

Woodrush High School

Shawhurst Lane, Wythall, B47 5JW

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- All groups of students achieve very well. Levels of attainment by the end of Year 11 are high and students in all year groups are making rapid progress. They enjoy their learning and are keen to do well.
- There is consistency in the high quality of teaching, with much that is outstanding. Teachers plan very well to ensure that students learn actively and tasks are varied and exciting.
- Teachers know their students well so tasks in most lessons are at the right level of difficulty. Opportunities are very occasionally missed to fully challenge those of highest ability.
- Teachers are skilled at assessing learning during lessons and moving students on with their learning as soon as they show understanding. Some opportunities are missed to encourage students to respond to written marking.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school. They show great enthusiasm for learning. They are polite and courteous and relationships are warm and supportive. They say that they always feel safe and greatly appreciate the support that adults provide.
- The headteacher is very well supported by the strong senior team and the governing body, who share his vision to promote the well-being and achievement of all groups of students.
- Leaders' procedures to ensure that the quality of teaching continues to improve and to support those teachers new to the profession are exemplary. Staff work as a close effective team, sharing good practice and providing support for each other.
- The sixth form is good and is improving. High-quality teaching and the wide variety of courses offered enable students, increasingly, to achieve well. Some opportunities are being missed to fully promote students' independent learning skills.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons, eight of which were seen together with the school’s senior leaders. They also made a number of further short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with students, governors and staff, including subject leaders. A telephone conversation took place with the School Improvement Partner.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at: policies, the school’s own assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and its development planning, records of lesson monitoring, information about students’ progress, safeguarding documents, and samples of students’ work.
- The views of 67 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, together with the school’s own survey of parents’ views and correspondence from two parents. Inspectors also took account of 51 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Mary Davis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Nigel Boyd

Additional Inspector

Thomas Walton

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Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Woodrush High School converted to become an academy school on 1 July 2011. When its predecessor school, Woodrush Community High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school is an average-sized secondary school having a small sixth form where numbers are increasing.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average, while the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is below average with the largest group being of Indian heritage. Very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is below the national average.
- Fourteen students attend a variety of full- and part-time alternative courses. These vocational courses are provided at New College, Hollywood Animal Rescue Centre, Redditch Wheels and South Birmingham College. In addition, six students with medical or mental health needs are dual registered with specialist providers including the James Brindley Medical School.
- The school meets the current government floor standards for secondary schools, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school runs the neighbouring Youth and Community Centre.
- Over the past two years there has been much staffing disruption, particularly in mathematics and English, including in the leadership of English. The changes included 10 teachers absent for personal reasons. Fourteen new staff joined the school in September 2013, including 10 newly qualified teachers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make all teaching outstanding by ensuring that:
 - written marking always provides students with opportunities to respond to advice by practising skills, correcting mistakes or undertaking a new challenge
 - teachers always fully promote the progress of the most-able students by providing them with tasks that are appropriately challenging.
- Raise achievement in the sixth form by developing students' independent study skills so that they are able to take more responsibility for their own progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students typically enter the school with average standards in reading, writing, communication and mathematics. They make excellent progress and the proportion of Year 11 students gaining five GCSE subject grades A* to C including English and mathematics is consistently well-above average. In 2013, all students gained five or more higher GCSE grades. The school's current assessments indicate that attainment is predicted to rise further by the end of the current academic year.
- Students make exceptional progress from their starting points. They were keen to tell inspectors how much the school encourages and supports them. Over the past two years, the proportion of students making better progress than that expected nationally in English and mathematics fell slightly as a result of the staffing difficulties in these subjects. Current assessments show that the proportion of students making accelerated progress in these subjects across all year groups compares very well with last year's national averages.
- Students show enthusiasm for learning in all subjects and are keen to do well. There is no significant difference between the rates of progress of students from different ethnic backgrounds or the very few who speak English as an additional language.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are very well supported by expert teaching assistants in classrooms so that all are fully included and make similarly outstanding progress to their peers. Those with complex needs receive well-focused specialist support enabling them to reach their potential as learners.
- The school has a strong focus on the promotion of literacy and numeracy throughout the curriculum. Each Year 7 class has a designated literacy lesson each week that includes reading, spelling and promotes other literacy skills. Numeracy challenges are regularly set during form time. Year 7 catch-up funding enables those with low literacy and numeracy levels to benefit from small group and individual support and to achieve well in these skills.
- Pupil premium funding is used very effectively on a wide range of strategies. These focus on promoting study skills and providing the financial support to ensure that those facing challenging circumstances are fully included in enrichment activities, such as going on school trips and having music tuition. Well-focused support is also provided to promote good behaviour and attendance of this group through the provision of learning coordinators and a family-liaison worker.
- The attainment of the students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above that achieved by this group nationally in English and mathematics, although within school in 2013 they were a GCSE grade behind their classmates in both subjects. Some of this group had complex special educational learning needs and, even with good support, struggled to make the exceptional progress made by other students. The school's current data and observations by inspectors across Years 7 to 11 show that gaps between the attainment and progress of eligible pupils and others are rapidly closing for all ability levels and achievement is at least good.
- The students following alternative courses off-site achieve well as a result of the support and high-quality care they receive matched to their learning needs.
- The majority of students are entered for GCSE mathematics during Year 10, having followed a two-year course starting in Year 9. The most-able students further their mathematical skills

during Year 11, preparing them well for advanced study.

- Achievement is rising steadily in the sixth form, with a further rise in attainment in 2013, although numbers taking each subject are often very low, making comparison with national levels of achievement difficult. Students' attainment on entry to the sixth form has not always reflected the profile of attainment seen in Year 11 as many able students have chosen to undertake education elsewhere to follow subjects that could not be made available in the sixth form. Attainment on entry is rising as a result of more students choosing to stay on at age 16, as a result of a wider range of subjects, including a range of vocational courses, now being offered, rather than going to other local providers. This range of courses, matching students' needs more closely, has resulted in an improved success rate. The school requires that all students should have achieved at least a grade C in GCSE English and mathematics before entering the sixth form. More students are remaining in the sixth form for two years, rather than one. The proportion who complete their courses is now high. The proportion of those who continue into higher education is increasing. All students in 2013 went on to higher or further education or employment. During the inspection, students were observed performing at a high level and making rapid progress in many subjects as a result of the good and outstanding teaching and the individual guidance and support provided.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Robust monitoring of teaching by senior leaders shows that teaching in the main school and in the sixth form is usually outstanding and rarely less than good. This was confirmed by lesson observations during the inspection. Despite the large proportion of new staff, many of whom are newly qualified, there is a high degree of consistency of practice. Students told inspectors how much they value the high-quality teaching they receive. Consequently, they make outstanding progress.
- Teachers know students well and effectively plan learning based on accurate assessment of attainment and progress so that work is usually very well matched to the range of abilities in each class. Lessons are often very active, including opportunities for students to move round the room, searching for clues, engaging in competition or working together in pairs or small groups to enable them to discuss their learning. For example, in a Year 10 music lesson where the teaching was outstanding, students made rapid progress in their understanding of the Viennese waltz by expertly dancing the waltz to emphasise the rise and fall in the accompanying rhythms.
- The schools detailed literacy and numeracy policy ensures that subject teachers across the school promote these skills, together with a love of reading, and ensure that students develop the use of specialist technical language. For example, in a Year 7 lesson observed, students confidently explained the difference between 'synonym' and 'homophone'.
- Teachers support disabled students and those who have special educational needs very effectively, deploying teaching assistants well. The teachers promote a high standard of behaviour and learning skills. They patiently encourage less-confident students by providing them with opportunities to succeed. The fun activities provided fully engage students in their learning.
- Students are often encouraged to take the lead in their learning and teacher and students work together as a team. For example, in a Year 10 drama lesson, students and their teacher worked together to make last-minute preparations for their public performance of excerpts from *The Winter's Tale*, as part of a local Shakespeare festival. Close teamwork and a high degree of commitment and enthusiasm were evident, resulting in students gaining in self-confidence and being proud of their achievement and knowledge of the text.

- Where teaching is good rather than outstanding, teachers occasionally missed the opportunity to fully stretch those of highest ability by directing them to work independently or setting them a special challenge.
- Teachers use assessment very well to identify when students need extra support or are ready to move on with their learning. Students frequently assess each other's or their own work, having a good understanding of the success criteria for the task and being skilled in identifying how to improve or develop their work. For example, in one lesson observed, students built a figure using a model construction kit, adding a brick each time a particular feature was used to provide a visual indication of the progress they were making.
- Although the marking of students' work provides clear targets for development of skills and understanding, not all teachers provide opportunities for students to respond to advice, by practising skills, correcting mistakes or being set an additional challenge.
- Teaching in the sixth form is usually outstanding, providing a high level of challenge. For example, in a Year 13 Spanish lesson observed, students were able to discuss issues in fluent Spanish, having a clear understanding of how to achieve their challenging targets. This is typical of the sixth form teaching observed. Some opportunities are being missed to promote students' independence by using their time outside lessons to the full to research and further their studies.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students told inspectors that behaviour in lessons is typically of a high standard and that their learning is rarely disrupted. Inspectors found the atmosphere is calm and in all lessons warm relationships are evident between adults and students.
- Students show enthusiasm for their learning and are attentive and engaged in all lessons across the school, responding very quickly to instructions and showing a determination to do well. They are polite and courteous to adults, confidently explaining their learning to inspectors.
- Students say that the school keeps them very safe. They have a clear understanding of bullying and the different forms it can take, including a good understanding of e-safety. They say that any racist or homophobic name-calling is not tolerated and that adults support them very well if they are troubled in any way.
- They enjoy taking responsible roles, for example, acting as peer mentors supporting younger students. Students take their responsibilities as global citizens seriously and raise large sums of money for charity each year.
- Sixth form students contribute fully to the school community, taking an active role, including in providing care for younger students. Their responsible attitudes enable them to develop leadership and employability skills and to increase their self-confidence. For example, they regularly support slower readers or contribute to house assemblies.
- The school's leaders provide excellent support for students and their families facing challenging circumstances and to promote good attendance and punctuality. As a result, persistent absence rates are low. Good attendance is promoted at every opportunity. The school's motto to 'Turn up, work hard, be nice', is constantly reinforced through display around the school. Care is taken to ensure that those on alternative courses attend well and their well-being is closely checked.

- Leaders ensure that the very high standards of behaviour are maintained. Incidents are comprehensively logged and exclusions are low. The house system, led by non-teaching heads of house, is very effective in providing a quick response to any issues and promoting students' well-being and achievement. The strong partnership with the Youth and Community Centre promotes self-esteem and enables students to socialise in a safe environment.
- Parents, student and staff surveys are unreservedly positive about both behaviour and safety.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is highly effective in promoting the achievement and well-being of all students. He is supported by a strong team and has established excellent practice of close teamwork among all staff.
- Comprehensive quality-assurance procedures are well established, involving leaders at all levels. Teachers told inspectors how much they value the outstanding support and training provided. Particularly effective are the weekly training sessions, which are closely matched to teachers' individual needs and enable them to share good practice. The effectiveness of this support is illustrated by the high proportion of newly qualified teachers who were observed delivering lessons where the teaching was good or outstanding, after only eight weeks in the profession. Rigorous management of staff performance is well established and salary progression is only possible if targets for students' achievement are fully met.
- The school knows itself extremely well. All subject leaders contribute to self-evaluation which is detailed and leads to the identification of appropriate priorities for improvement, strongly focusing on raising the aspirations and achievement of all groups of students. There is a strong capacity for further improvement in this school where equality of opportunity is successfully promoted and discrimination eliminated. For example, leaders analysed the take-up of after-school activities and trips to ensure that those eligible for pupil premium funding were fully included. This led to the provision of focused support to enable all to take part.
- The strong leaders of subjects and house leaders, including those responsible for students' well-being and behaviour, value the support of their line managers who helped them to establish clear and consistent procedures across the school and to drive improvement further forward.
- The courses that students follow are extremely well planned and organised. They provide a wide range of subjects that are personalised to meet the needs of students. There are increasing opportunities to take English Baccalaureate subjects, for example the take-up of language courses has increased with courses offered in French or Spanish. Students' experiences are enriched by an extensive range of well-attended after-school activities and trips. Alternative vocational courses, such as health and beauty and animal welfare, have ensured that students' learning needs are well met.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a real strength. There are a wide range of well-thought-out opportunities provided, including theme of the week, awareness days and cultural visits. Students told inspectors of their enjoyment of partnering a Birmingham school whose students are from a variety of different ethnic backgrounds, learning about each other's local area and visiting places of worship.
- Independent careers guidance, provided through the Youth and Community Centre, is highly valued by students enabling them to make realistic and informed choices about their next steps in education or career. As a result, there are no students who are not in education, employment

or training when they leave school.

- The school provides many opportunities to involve parents in the education of their children. The school website and expertly produced newsletters and magazines provide detailed information and telephone calls and frequent text messages keep parents informed. Family-learning projects promote family well-being. Parents, through a variety of surveys, express a high degree of satisfaction with all aspects of the school's work.
- The sixth form is well led. Students appreciate the range of guidance and support they receive and the ever-increasing variety of subjects they are offered – for example, politics and photography. These include academic and vocational courses which flexibly meet the needs and interests of students. Students' progress is well monitored and individual support provided if students are identified as at risk of not meeting their challenging targets.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very supportive of the school and provide effective financial and business support as a result of the wide range of expertise within the governing body. They understand how pupil premium additional funding is being spent and the impact that it is making. Governors undertake regular training in order to further develop their effectiveness and are able to compare the school's performance with that of schools nationally. The headteacher provides them with excellent information about issues facing the school, enabling them to appropriately challenge and support. Governors are actively involved in performance management of staff and apply the link between salary progression and students' achievement. They ensure the safety of the school community and that safeguarding procedures are exemplary. Consequently, all safeguarding requirements are met.

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	136924
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	427136

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
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	1000
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Sambrook
Headteacher	Chris King
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
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