

The Friary School

Eastern Avenue, Lichfield, WS13 7EW

Inspection dates

11–12 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The proportion of students achieving five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics at the end of Year 11 is now well above the national average.
- Students make good progress, and achievement in English and mathematics has improved for all groups of students.
- Teaching is typically at least good and an increasing proportion is outstanding. As a result, students have positive attitudes to learning, enjoy their lessons and, therefore, achieve well.
- Senior leaders and governors provide good leadership. They ensure that all staff share their high expectations and have a relentless focus on improving outcomes for students.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress and are supported effectively to achieve the best that they can. Consequently, they are well prepared for the next stages of their lives.
- Students report that they feel very safe at school. There is excellent support for vulnerable students through the student support team.
- Behaviour throughout the school is typically good. Attendance has risen over time and is now above the national average. There is little difference in rates of attendance for different groups.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small proportion of teaching requires improvement. This is particularly the case where teachers do not plan effectively enough to challenge the most able.
- Although marking is consistently good in English and mathematics, this is not always the case in all subject areas.
- Students are not always required by teachers to respond to comments about how to improve their work.
- A small number of students report that a few teachers do not apply the new behaviour management system fairly.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons or parts of lessons, of which six were jointly observed with a member of the school's leadership team. Inspectors visited assemblies and registration periods and carried out a series of short visits to lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with groups of students from all key stages, with senior and other leaders, governors and class teachers. A telephone conversation was held with a local authority representative and with the school's provider of alternative education, Lichfield and Burntwood Vocational Centre.
- Inspectors took account of 31 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and evaluated the written responses from parents and students, collected and collated by the school. Inspectors also took account of 42 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- A range of school documentation was reviewed and evaluated, including: records of progress made by current students; self-evaluation documents and improvement plans; behaviour and bullying logs; staff performance records; minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding policies and records.
- In addition, inspectors considered work from a range of students across all key stages and a range of subjects.

Inspection team

Merryl Ford, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Wolfson	Additional Inspector
Susan Hargadon	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Macfarlane	Additional Inspector
Susan Thomas	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Friary School is a larger-than-average secondary school with a sixth form.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium (additional funding provided for students known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs and requiring support through school action is lower than average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or by a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- A small number of students in Year 10 and Year 11 attend alternative provision at Lichfield and Burntwood Vocational Centre, taught by staff from South Staffordshire College.
- The school operates a collaborative sixth form with four other local schools.
- This year, no students will be entered early for GCSE mathematics.
- The school's performance meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that the small amount requiring improvement is eradicated and more is outstanding, by making sure that:
 - marking in all subjects consistently provides students with clear, precise next steps to enable them to improve their work
 - students are routinely expected to respond to teachers' comments, including where they need to ask for additional help
 - all teachers plan lessons that take account of students' starting points, particularly those of the most able.
- Improve the behaviour of students by:
 - ensuring that all teachers consistently apply the behaviour policy, so that students are absolutely clear about the consequences of poor behaviour at all times.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The school's above-average attainment in English and mathematics is underpinned by good progress. Nearly all students and groups of students make at least expected progress from their starting points.
- Students eligible for pupil premium funding attain one grade below that of other students in English and three quarters of a grade in mathematics. However, this is an improvement on previous years, as in mathematics expected progress for these students has increased by 33 percentage points and in English meets the national average for non-free school meal students.
- Students who have special educational needs are supported well and, as a consequence, the progress these students make is improving strongly. The progress of students supported by a statement of special educational needs is significantly above average, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Progress of the most able has improved. However, where weaker teaching remains, they are not always challenged sufficiently. This is because, in these cases, teachers do not routinely have high enough expectations of what students can achieve.
- A small number of students attend alternative courses through South Staffordshire College. These courses are well matched to students' needs so that all make good progress and are well prepared for the next stages in their lives.
- In Year 7, catch-up funding is used effectively to support improvement in reading. Consequently, those students targeted have increased their reading ages by an average of 19 months.
- The whole-school literacy policy permeates the work of the school and is greatly appreciated by students who say that it has a positive impact on their literacy skills and their ability to apply these in a range of situations. Inspectors saw this in practice in tutor time and across a wide range of subjects.
- In 2013, the school entered students early in Year 11 for GCSE mathematics. This helped them to understand the requirements of the examinations and improved achievement overall. The school has now developed internal systems to ensure students develop a similar level of understanding without having to be entered early for their examination.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. This is because there is a highly effective system of mentoring and monitoring so that students make good progress. Achievement is above average in media studies, English, Spanish and business studies and is at least in line with national averages for all other subjects, including vocational qualifications.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection. The teaching in lessons is now usually good and there are examples of outstanding practice. Nearly all students make good progress in most subjects. In the few instances where teaching requires improvement, students do not make as much progress because teachers do not have high enough expectations of what they can achieve from their starting points.

- Where the teaching is most effective, teachers plan carefully to ensure that all students make rapid progress by taking account of starting points and prior learning in order to plan activities that support and challenge them. For instance, in an English lesson, the teacher used a paired activity to reinforce the learning of one group of students by getting them to support the learning of another group.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good, and outstanding teaching is increasing. Teachers have high expectations and good subject knowledge. They use questioning well to help students extend their ideas and employ effective strategies to develop skills that enable students to continue with their work outside lessons.
- In English and mathematics, the quality of marking is consistently good as a result of the school's effective marking and feedback policy so that students are clear about exactly what they need to do to improve. Although good marking was noted in most subjects, it was not always consistently good in all. In these cases, students do not routinely act on advice given because they are not always clear about how to do so.
- Teaching assistants are effective and have a positive impact on the progress of the students they support, whether in subject lessons or when leading interventions. This was particularly evident in two intervention lessons, led by teaching assistants for targeted students, which resulted in outstanding progress.
- In the vast majority of cases, teachers have excellent relationships with students because they know them well and are committed to ensuring that they make good progress. Consequently, students have positive attitudes to learning and are supportive of each other's efforts to achieve well. This helps to create the good environment for learning that inspectors noted in the school.
- Students report that teaching has improved considerably, particularly over the last 12 months, and they appreciate the efforts that teachers make to ensure that learning is interesting and enjoyable.
- Most parents who responded to Parent View or the school's own version of this agree that their children are taught well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. They arrive promptly to school and to lessons, and the vast majority settle to work quickly, responding rapidly to requests from teachers and other adults.
- As a result of the new behaviour management policy, the small numbers of students who do not behave well are dealt with rapidly and other students report that this has reduced the amount of low-level disruption in lessons considerably.
- Students understand the behaviour management and rewards system well and consider it fair and effective. A few students report that a small number of teachers do not always apply sanctions consistently and, in these cases, there are still occasional instances of low-level disruption.
- The school records patterns of any inappropriate behaviour on a five-stage scale and this informs actions to be taken. Records show that incidents of poor behaviour have reduced significantly over time and this is supported by students' comments.

- Attendance has improved over the last three years and is higher than the national average. This is the result of robust systems to monitor students whose attendance is too low and the effective support and challenge processes delivered through the student support teams attached to each year group.
- Exclusions have reduced and are now below the national average because the school provides timely additional support for those who might be at risk of exclusion.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. All students report that they feel safe at all times, in all areas of the school and at alternative provision placements. This is because the school ensures that systems for monitoring are highly effective.
- Students report that bullying is very rare. They understand the different forms of bullying well, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying, and know how to keep themselves safe.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is led and managed well. The headteacher has an ambitious vision for continuing improvement which is shared by all staff. Actions taken since the last inspection have been focused on improving outcomes for students and these have been successful in raising achievement significantly.
- Leadership of teaching is good. Rigorous monitoring, challenge and support have ensured that the teaching in the large majority of lessons is at least good. Senior leaders have established additional programmes to ensure that teaching continues to improve, including weekly 'sharing good practice' sessions, led by teachers identified as having excellent practice in specific areas. These innovations are highly valued by staff who report the positive impact they have had on improving practice and on morale.
- Clear systems are in place for managing the performance of staff. As a result, leaders have a clear view of strengths and areas for development. Only those staff who meet the appropriate standards move up the pay scale.
- Heads of departments and subject leaders are fully involved in tracking and monitoring the quality of teaching and students' performance. An annual calendar of quality assurance ensures all staff know exactly what is expected of them and when and how they will be held to account. If teaching is found to fall short of expectations, targets are put in place immediately and rapid review of progress takes place.
- Systems for monitoring the progress of students are thorough and well understood by staff at all levels. Students who are underperforming are identified quickly and appropriate interventions are put in place and monitored for their impact.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide one-to-one tuition in English and mathematics and to support short blocks of teaching by specialist teachers which are targeted at specific skills gaps. Thorough systems are in place to evaluate students' progress.
- The school provides a broad, balanced curriculum that meets the needs and aspirations of its students and supports successful progression across key stages. Information, advice and guidance are embedded in the curriculum and additional and specific support is provided for students in Year 11 and for those for whom the school receives the pupil premium.

Consequently, all students either gain employment or proceed to further education or training at the end of Year 11 and Year 13.

- Leadership of the sixth form is good because it ensures that teachers work well together and with support staff to promote achievement. Responses to pupil voice questionnaires show that students are confident in its leadership and their ability to access support.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. The school provides a wide range of opportunities for students to learn about tackling discrimination and equal opportunities through lessons, assemblies, extra-curricular activities and links with the community.
- Procedures for safeguarding fully meet requirements.
- The local authority has supported the school well, providing external verification of improvements and organising additional support where necessary.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are ambitious for the school and have a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development. They meet regularly with school leaders and are well informed about students' achievement and the quality of teaching. They know how underperformance is tackled and how good practice is being promoted and rewarded. Governors have a good understanding of systems for managing teachers' performance and know which teachers have moved up the pay scale and why. They feel able to challenge leaders if they do not agree with recommendations. Since the last inspection, governors have undertaken training to improve their understanding of information about students' performance and have established links with subject areas. They are knowledgeable about how the pupil premium funding has been spent and monitor its impact on students' achievement closely.

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	124422
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	433238

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	1225
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Iain Liston-Brown
Headteacher	David Lister
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2013
Telephone number	01543 267400
Fax number	01543 267499
Email address	office@friaryschool.com

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