

Holyhead School

Milestone Lane, Handsworth, Birmingham, B21 0HN

Inspection dates 4–5 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	Select
	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.

- Students make excellent progress in all year groups. GCSE results across a wide range of subjects are significantly better than those of similar schools, and students make excellent progress in English and mathematics from starting points which are often well below average.
- Teaching is consistently good and very frequently outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of all students, regardless of their ability, and plan lessons that engage and challenge students to achieve at the highest level.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students respond well to excellent teaching and pastoral support and guidance and make outstanding progress. Through the school's exceptionally strong links with local colleges and universities almost all students progress to the higher education institution of their choice.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding. Their very positive attitudes in lessons help them to learn well. They treat each other and adults with respect and courtesy and are proud of the school's diversity. One student said, 'We are all equal, we all support one another'.
- Sixth form students are excellent role models for other students through their exemplary behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of different students well. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced by a variety of extra-curricular activities and trips and visits which are appreciated by the students.
- The leadership of the principal, senior team and other leaders is excellent. They have high aspirations, which are shared by all staff, to provide the best education and care for all students in the school.
- Governors are well informed and totally committed to supporting the principal and senior leadership team in their endeavours to improve teaching and raise students' achievement.
- Although there is outstanding practice in school, teachers' marking does not always give students enough information about how to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 49 part lessons, 15 of which were observed jointly with senior staff. A number of other lessons were visited to sample the quality of marking of students' work.
- 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 assembly, tutor time, students' behaviour at lunchtime and break, and students' arrival and departure from school.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior and other leaders, and five groups of students. In addition, discussions took place with five governors including the Chair, and an external consultant who works with the school.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 33 parents and carers who responded to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire), nine parents who attended a community group meeting during the inspection, and 70 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- A wide range of documents was reviewed including the school's own data on students' recent examination results and current progress, its self-evaluation and development plan, information about the work of the staff linked to performance management and training arrangements, checks on teaching, students' behaviour and attendance, the safeguarding of students, and governance.

Inspection team

Ann Behan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kathy Yates

Additional Inspector

Keith Brown

Additional Inspector

Bob Roberts

Additional Inspector

William Cassell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Holyhead School is a larger than average-sized secondary school. It converted to an academy on 1 August 2011. When its predecessor school, Holyhead School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.
- Most students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest of these groups is Indian, followed by Pakistani, then Caribbean and Bangladeshi heritages. Over three quarters of the students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority, is well above the national average.
- About one quarter of students in Years 7 and 8 benefit from the nationally funded catch-up programme, which is for students who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The school does not use any off-site provision to cover alternative education for groups of students.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for secondary schools, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teachers' marking across all subjects matches the exemplary practice seen in English.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students enter the school with attainment which is well below the national average. By the end of Key Stage 4 the proportion of students gaining five GCSE passes at A* - C, including English and mathematics, was well above the national average in 2012 and in line with the national average in 2013. Given the very low starting points of students, this represents outstanding progress.
- Students' achievement in mathematics has been consistently outstanding. In 2012 and 2013 the proportion making, and exceeding, the expected levels of progress in mathematics was significantly above national averages. Current assessments suggest that this is set to continue.
- Students' achievement in English has not been as consistently strong as in mathematics. In 2012, the proportion of students making, and exceeding, the expected levels of progress was significantly above national averages. In 2013, although an above average proportion of students made the expected progress, there was a dip in the proportion exceeding this. Current assessments, and work seen during the inspection, suggest that achievement in English is improving rapidly, particularly for the more-able students. This is as a result of the school providing additional resources, increasing the number of teaching and support staff, and consistently good and frequently outstanding teaching in the subject.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make outstanding progress because of the specific and well-targeted help that they receive. They benefit from individual one-to-one teaching, small group work, and very effective in-class support.
- The progress of students who speak English as an additional language is at least good and in many cases outstanding. This is because of the effectively targeted support they receive from well qualified teaching assistants, and the emphasis placed on improving literacy across the school. Students are given many opportunities to practise reading, speaking, listening and writing skills across a number of subjects to consolidate and apply the skills learnt in English.
- The school makes good use of pupil premium funding to provide additional support for eligible students. Their progress is similar to other students in the school, and compares favourably with similar students nationally. In English, in 2013 they attained approximately half a GCSE grade lower than other students in school, and approximately three quarters of a grade lower in mathematics. Current assessments suggest that the gaps are narrowing significantly in both subjects.
- Students who enter the school in Year 7 with attainment below national expectations receive intensive support to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. They respond well to this and make rapid improvements, particularly in their reading, so the gap between them and others is reducing.
- The attainment and progress of more-able students are improving. In 2013 their progress was good but some students failed to reach the higher grades at GCSE, particularly in English. Additional support, and careful monitoring of these students are having a positive impact, and recent assessments show that they are making at least good progress. In lessons observed during the inspection in English, they were making outstanding progress.
- Students' achievement in the sixth form is outstanding. They have received excellent guidance to ensure that the courses they are following meet their needs and aspirations, and their progress

is carefully tracked to ensure they are given the support they need to meet their targets. Their excellent attitudes to learning have a positive impact on their progress. There has been a significant improvement in AS and A level results in 2012 and 2013 and almost all students gained the grades that they needed to progress to the universities of their choice.

- The school no longer enters students early for GCSE mathematics. However, some use has been made of early entry for selected students in English. This has been planned after careful consideration of different students' needs.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching in the vast majority of lessons and across subjects is at least good and very often outstanding, including in the sixth form. Teachers use prior achievement information, their excellent subject knowledge and very high expectations, to plan lessons that engage and challenge students of all abilities. As a result almost all students make outstanding progress.
- In the best lessons teachers skilfully question students to encourage them to reflect on what they have learnt and think more deeply about their work. For example, this was seen in a Year 13 mathematics lesson where students were working in pairs, solving different problems and checking their answers against examination mark schemes; once they had solved their problem they became 'experts' and taught other members of the group. The teacher encouraged and challenge students through very searching questioning and students then applied the problems to real life situations. The progress of these students was outstanding.
- Teaching assistants and additional adults make a strong contribution to students' excellent progress. They work collaboratively with teachers to provide additional help for students who have special needs, those from minority ethnic groups, students who speak English as an additional language, and those who are eligible for pupil premium and the catch-up programme. They know the students well, provide the right balance between support and challenge, and help ensure that these students make the best possible progress.
- The school has very well established policies for promoting literacy and numeracy across the curriculum which are consistently applied across all subjects. Students are given many opportunities to practise their reading, speaking, listening and extended writing skills in lessons, and are encouraged and supported to read for pleasure. As a result many make rapid progress in English from very low starting points.
- The quality of marking is often excellent, particularly in English, but there are inconsistencies in some other subjects. Where marking is less effective, teachers do not always explain what students have done well, or give specific advice on how to improve their work, or check that students have responded to the guidance given.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

- Behaviour around school and in lessons is outstanding. Relationships are excellent and are built on respect and trust. Students from many different backgrounds and cultures get on very well together. This contributes to the calm, happy and purposeful atmosphere of the school.
- Students at all key stages say they feel safe and well cared for, and many talked in a positive way about the mixed aged tutor groups. One student said 'Our vertical tutor groups are like little families'.

- The curriculum is well planned to give students a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. Students are taught about the advantages of healthy life styles and the dangers of alcohol and substance abuse. They know about different kinds of bullying and explained to inspectors about how it is inappropriate to use homophobic and racist language. They are aware of the dangers of the internet and social networking sites and are clear about what constitutes cyber-bullying. Students said bullying is rare, and when it does happen it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff.
- Sixth form students provide excellent role models for younger students and make many important contributions to the school community. Many give up time to work alongside younger students in lessons, providing support and guidance. Younger students were very positive about the way the sixth form students care for them and help them in their studies.
- Attendance has improved and is now above average. The school has successfully worked hard to reduce the proportion of students who have high levels of absence. Exclusions were above the national average in 2012-2013 but the school has reviewed and improved the support given to vulnerable students so that exclusions are falling rapidly and repeat offenders for exclusion reducing.
- The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View, and all of the staff who completed the questionnaire, believe that students are safe and well cared for by the school, that bullying is dealt with effectively, and that students' behaviour is at least good.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The school is led exceptionally well by the principal and the senior leadership team. They have an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the school, set high standards for themselves and others, and are totally committed to providing the best education for students in the school. They are well supported by the governing body.
- Leaders at all levels are held accountable for the success of their areas of responsibility, and are given training and support to fulfil their roles. As a result they contribute significantly to the excellent success of the school.
- Staff morale is high. All of those responding to the staff questionnaire were positive and supportive of the school and the senior leadership team. A member of staff wrote, 'I would not want to work anywhere else, the special relationships and rapport with students is exceptional, their thirst to succeed is infectious'.
- The school has rigorous systems in place to monitor the quality of teaching, and uses detailed assessment data to identify underachievement of students. Teachers know that they are accountable for students' progress and that their movement up the pay scales is linked to the quality of their teaching and students' performance.
- Professional development has a positive impact on the success of the school. The school works collaboratively with schools locally and nationally to provide courses, training and coaching to improve teaching and learning, and to share outstanding practice.
- The curriculum is well matched to the needs and aspirations of all students, including those in the sixth form. Students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is promoted well through the curriculum and daily life of the school as well as through a wide range of enrichment activities, after school clubs, and through a number of educational trips and visits.

- The school has excellent partnerships with local primary schools, secondary schools, colleges and universities, and businesses which provide for smooth progression for students at different stages in their education. At each stage of their education students are given excellent external advice about the requirements for future education pathways and careers.
- Equal opportunities are rigorously promoted across the school so that every student has an equal chance of success. Pupil premium and catch up funding has been used to make sure all students have the opportunity to take part in every activity that the school has on offer, to provide smaller groups in English and mathematics, and to provide additional support for those students who enter the school with low levels of literacy and numeracy and for those with early experiences of English.
- The school has very positive relationships with parents and carers and regularly seeks their views on the effectiveness of its provision. It works closely with parents for whom English is an additional language and provides classes for them to improve their speaking and reading skills so they are better placed to support their children's learning. These parents and those responding to Parent View were overwhelmingly positive and supportive of the work of the school.
- Arrangements for ensuring the safeguarding of students meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Governing Body is very proud of the school and supportive of the work that it does. Governors bring a wealth of experience to their roles and have received excellent training so that they are able to compare how well the school is performing against others nationally. They are well informed about the quality of teaching and the achievement of students through analysis of data, reports from the principal and other leaders, meetings with staff and students, and visits to the school to observe the working day. Governors support the principal well in the performance reviews and pay progressions of staff, and are clear that pay awards are linked closely to high quality teaching and students' achievement. They manage the resources of the school very well, and monitor the effectiveness and impact of their decisions, and those of the senior leadership, to ensure best value. A good example of this is the way they assess the impact of the use of pupil premium and catch-up funds on the progress of eligible students. Governors make sure 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	137034
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	429612

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	1229
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony McCool
Principal	Martin Bayliss
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2009
Telephone number	0121 523 1960
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