

John Willmott School

Reddicap Heath Road, Sutton Coldfield, B75 7DY

Inspection dates

5–6 December 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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Students do not yet make good progress in English and mathematics during their time in the school. In particular, the pace of progress of more-able students is not yet as good as it should be.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Students do not yet make good progress in all of their subjects because good teaching has not been established for long enough to promote good progress over time.
- Occasionally, teaching is not sufficiently challenging, and teachers do not ask enough searching questions to make students explain their understanding.
- When teachers mark work, they do not always help students to improve their work, or make sure that they follow any guidance given.
- Teachers do not always make sure that students present their work in a clear way, so they will be able to refer back to it for revision purposes.
- Leaders do not always make sure that where adults other than teachers provide support for students in lessons, they receive clear guidance on how to help students learn.

The school has the following strengths

- Progress throughout the school is improving, and for students with special educational needs it is good.
- The headteacher provides excellent leadership and works closely with other leaders and governors to drive up standards.
- Leaders are eliminating inadequate teaching, and much of the teaching seen was good. Training has been effective in improving teachers' skills.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour is good. Their attendance has improved rapidly.
- Students say they enjoy being at school. They feel safe thanks to very good support and care, and say that any rare bullying incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 teachers in 40 parts of lessons. Six of these observations were shared with senior leaders to determine how accurately they evaluate teaching.
- Meetings were held with staff, students, parents and governors. The lead inspector also spoke to a representative of the local authority and the school's improvement partner.
- Inspectors examined documents about the school's work, including information about the achievement of students, development planning and the school's own judgements on its strengths and weaknesses.
- Inspectors took account of 75 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, and the school's own survey of parents' views. It also considered the responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Edward Wheatley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Ahson Mohammed	Additional Inspector
Helen Owen	Additional Inspector
Christopher Crouch	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than most secondary schools.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is broadly average, and very few are at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the school premium is above average. This is additional government funding for students who are looked after by the local authority, known to be eligible for free school meals, or from a family with a parent in the armed forces.
- A small number of students are partly educated off site at Plantsbrook School, Fairfax Academy, and Birmingham Metropolitan College.
- 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 and students' achievement by making sure that teachers:
 - provide work that is challenging but carefully planned at the right level of difficulty for different groups, especially the most able students
 - ask searching questions to make sure students fully understand what they are learning, and teachers can see where they need help to develop their understanding further
 - tell students how well they achieve when marking their work and what they need to do to improve it, and insist that students follow the advice given
 - check that students present their work in a clear way so that they fully understand what they have written when they need to use the work for revision later.
- Ensure leaders make effective use of extra adults in the classroom to support students' learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- The progress made by students requires improvement. Many now make good progress, but some have not made sufficient sustained progress over time to reach the standards they are capable of.
- There is an upward trend in progress in all subjects, and actions taken by the school are having a positive effect on improving it further. Nevertheless, more-able students do not make consistently good progress. The focus on helping these students to do better is starting to be successful, but has not been in place for long enough to have had a full impact.
- Standards are rising and despite students' below-average attainment on entry to the school, they are currently broadly average. GCSE results have fluctuated in recent years, in line with variations in students' attainment on entry. Results in 2013 were broadly average, but lower than in 2012. Many students had made good progress during their time in the school, but for others progress was not consistent and had not been sustained for long enough. Students' progress in science, modern languages and humanities are improving because the school has resolved staffing difficulties, and selected courses better suited to students' needs.
- In 2013, results were best in English, where they have improved in recent years. Results in mathematics were close to average and have also improved, but at a slower rate. In other subjects, results were generally below average but, because of action taken, standards are steadily rising. Students' positive attitudes to learning also make an important contribution to their improving achievement.
- Most students read and write well. Those who find reading difficult receive support that reinforces reading skills they have been taught earlier. Students have a good vocabulary and use it well in their writing, especially to explain their understanding and knowledge. However, some students do not take enough care in how they present their work, so it is not always easy to understand when returning to it later for revision purposes.
- Standards in mathematics are rising. Students calculate accurately and competently. They produce graphs and interpret numerical data well. Their mathematical skills are reinforced effectively in science and other subjects.
- The school's approach to entering some students early for examinations has been beneficial. Those who did well went on to gain extra qualifications, and those who did not do as well continued with the GCSE courses in order to take their examinations again. However, in the light of the government's stance on early entry, the school is discontinuing the practice.
- Students supported by the pupil premium funding are catching up on the performance of other students. The gap between these and other students achieving five or more A* to C GCSE grades has narrowed in recent years. In 2013 the difference was about half a grade in English and two-thirds of a grade in mathematics. Funds are spent effectively on small-group and individual support and to make sure they take part in the wide range of activities available. These students are well represented in top sets, where subjects are taught in ability groups.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support that helps them to learn well and gain confidence in their own abilities, so they can achieve well and work with other students.

- The small number of students who are at the early stages of learning English, or speak English as an additional language, make good progress because they are well supported by staff and other students.
- The students starting in Year 7 with below expected levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics catch up to the levels they should be at. Year 7 'catch-up' funding is used well to provide one-to-one teaching and extra resources to ensure they can work with other students.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 attending off-site provision at other schools or local colleges for work-related courses are successful. They gain the qualifications they need to prepare them for work or further education when they leave school.
- Sixth form students' progress requires improvement. Performance in AS- and A-level examinations was close to averages in most subjects in 2013, and part of an improving trend in recent years. Students taking applied AS- and A-level courses made similar progress to other students. Progress has improved markedly in recent years, and new leadership is playing a significant part in driving this improvement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The teaching seen was often good, but this has not been sustained over a long enough period of time to ensure that all students make good overall progress. Improved teaching is now apparent in most subjects, but it is not fully meeting the needs of the most able pupils. In a small proportion of lessons work is not challenging enough and does not capture students' interest.
- Teachers' marking is inconsistent. Where it is good, for example in English, students are told how well they are doing and given careful guidance on how to improve their work. Teachers then make sure students follow the guidance they give on how to improve. Elsewhere, marking is not always so helpful.
- Teachers' questioning is not always effective enough to ensure students fully explain their understanding and knowledge. Where it is searching, students explain well because they join in discussion with the teacher and each other. This helps students gain confidence to express their understanding clearly, and teachers to support them when they do not understand.
- In the sixth form, while the teaching is improving and much is now good, teachers' questioning is sometimes not searching enough, and work does not offer enough opportunities for students to do their own research.
- In most lessons teachers provide opportunities for students to improve their English and mathematical skills. For example, pupils are given opportunities for discussion and challenged to use subject-specific terminology accurately.
- Teachers work closely with teaching assistants to make sure work is matched closely to students' particular learning needs, and students receive the one-to-one help they need.
- Teaching has some strong features that promote effective learning. In most lessons teachers use assessment information to plan work at the right level of difficulty. Most lessons are fast paced, with a wide range of activities that catch students' interest. Relationships are good and this encourages students to ask questions themselves, and to attempt to answer questions when they are not sure they fully understand. Effective group work promotes students' social, cultural

and moral development well.

- Teachers set students challenging targets, and most students know what these are and how they are progressing towards them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' attitudes to work are good. They behave safely around the school, and act safely and sensibly in workshops. They are keen to do well and enjoy lessons most of the time.
- Students say that they can see the improvements the school has made recently, and welcome improvements in teaching which are helping them have better success.
- Students' attendance is broadly average and has improved considerably over the last year. Persistent absence has reduced and the efforts to promote high levels of attendance are having a positive effect.
- Students' behaviour is generally good, and although there are more exclusions than normally seen, these are in response to the new behaviour policy the school has introduced. The great majority of students fully accept and comply with the school's expectations of good behaviour, and understand the importance of the school's response to unacceptable behaviour. Their attention only wanders from work on the odd occasions when teaching is not challenging.
- Although some parents feel that the school does not deal with unacceptable behaviour well, most of those responding to Parent View and all of those spoken to during the inspection do. Inspectors saw almost entirely good, considerate and polite behaviour.
- Students enjoy the wide range of out-of-school-activities. Many take part in them, some for educational reasons, others for personal challenge and others for fun. They include theatre visits, sports, the Duke of Edinburgh Award, and trips abroad.
- Relationships between students and between students and staff are good. Staff and students respect each other, and this makes learning enjoyable.
- Students have an extensive knowledge of the different forms of bullying, this having been a focus of the school's work recently. Students support each other well, and say they would go to any member of staff for support if they needed it.
- Sixth form students set a good example to younger students. They take an active part in school activities, and help run some activities for younger students. They have positive attitudes to work, enjoy learning and their attendance is good.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides excellent direction for the school's improvement. Since taking up appointment two years ago she has redirected the work of the school and ensured senior leaders are well prepared for the task of driving improvements. She is extremely well supported by all leaders, and priorities for development are shared and fully understood by staff.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their well-considered steps to ensure improvements in teaching, attendance and behaviour provide a

secure foundation for achievement to improve.

- Leaders have, for example, identified the underperformance of more-able students as an issue to tackle. They ensure these students are identified, supported through the use of individual education programmes and challenging teaching, monitored to check they make good progress, and mentored to help them succeed.
- Inadequate teaching has been dealt with well, and training to make sure teaching is at least good is thorough. As a result teaching is improving, and staff are keen to improve their skills. Teachers know what their targets are to help them improve, and are well aware that progression on the salary scales is dependent on their success in promoting students' good progress.
- The school has trained and organised its teaching assistants well, so that they work closely with teachers to provide support for those students requiring it. However, the use of other adults, in classrooms is not always quite so well organised, and sometimes their support for students is not so well coordinated with the subject teacher.
- Subject leaders are effective, and although some are new to their roles, they all have a good grasp of what improvements are needed to raise students' performance. The training for subject leaders is good. The local authority and other effective schools play an important role in helping leaders develop their skills, particularly in equipping new leaders to evaluate and improve the quality of teaching in their subject areas.
- The leadership of the sixth form is good. Recent changes in leadership have led to a strong focus on ensuring teaching is good, students are well supported and guided, and the courses taught are suited to their future aspirations.
- The curriculum is well organised. It is carefully linked to the academic and work-related needs of students. The school reviews the subjects it teaches regularly. For example, the science curriculum has been changed to provide a demanding course for students, better suiting the needs of many of them for the future. There are several work-related courses, some provided by a local college. In the sixth form, some courses are provided by other schools to ensure students receive the best range of subjects possible. The school monitors their quality effectively.
- The range of residential trips and other activities and visits is wide. Students visit art galleries, theatres, outdoor pursuit centres and play a wide range of sports, and participate in musical activities in school. The level of involvement is high and this part of the curriculum promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- The school provides very good support and care for its students. It has very good links with external agencies to promote good attendance, and to help students and their families when they experience problems. It has good links with primary schools, colleges and employers that ensure students settle quickly when they join the school, and move on smoothly to the next stage of their education or employment.
- A significant minority of the 75 parents who responded to Parent View expressed some concern about how well their children made progress, the quality of teaching and how well the school was led. Parents spoken to during the inspection were considerably more positive, and explained that there had been significant improvements in the last year. Inspectors confirm that achievement and teaching are improving, and good leadership is driving the improvements.
- The school has acted effectively to improve achievement, teaching, attendance and behaviour. It is eliminating all forms of discrimination and it promotes enjoyment in learning. The capacity for

further improvement is strong.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is well informed and well trained. It provides good support for the headteacher, and also asks demanding questions of all leaders, especially about achievement and how the school proposes to raise standards.
- Governors know how well students achieve compared with other students nationally, and with schools locally. They know how effectively funds are spent to raise standards, particularly of those students supported by the pupil premium, and about future plans for improving their progress further.
- Governors know about the quality of teaching and how leaders check the professional standards of teachers. They make sure salary increases are linked to teachers' performance management targets.
- Governors meet their responsibilities to make sure national safeguarding requirements are met, and that staff are checked before they take up appointments.
- They provide a high level of support for the headteacher, especially in introducing and establishing new code of behaviour for students.

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	103522
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	427036

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
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	1075
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Murray
Headteacher	Mandy McCrohon
Date of previous school inspection	14 September 2011
Telephone number	0121 378 1946
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