

Perryfields High School Specialist Maths and Computing College

Oldacre Road, Oldbury, B68 0RG

Inspection dates

3–4 December 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

- Although all students make good progress in mathematics, in 2013 this is not the case in science, history, geography and for middle ability students in English.
- No inadequate teaching was seen and much was good or better. However, not all teachers make sure that work in lessons is adapted to meet the needs of different ability groups..
- Inconsistencies in marking and assessment mean that, over time, not all students are making the progress that they should in all subjects.
- School systems to monitor the achievement of students are not rigorous enough to rapidly identify underperformance. As a result, interventions to support improvement have not taken place in a timely way.
- Targets for improving the quality of teaching are not always specific enough to measure progress and identify where further support is required.
- The sixth form requires improvement because students do not make consistently good progress. Teaching is improving but does not fully promote students' ability to develop their learning without help from staff.

The school has the following strengths

- The behaviour of students is good and teachers are skilled in supporting all students to develop good attitudes to learning.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium funding reach higher standards than similar students nationally. The gap between their progress and that of others in the school is closing.
- Attendance has improved steadily for all groups of students and is now at the national average.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are well supported.
- Governors are committed to the school and have undertaken extensive training to improve their ability to challenge the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 teachers in 41 lessons, including eight joint lesson observations with members of the school’s senior leadership team and lead teachers.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, a local authority representative, members of the governing body, senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of students in all key stages.
- Inspectors scrutinised 64 responses to the staff questionnaire and 55 responses to Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including the school’s self-evaluation and improvement planning, student achievement data and monitoring documents. The school’s safeguarding arrangements were also checked.

Inspection team

Merryl Ford, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Deborah James

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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Additional Inspector

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Full report

Information about this school

- Perryfields High School is a large secondary school.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is below the national average. The proportion of students 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 funding through the pupil premium (additional funding for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, or those who have a parent in the armed forces) is in line with the national average.
- The percentage of students leaving or joining the school at times other than the start of a year is lower than the national average.
- The school provides access to alternative provision according to students' individual needs and interests. Currently, nine students access a range of alternative provision provided by Sandwell Community School, The Bridge, St Michael's, Batmans and Whiteheath.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher provides support for schools within the Lightwood Teaching School Alliance and works in partnership with a local university.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching over time by ensuring that:
 - marking and assessment processes are used effectively across the school to help students know how well they are doing and what to do next to improve further
 - all teachers plan activities to meet the needs of different ability groups so that all students make at least good progress.
- Improve achievement in the sixth form by ensuring that:
 - appropriate teaching strategies are consistently used to develop the skills required for success at A level
 - rigorous analysis of student progress takes place that identifies areas for development at an early stage.
- Reduce year-on-year variation in subject outcomes, including in the sixth form, and strengthen the effectiveness of the school's leadership by ensuring that quality assurance systems are in place so that:
 - subject leaders have a robust system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning within their areas of responsibility, including tracking student progress across groups and classes, and are held to account for this
 - senior leaders have a whole-school system for monitoring student progress that enables rapid identification of underperformance across all subjects
 - teacher appraisal systems lead to clear action points for improvement where required, and are monitored against specific, time-bound targets.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students enter the school with prior attainment that is usually in line with students nationally. However, students who left in 2013 joined the school with prior attainment that was above national averages. Nevertheless, the proportion of these students gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, was lower than in previous years. This was because of a drop in attainment in English, but also due to underperformance in science, history, geography and social studies.
- There is considerable year-on-year variation in achievement in different subjects. For instance, in 2012 attainment in physical education and art and design was significantly below national averages. In 2013 these subjects improved, but the proportion of students gaining A* to C grades in English, geography, history and social studies was significantly below national levels.
- Students achieve well in mathematics over time, including more able students who gain a higher proportion of A* and A grades than average.
- The school has entered some students early for GCSE mathematics to increase their confidence and examination skills. Students continued to study mathematics after this and many went on to improve their grades in the summer examinations.
- Almost all students leave school with at least five A* to G GCSE grades or equivalent. This is consistently above the national average and reflects the school's good curriculum provision which is well-matched to students' needs and interests, including for the least able.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make expected progress from their starting points as a result of carefully planned support and curriculum provision.
- Although the attainment of students eligible for pupil premium lags behind that of other students, the gap has narrowed consistently over the last three years. Currently, these pupils are half a grade behind others in English and three quarters of a grade behind in mathematics.
- Those eligible for Year 7 catch-up premium are given effective additional support. As a result, this group of students now make good progress in English and mathematics. The school's policy to promote literacy across the curriculum, including intensive reading support and development of writing skills, is having a positive impact.
- Alternative provision meets the needs and interests of students well. The majority have achieved appropriate vocational qualifications and have been well prepared for the next stage in their lives. All students who accessed alternative provision in the last three years have gone on to appropriate employment or training.
- The school's sixth form has only been open for four years and achievement, although improving, is below national standards. Improvements in teaching are having a positive impact on student outcomes and 2013 results were a considerable improvement on the previous year.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There is no inadequate teaching and much that is good or better. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching mean that not all students make the progress that they should in all subjects.

- The marking of students' work is inconsistent. Some marking provides clear guidance and ensures that students know precisely what to do next in order to improve further. Examples of good practice were seen in English, mathematics and science, but too much marking remains generic and lacks focus on the skills and understanding required for success.
- In less effective lessons, students were not given enough opportunity to work develop and the work they were set did not take account of their differing levels of ability.
- In the best lessons, students had opportunities to work in a range of different ways and made good progress. This was noted particularly in information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology.
- In good or better lessons, teachers used questioning very effectively to stretch and challenge all students, encouraging them to expand on their ideas and responses. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson good questioning about charity literature led to sophisticated responses.
- In many lessons teachers ensured that literacy was a focus. For example, in a Year 9 geography lesson the teacher had identified that reading skills would be a barrier to learning for a number of the students. The use of poetry helped to reinforce their understanding of the impact of earthquakes. Some good examples of numeracy were seen in science and geography.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively, particularly in supporting students who need additional help with their work.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is improving but is not consistently good. Very small teaching groups in some subjects mean that, on occasions, teachers do too much of the students' work for them. In better lessons, students have the opportunity for discussion and work collaboratively to develop understanding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The respect and courtesy shown by adults and students to each other is a real strength of the school. There is a tangible sense that teachers respect and care about their students and that the school wants the absolute best for them.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Teachers are skilled in managing students' behaviour effectively. This is reflected in the very positive relationships between teachers and students and between the students themselves.
- In all lessons there was a positive environment for learning. This is particularly the case where students are highly engaged and find lessons interesting because they have well-planned opportunities for exploring their own ideas to extend their work. No disruptive behaviour was seen in lessons, although students are less positive about their learning where lessons are overly teacher-led.
- There is a comprehensive behaviour management policy which is well understood by staff and implemented consistently. The school analyses behaviour rigorously and incident logs are accurately maintained. Data analysis indicates that behaviour has improved over time and permanent and fixed-term exclusions are now well below the national average.
- Students say that they enjoy school and feel safe. They are taught about the dangers of different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, in personal, social and health education

(PSHE) lessons, assemblies and enrichment lessons. They know how to keep themselves safe. They report that there is very little bullying and that teachers and school leaders deal with the rare cases effectively. Students appreciate the school's 'zero tolerance' approach to all forms of bullying.

- Attendance has improved consistently over recent years and remains in line with national averages overall. Although the attendance of school action plus students has been a concern in the past, the school has taken effective action to reduce this significantly through the appointment of an attendance officer who identifies trends and liaises with parents and carers.
- Students, parents and staff are very positive about the school's management of behaviour and their response to bullying and safety.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher has high aspirations for continuing improvement. However, senior leaders have an overly generous view of the current position of the school. Data collection and analysis are not yet rigorous enough to enable the school to demonstrate the effectiveness of actions to rectify poor performance of some subjects.
- While departmental reviews take place on a regular cycle, targets for improvement are not robust enough and are not always measurable or within a specified time scale. This means that progress made is sometimes slower than it should be. Subject leaders do not have a clear system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility and are therefore not fully accountable for the progress of students.
- Although there is evidence that some actions taken by the school to improve teaching have been effective, the quality of targets is variable. The school has effectively used pay progression to reward teachers' performance and the governing body are kept well informed. A professional development programme is made available to all staff, much of which is led by staff within the school. However, the impact of this work is not monitored carefully enough.
- Curriculum provision is good. Senior leaders have reviewed and adapted the curriculum to ensure that the needs of all students and groups of students are met effectively. It prepares students well for the next stages of their education or life through a good balance of academic and vocational options, as well as alternative provision where required.
- Leaders in the sixth form have been effective in developing a curriculum that meets the needs of the students and they have increased the proportion of students who have moved from Year 12 to Year 13. A new tracking and intervention system has recently been put in place and is providing additional support for students at risk of underachieving. The school ensures that students receive appropriate independent guidance and advice to help prepare them for the next stage of their education and the world of work.
- Social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is a strength of the school. It is promoted particularly well in religious studies, art, music, physical education and during form periods. As a result, students are very tolerant of each other and differing beliefs and values.
- Parents and carers, staff and students are very positive about the school and its leadership.
- The local authority checks the school's performance and has not provided any additional support.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance has strengthened considerably over the last two years, following the governing body's decision to request an external review and training. Governors are now aware of the need to ensure an up-to-date understanding of school data throughout the year so that potential underperformance is challenged early. There is a range of expertise within the governing body. The restructuring of committees to meet the priorities of the school has been effective in ensuring that governors are improving their understanding of the school. Governors are in school regularly to gather first-hand evidence of the school's work and when visiting link subject areas. This is helping them to get a better understanding of the skills of staff and the response of students. Governors are now involved in the appraisal of staff performance and are keen to move on from the past where theirs was a more reactive role. Governors are knowledgeable about how pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding are being spent and the impact these have on student progress. The governing body ensures that the school meets all the current requirements for 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	104012
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	428946

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	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	1160
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	67
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Gallant
Headteacher	Dai Meredith
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2009
Telephone number	0121 421 7979
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