

Pedmore Technology College and Community School

Grange Lane, Pedmore, Stourbridge, DY9 7HS

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 because not all students are making the progress they should, particularly in mathematics.
- Although it is getting better, teaching has not been consistently strong enough to ensure that all students make good progress during their time in the school.
- There is too much teaching which does not take full account of students' different learning needs and abilities.
- Students do not have enough opportunities to work independently or in small groups to develop knowledge or understanding for themselves.
- Teachers do not always use questioning effectively to check students' understanding or to enable them to think more deeply about their learning.
- Marking does not always inform students about how well they are doing or provide them with sufficient guidance on how to improve their work.
- Senior leaders have introduced new systems to improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement. There are signs that these are having a positive effect. However, they are not yet well established, and it is too early to judge their full impact on improving standards.

The school has the following strengths

- Since his arrival, the headteacher has quickly gained a clear understanding of the school's areas for development and, with a newly restructured senior leadership team, has raised expectations and accountability.
- There are examples of good and outstanding teaching in the school.
- Students are very positive about the school. They say they are well cared for, feel safe and value the multicultural, harmonious atmosphere of the school.
- Governors have a wide range of experience and know the areas that need to be improved in school. Increasingly, they are challenging senior leaders to do better.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 33 lessons, of which nine were joint observations with the headteacher. A number of other lessons were visited briefly with senior leaders to look at students' attitudes to learning, to sample the quality of marking of students' work, and to check the promotion of literacy across subjects.
- Inspectors examined students' books, talked to students about their work and heard them read in lessons. They observed other aspects of the school day including an assembly, students' behaviour at break and lunchtime, and students' arrival and departure from school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and other leaders, and four groups of students. In addition, discussions took place with the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 21 parents who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire, and 35 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents, including the school's own analysis of recent examinations and current progress, its self-evaluation and development plan, information about the work of staff linked to training arrangements, checks on teaching, students' behaviour and attendance, the safeguarding of students, and details of governance.

Inspection team

Ann Behan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

David Wolfson

Additional Inspector

Robert Steed

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- A new headteacher took up post in January 2013.
- While the majority of students are from White British backgrounds, the proportion of students for minority ethnic background is above average. The largest group of these students is of Pakistani heritage.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average, but only a few are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for students who are eligible for free school meals, and those in the care of the local authority, is above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A small number of students attend off-site provision. They follow work-related courses at Black County Wheels, and Cherry Tree Learning Centre.
- 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?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good, and increase the proportion that is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently plan activities that are challenging and closely matched to the abilities and learning needs of all students
 - providing more opportunities for students to work in groups or independently to research and explore topics and ideas for themselves
 - ensuring marking is of a consistently high standard so that written feedback to students explains what they have done well and what they can do to improve their work
 - using questioning more effectively to assess students' learning and progress, and provide them with greater opportunities for reflection and discussion to deepen their understanding.
- Raise achievement in mathematics and make sure that students make consistently good progress.
- Build on the improving quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - recently introduced more robust procedures for monitoring teaching and learning become well established so that improvements in teaching and students' achievement are accelerated and sustained
 - existing strengths in teaching are shared as models of good practice across subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because students have not made sufficient progress in mathematics. In 2012, fewer students made or exceeded the nationally expected rate of progress in the subject. Although there was a slight improvement in 2013, progress remains below what it could be. Students' achievement in English and in science have been consistently better than in mathematics. The differences in achievement reflect the quality of teaching in these subjects.
- Attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is below average. By Year 11, the proportion of students leaving school with five or more GCSE subjects at grades A* to C including English and mathematics was below average in 2012 and had dipped from previous years. However, 2013 results show a significant improvement, and the school's current assessments suggest that these improvements are set to continue.
- Outcomes have been consistently high for students in science subjects and many make outstanding progress. There are also good and better outcomes in the humanities subjects – history, geography and religious education.
- In 2012, students eligible for the pupil premium attained approximately three quarters of a GCSE grade lower in English, and a third of a grade lower in mathematics when compared to other students in the school. When compared to similar students across the country, they attained one third of a grade above in English, and were broadly in line with similar students in mathematics. In 2013, the gaps widened between eligible students and others in school – in mathematics significantly so. However, current assessment data show that these gaps in attainment are narrowing.
- As a result of actions taken over the last year, there are signs that achievement is improving across subjects, although progress in lessons still varies too much across the school. Too many lessons do not cater for different abilities, are aimed at the middle ability range. Consequently, some students, particularly the more able, still make insufficient progress. However, there are examples of students making outstanding progress. This was evident in an Urdu lesson, where the teacher built on previous knowledge, where aspirations were high, and where challenging teaching brought about outstanding progress in improving students' writing and reading skills.
- Approximately a quarter of students are entered early for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics. This does not impede their progress and many go on to achieve higher grades at the end of Year 11.
- Students eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding in English and mathematics, and those for whom English is an additional language benefit from additional help and support when it is needed. As a result, these students are making similar progress to that of other students in the school. Year 7 catch-up funding has been used to provide one-to-one tuition in English and to employ a mentor in mathematics and this has had a positive effect of narrowing the gap between these and other students' attainment in Year 7.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs benefit from individual, targeted support and are making similar progress to that of their peers.
- The progress made by the small number of students who attend courses off-site is monitored by

the school. The progress they are making is similar to that of other students.

- Students have a positive attitude to learning. When teaching is good or better they respond well, are keen to learn and their progress is at least good.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because there is too much variability in quality and not enough good teaching. There are examples of good and outstanding teaching but in too many lessons teaching does not enable students to make good progress.
- Where teaching requires improvement, teachers do not always use assessment data on students' attainment and progress to plan activities which meet the different learning needs and abilities of students. In these lessons, all students follow the same work regardless of their ability so there is a lack of challenge for more-able students and they do not make sufficient progress.
- In some lessons there is a lack of pace to learning, students are not challenged to think and exchange ideas, and questioning is aimed at the whole class rather than to check individual and different groups of students' understanding and involvement in their learning. Students are not always given enough opportunity to work independently or in small groups to research and explore ideas for themselves.
- Marking is too variable in quality across subjects. In the best marking, teachers give good feedback on what students are doing well and explain clearly what they need to do to improve their work. They allow time for students to reflect and take action on advice given, and then check that students have responded to their suggestions. However, in some cases, marking involves little more than a few ticks and some comments of praise without giving students any guidance on how to move forward.
- Where teaching is most successful, teachers plan work that is challenging and use a variety of activities to engage students' interest. This was seen in a Year 9 mathematics lesson where students were applying the theorem of Pythagoras and using trigonometry to solve problems. The teacher had high expectations, set problems that matched different abilities, encouraged students to discuss and explore their ideas, and challenged individuals and groups with searching questions. Students were enthusiastic, thoroughly enjoyed their learning, and made excellent progress.
- The school has recently introduced a literacy programme to promote literacy across the curriculum and this is having a positive effect in school. In the most successful lessons, teachers focus on providing activities that allow students to practise their reading, speaking and listening skills, and to produce extended pieces of writing linked to topics being studied.
- The deployment of teaching assistants has been revised recently. Those observed who followed best practice worked collaboratively with teachers and were effective in supporting disabled students and those who have special educational needs. However, in less effective situations, while they were keen to support students, their contribution was less well planned by the teacher.
- Relationships are good in almost all lessons. Where teaching is good or better, teachers engage and enthuse students in their learning and their attitudes to learning are at least good.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour around school and in lessons is very calm, orderly and respectful. Students say they value the harmonious, multicultural atmosphere of the school.
- Students have a good awareness of different forms of bullying or discrimination and know about e-safety. They say that incidents of bullying, or any form of discrimination, are rare and that on the few occasions when they happen they are dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff.
- In assemblies, in lessons and through the 'Learn for Life' programme students are given advice about how to stay healthy. They cover a variety of themes about family issues, the importance of healthy lifestyles and the dangers and adverse effects of drugs and substance abuse.
- Attendance is improving and is broadly in line with the national average. The school has been active in raising attendance and reducing persistent absence.
- Although declining, exclusions have been above the national average. The introduction of new, more rigorous behaviour-management systems and a revision of the curriculum, are having a positive effect on reducing the numbers of exclusions.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View, and the staff who completed the staff questionnaire thought that students were well behaved and cared for, and that the school dealt with bullying effectively. These views endorsed those of the inspectors.
- Students' attendance at courses off-site is good. The school liaises well with the providers to check students' attendance and behaviour, and to ensure they are benefiting from the alternative provision.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Although the headteacher, along with the recently restructured senior leadership team, has raised expectations and accountability and introduced more robust systems for checking teaching, it is too early to judge their impact. Teaching is still not consistently good and there is still too much variation between the progress of different groups, particularly in mathematics, so leadership and management require improvement.
- School self-evaluation shows that senior leaders have a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Their focus on improving teaching is the right one; they have put systems in place to achieve better teaching and these are having a positive impact. However, teaching is not improving at a fast enough rate, and further work needs to be done to share the good and outstanding practice that exists already, across the school.
- New systems for the management of staff have recently been introduced and senior staff now meet regularly with teachers to discuss progress towards meeting their annual objectives related to students' achievement. Training has been closely linked to improve teaching and learning, and leadership and management. There has been a change in the school timetable to enable training to take place every Wednesday morning, which has been well received by staff. Any underperformance is now dealt with quickly, and salary increases are not awarded unless

students' performance over time warrants them.

- Staff morale is high. The overwhelming response to the staff questionnaire was one of support for the headteacher and the changes that he has brought about. For example, one member of the support staff wrote, 'The new head has given us all value in our roles.' A teacher wrote, 'I am extremely proud of working here. The students are a pleasure to teach.'
- The curriculum has been revised to provide appropriate courses for students in Key Stage 4, including well-managed off-site provision. The school works well with local primary schools to aid progression from Year 6 to Year 7, has good links with local businesses and colleges, and provides opportunities for students to gain independent help about different career choices.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through a range of enrichment activities and after-school clubs, through assemblies, and through the 'Learn for Life' programme. Different cultures and religions are respected. In all assemblies, students are encouraged to 'pray to your God' – an action which they appreciate. It shows a celebration of different ideas, religions and cultures that is a hallmark of the school.
- The school works hard to prevent discrimination and to make sure all students are given the equal opportunity to succeed.
- Additional funding received through the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up is used wisely to make sure the eligible students get the help that they need. The school has consulted with the parents of pupil premium students to gain their views on how best to use these funds.
- The school makes sure that relationships with parents are constructive. Parents are very supportive of the school and those responding to Parent View were overwhelmingly positive.
- There is a positive working relationship between the school and the local authority. The local authority provided support during a recent restructuring of staffing and has given advice on improving the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics.
- The school meets all government requirements in relation to safeguarding and safer recruitment.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body does not require review, because it is already having a positive impact on school improvement. Governors have a wide range of experience, and increasingly are becoming better informed so they have a more accurate understanding of how well the school is performing and of the quality of teaching and learning. Through the training that they have received, they are able to analyse outcomes of examination performance. They are asking challenging questions about students' progress and achievement when compared to schools nationally, and make leaders accountable for students' achievement. Governors are involved fully in ensuring close links between performance management of staff, salary increases, and the effectiveness of teaching in ensuring students' achievement. They monitor expenditure closely, including the impact of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up money, and ensure that financial and other resources are used to improve the quality of teaching and raise standards. The governing body ensures that all statutory 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	103859
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	429484

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	563
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Evans
Headteacher	Gareth Lloyd
Date of previous school inspection	28 March 2011
Telephone number	01384 816660
Fax number	01384 816659
Email address	info@pedmoretc.dudley.sch.uk

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