All students who spoke with inspectors emphasised how safe the school is. Their views are fully supported by staff and parents. Students know how to keep themselves safe and most are aware of the importance of this when using social networking sites.
- Students say that bullying is rare, and they feel strongly that the few instances of bullying that occur are dealt with very well by the school. Students would be confident to go to the anti-bullying ambassadors or to members of staff if they needed help. Pioneering work on anti-bullying led to the school receiving a Diana Award.
- The number of students not allowed in school for a short period due to poor behaviour is well-below average. No student has been permanently excluded from the academy. Teachers and other adults are skilled at helping students who find it harder to cope with school routines.
- Students' attendance is consistently above average and they can be relied upon to arrive on time to their lessons. The school works closely, and often successfully, with the parents of the small number of students who are away from school for longer periods.
- Sixth form students are keen to take part in lessons and show outstanding attitudes to learning. Their attendance is high. Students play an active role in school life, helping Year 7 students to settle in quickly and lead charity events. As a result, sixth form students develop strong social and organisational skills which serve them in excellent stead for future employment. When asked whether they could suggest any areas for improvement, sixth form students spoke as one and said, 'We are happy with everything.' Students' enjoyment of all that the sixth form has to offer is supported by their high staying-on rates and successful completion of courses.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and all leaders and staff throughout the school are united in their ambition for students' success. Leaders' impact on improving teaching and students' achievement, particularly

in the sixth form, has proved highly effective. However, there is no complacency and leaders are determined to improve both teaching and achievement to become outstanding in the main school. The school's capacity to go further forward is strong.

- School leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development of the school. They know how well the school is doing because they systematically analyse evidence of students' progress and attainment. Any weaker teaching has been tackled, and teachers are only given more responsibility where there is consistent evidence that their teaching is good or better.
- The quality of teaching is central to the school's improvement plan. School leaders are rigorous in checking teaching, helping any staff to be more effective whose teaching is not consistently good. Individual teachers develop their teaching skills through the in-house training programme, with improvements measured through regular observations. Teachers spoke enthusiastically about the school's 'learning communities' because they could observe teaching in different subjects and enhance their own skills.
- School leaders are particularly skilled at recognising talent within the staff. Leadership of departments has been strengthened through imaginative links across subjects and leaders below senior level are highly effective. Members of staff feel encouraged to contribute and carry through ideas for improvement. Morale is high. All staff who responded to the questionnaire are proud to work at the school.
- The school offers a broad and balanced range of subjects which suit students' abilities very well and encourage a love of learning. As a result, students respond to learning opportunities with much enthusiasm and are thoroughly prepared for the next stage in their education. Lessons such as the 'cookie factory' in Year 8 and business costing in Year 12 boost students' numeracy and work skills. Visits from authors inspired entries to a short-story competition and increased borrowing rates from the library – enhancing students' literacy skills.
- The many clubs, from sports and music to 'cake and coding', and the social activities in the school's 'Access to Teaching, Learning and Support' (ATLAS) centre, contribute to students' enjoyment in learning. Students appreciate the wide range of visits, such as the Year 8 study week, which offers each student an international sporting and cultural activity. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was enhanced, for example, through an assembly on: 'You can find both good and bad in anything.' They considered how the internet can be used as a means to good ends – such as the international response to the recent disaster in the Philippines and, by contrast, the risks of cyber-bullying.
- The school has welcomed the opportunity to continue its links with the local authority. The local authority provides 'light-touch' support and agrees with the school's judgements of its strengths and areas to improve. The local authority adviser singled out for praise the difference the school's work with a local primary school had made there to the pupils' achievement in mathematics.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. The head of sixth form makes sure that students are fully supported. Independent advice is arranged and tailor-made courses are provided for students who stay on to gain work-related experience and extra qualifications – apart from the A-level curriculum. A close eye is kept on how well all students are doing, and teaching is frequently checked to make sure that students achieve in all their subjects.

■ The governance of the school:

- The school has a highly skilled and knowledgeable governing body. Governors are committed to students' success across both key stages and the sixth form. Through their regular visits to the school, when they go into lessons and meet staff and students, governors check progress against the priorities of the school improvement plan. As a result, governors have a deep and informed insight into how well the school is doing. They strike the right balance between challenge and support to school leaders.
- Governors make the most of the local authority's programme of training and frequent briefings from the school, including about results and current progress. This helps them understand data on students' progress and attainment, including that provided direct to the school by Ofsted and by the Ofsted Data Dashboard. Their probing questions help them to find out how well different subjects and groups of students are achieving.
- Governors know what the quality of teaching is across the school. They fully understand the school's system of setting targets for teachers to improve their work. They rightly insist on teachers' movement up the pay scale being linked to good teaching and students' progress. Governors and school leaders alike are not afraid to make difficult decisions about staff to make sure that students achieve as well as possible.
- Governors have the expertise required to check that the school's finances are well managed. They analyse carefully how well the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch-up funding are being used to help eligible students make progress.
- The governing body fulfils all statutory duties, including 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	136909
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	427109

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	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	1312
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	265
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Lycett
Headteacher	Andrew Mackereth
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2008
Telephone number	01676 535222
Fax number	01676 534282
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