

The Chase

Geraldine Road, Malvern, WR14 3NZ

Inspection dates

4–5 February 2014

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		Require improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- There is too much variation in achievement between different groups of students and their progress in different subjects.
- Too many students, for whom the school receives additional funding, do not achieve as well as they should.
- Students are not doing as well as they should in mathematics by the end of Year 11. Standards in this subject have fallen since the last inspection.
- Although teaching is improving, it does not yet result in all groups of students doing well.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and learning have not resulted in good achievement for all students.
- In some subjects, work is not marked regularly and students are not given enough guidance on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Recent changes in the school's leadership activities have yet to have a full impact on improving students' achievement.
- While attendance overall has now improved, it is still too low for certain groups of students.

The school has the following strengths

- The newly appointed headteacher has skilfully steered a new direction for the school and brought all staff together to work as a team.
- The range of subjects and courses on offer has improved so that it is now more suitable for almost all students. This is helping students to gain better results.
- Students feel safe in school. Parents are pleased with the improvements that are being made.
- Students behave well around the school and in lessons. They show that they are keen and want to learn.
- Leaders now have systems for checking the quality of the school's work so that improvement can be sustained.
- The sixth form is good and students do well. They are given strong guidance on which subjects to follow and their progress is checked regularly.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 52 lessons, of which 36 were observed jointly with senior leaders. They also observed tutor time as well as break and lunch times.
- Meetings were held with students, school leaders at all levels of responsibility, and governors. Inspectors also spoke to staff and students informally after lessons and during break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors checked students' books and looked at a wide range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, information about students' progress, the school's record of lesson observations and records relating to teachers' overall performance. They also looked at documents relating to safeguarding, attendance and behaviour, as well as minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- The views of the 181 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account.

Inspection team

Huw Bishop, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Martin Spoor	Additional Inspector
Beverley Mabey	Additional Inspector
Michael Rose	Additional Inspector
Hilary Green	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Chase is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most students at the school are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for specific students, including those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported by school action is well above average, while the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational need is average.
- A very small number of students are enrolled on alternative learning programmes at Worcester College of Technology.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The current headteacher took up post in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement, particularly in mathematics, by making sure that teaching is at least consistently good by making sure that:
 - all teachers plan lessons that take into account what all groups of students can do and how they learn best
 - work is hard enough for the most able and that the less able and those for whom the school receives pupil premium funding are supported better
 - students' written work is regularly marked so that students know and understand how well they are doing
 - attendance is improved for all groups of students.
- Improve the effectiveness of the school's leadership to raise achievement by monitoring the quality of teaching and its impact of students' work more often and using the information more effectively in all subjects to raise the quality of teaching.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students join the school with above-average standards but, for the last two years, they have left the school with standards that are broadly average. Middle and low-ability students have not achieved as well as they should.
- There are a number of subjects where students do not make good progress. In mathematics, progress is not rapid enough because middle and lower-ability students do not achieve as well as they should. Expectations are not high enough for the more able to make good progress.
- Students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding are not making fast enough progress. Although there was an improvement in 2013 in the proportion of these students achieving five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, the gap in achievement between them and others is not closing quickly enough, especially in mathematics. They were on average two grades behind other students. However, recent initiatives are providing better support, and these students are currently making better progress than they did last year.
- Results at GCSE are improving. Information on the progress of students currently in school shows that, overall, improvements are set to continue. Results in 2013 were just above the national average.
- At Key Stage 4, more students gained grades A* to C in more subjects in 2013 compared with 2012. However, targets were not met in additional science, art and design, business studies, core science and resistant materials.
- In English, more students are making faster progress than in the past and progress information from school indicates that this improving trend is continuing for students currently in school.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is variable and requires improvement. Although changes to the curriculum, the new system of monitoring students' progress and more effective individual support are now in place, not enough attention is given to ensuring that all students are helped to make good progress.
- The students who attend alternative courses and provision at Worcester College of Technology make progress in line with their abilities. They achieve well in courses which are work-related.
- Students who join the school with weaker reading skills are supported well using Year 7 'catch-up' funding. A range of specific activities, combined with a planned whole-school focus on literacy support, is securing improvements in the reading of students in their first year at the school.
- There has been a policy of entering high-ability students early for GCSE in mathematics and this has been adapted to take account of recent changes in government policy. In 2013, the number of students achieving A* and A grades in mathematics was above the national figure. This success also gives students more demanding opportunities to try harder work at AS level.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good because progress is consistently above national figures in many subjects at AS and A level, and is improving year on year. In 2013, achievement in history, psychology and general studies were above national averages for those subjects.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Although the quality of teaching is improving, there is still too much variability in quality and there is not enough good or outstanding teaching. The teaching in some subjects and some year groups is good, but in others it is not.
- Some teachers do not use the information they have on students' attainment and progress well enough to ensure that they plan lessons with work that is at the right level of difficulty for the students. As a result, teachers' expectations of what students can do in lessons are not always high enough. They do not make the work harder for the more able or give enough support to the less able.
- Although most teachers mark students' work regularly and offer feedback which helps them to understand what to do to improve, the quality of marking overall is not good enough. In some classes, the marking is minimal; in others, students' work is not marked at all. In these cases, students are not given the guidance they need, they put less effort into their work and the presentation of work is frequently messy. In some classes, there is very effective practice. For example, students mark and discuss each other's work and teachers follow up any corrections to check students' understanding.
- The teaching in some lessons fails to motivate the students, who appear bored and show little or no enthusiasm for their work. This happens when they are asked to complete lots of mundane worksheets or repetitive tasks, or when the teacher talks for most of the lesson without involving the students. In contrast, where teachers have planned well to make sure that each student could make good progress, students' engagement was a strong feature and this resulted in good learning.
- Some classrooms are scruffy and so do little to inspire or enthuse students to learn.
- Leaders' drive to improve the quality of teaching is beginning to have an impact. For example, the quality of teachers' questioning is improving. Teachers ask questions that make students think hard and help them to share their knowledge and demonstrate their understanding. When this happens, students know exactly how they have improved in relation to their different starting points. Teachers also change their activities to ensure that the work keeps the students interested. However, such practice is not always evident.
- Teachers demonstrate appropriate knowledge in their subject areas and use it well to enthuse students. In a sixth form psychology lesson, the teacher's excellent subject knowledge was used to drive learning forward through a range of activities which challenged students to work on their own and with others, reaching mature and reflective conclusions about key 'life events'. There was also good practice in developing students' literacy skills, with a particular focus on subject-specific vocabulary.
- Teaching assistants are used effectively in most lessons to support students who have fallen behind or who have specific learning difficulties. In the best practice, they assist with one-to-one activities and work closely with teachers, so that they know how to direct specific support to individual students.
- The overall quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. At its best, teachers with expert subject knowledge and a passion for learning help students to learn at a fast rate. Teachers give constructive feedback on students' work and regular checks on progress ensure that they know their achievement grades at all stages of their courses.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students in lessons and around the school is good. Students are friendly, courteous and polite and they behave sensibly.
- The quality of relationships between teachers and students is good and this supports a positive attitude to learning. Students worked cooperatively and supportively with each other in every lesson that was observed.
- Even though some classrooms are untidy, classrooms and outdoor areas are generally free of litter, even at breaks and lunchtimes. Students' movement around the school is orderly.
- Teachers and students have a good understanding of the behaviour policy, and teachers use it effectively to give guidance about the standards of behaviour that are expected. Students understand the boundaries of what is acceptable and keep to them. Students complain to their teachers about the occasional lapses of behaviour in lessons, knowing that action will be taken swiftly.
- The school's records show that behaviour has improved since the last inspection. The number of students from all groups who have been excluded from school for a short period because of poor behaviour has reduced considerably. There are very few instances of bullying and students say that when the occasional incident occurs, it is dealt with very quickly. Similarly, they say that cyber-bullying, racist and homophobic language are not tolerated, and they are very supportive of this policy.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say that they feel safe in school, and they understand how to keep themselves safe. They appreciate how the school helps them to be safe when using the internet and also in their personal relationships. This is done through lessons, tutor periods and assemblies. Students could identify an adult they could turn to if they needed help at any time.
- Attendance has shown significant improvement overall. This is because there has been a deliberate focus on improving attendance, including the monitoring and recording of absence and punctuality. Other external agencies support the school to improve attendance. The attendance of some vulnerable groups of students, however, still requires improvement and the school is addressing this issue.
- Students in the sixth form appreciate the opportunities they have to take responsibility, and they respond with maturity as young adults. They feel safe and welcomed in the sixth form, and the school provides help and guidance for them in a number of ways. Students speak very warmly of this.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders have not yet ensured that achievement and the quality of teaching are as good as they should be. Senior leaders and governors are realistic about the school's strengths and weaknesses and are clear about all that is needed to address this.
- Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching and link it to achievement across the school. Although joint observations conducted with inspectors confirmed the accuracy of those judgements, the rigour of evaluation is not consistent, and plans for improving teaching and

achievement have not always been put in place quickly or been focused enough.

- Teachers in charge of subjects talk about a new 'strength of leadership' in the school that is empowering them to address a previous climate of students not doing well enough. They now recognise a consistent focus on raising attainment and progress, and the early impact of this is seen in the improved results in 2013.
- Procedures for managing the performance of teachers are rigorous. Pay increases are only awarded if teachers meet their targets for students' achievement and the quality of their teaching is good. The programme for professional development and the targets which are set for teachers are linked to the school's targets for improving achievement. The 'Masterclass' training programme provides targeted support for teachers through sharing best practice. Although this is contributing to an improving quality of teaching and learning, it is not yet available to all teachers.
- The curriculum caters well for the needs of almost all groups of students and supports their progression through GCSE and the sixth form. The recent changes to the curriculum have improved access to GCSE courses for lower-ability students and those for whom the school receives additional pupil premium funding. The curriculum is supported well with information, advice and guidance from a careers adviser, and this prepares students well for their next steps in education, training or employment.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported within individual subjects as well as through an extensive selection of after-school activities and visits. Students contribute ideas for development to this area also and bring about changes through an active student council. The sixth form also provides an impressive range of activities, including links with local business, cultural visits and opportunities for student leadership.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are good because well thought-out procedures are applied consistently and sensitively. Leaders have created a clear identity for the sixth form which caters well for the individual needs of students. It is respected by students, parents and the wider community.
- Parents are very supportive of the school. They appreciate the care that their children receive.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors show a comprehensive and thorough knowledge of the school. They come from a range of backgrounds and with various skills and experience. They are very clear about what needs to change and have reviewed their committee structure to ensure that they can hold the school to account effectively. Some of these changes are relatively new and their full impact is yet to be seen. They know how the pupil premium funding is used and are very aware that the gaps in achievement have not been closing quickly enough. The restructured board facilitates the necessary monitoring of this key area of school improvement. Individual governors have taken on responsibility for monitoring specific areas of the school as 'link governors'. At each meeting, governors now receive accurate information on the progress of students and they ask searching questions. They have ensured that teachers are not rewarded for poor performance and they have included an external professional to be part of the process of monitoring the headteacher's performance.

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	137625
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	440682

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	1580
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	305
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Moyse
Headteacher	Richard Jacobs
Date of previous school inspection	9 November 2011
Telephone number	01684 891961
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