

Allestree Woodlands School

Blenheim Drive, Allestree, Derby, DE22 2LW

Inspection dates 29–30 April 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 headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and governors have taken concerted action since the previous inspection which has resulted in rapid improvements in teaching and in students' achievement.
- Students are making good and sometimes outstanding progress and reach standards that are well above national averages.
- Teachers motivate and challenge students. Teaching has improved because school leaders have taken effective action to eradicate teaching that is less than good.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school site is good. Students are courteous, respectful and confident when talking to teachers and visitors.
- The pastoral support and care provided by the school is good. Because of this, attendance is rising steadily and the rigorous checks on achievement and progress ensure that any students who fall behind are quickly identified and supported.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Nearly all students say they feel safe and value the many additional activities which are available to them.
- The sixth form is good. Academic standards are high and students are very well prepared for higher education or employment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are some inconsistencies in the quality of marking and feedback that students receive and their response to such feedback. Sometimes errors are left in when students mark their own work. Some teachers do not set high enough expectations for the quality of presentation of students' work.
- Sometimes teachers move on to new elements in their lessons without checking whether students have fully understood what they have been taught so far.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 lessons taught by 44 teachers. Inspectors also visited the hearing impaired unit, the learning hub, which provides additional support for students, several tutorial sessions and an assembly. A British Sign Language translator attended the inspection to assist in observing the work in the hearing impaired unit.
- Discussions were held with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors, the school improvement adviser, the senior leadership team, faculty leaders, the head of sixth form, the special educational needs coordinator, pastoral leaders, newly qualified teacher and students from every year group.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents from the 135 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire, and several letters and emails from parents about the school's work.
- The views of members of staff were gained from the 41 responses to the staff questionnaire as well as meetings and discussions with teachers.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's examination results and progress data, attendance and behaviour records, improvement planning, safeguarding documents, minutes of governing body meetings, performance management systems and information about how the school spends pupil premium funding.

Inspection team

Judith Straw, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kevin Harrison

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Rosemary Barnfield

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Kerin Jones

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Full report

Information about this school

- Allestree Woodlands School is larger than the average-sized secondary school. The number of students in the sixth form is steadily increasing.
- The very large majority of students come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is low.
- The proportion of students eligible for pupil premium funding is below average. Pupil premium is additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for students with a hearing impairment. This currently includes 14 students who attend for several hours each week. For the rest of the week, these students are taught alongside other students in the school.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 attend work-related courses at Rolls Royce engineering company, Derby College and Access Construction. They are following courses on motor engineering, horse care, hair and beauty, land-based studies and construction. Some are following young apprenticeship programmes. Most students attend these alternative courses for one or two days each week and are taught in the main school for the rest of the time.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching and so raise students' achievement by:
 - making sure that teachers check students' understanding before moving on to new work
 - setting higher expectations for the quality of presentation of students' work
 - improving the consistency of marking across the school so that students regularly receive useful feedback on how to improve their work
 - requiring students to act on the advice given to them through marking
 - always checking whether work marked by students is accurate.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students typically join the school with attainment which is above average. The proportion of students leaving Year 11 with five or more good passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is well above average. The proportion of students achieving A and A* grades is rising steadily. Results are especially impressive in sciences, design technology, humanities subjects, English and mathematics.
- Attainment was well above average at the previous inspection but students were not making good progress from their starting points. This has been addressed so that students' progress in nearly every subject is good. Progress in both English and mathematics is well above national figures. Those subjects in which students were underperforming have all improved.
- During the inspection, many students were revising during lessons, particularly in Year 11 and the sixth form. Students were engaged in bringing together their learning over the entire course and capturing this through mind maps and note books. Their high-quality revision work showed high-quality learning for most students over time.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are very well supported by teachers and teaching assistants and have additional sessions in the 'Hub', a resource unit for all students who might need extra support. If strategies appear not to be working then they are changed. As a result, students at school action, school action plus or with a statement of additional needs are doing well and making good progress in relation to their starting points. The small number of students who speak English as an additional language are equally well supported to make good progress.
- Students in the hearing impaired unit are making good progress because of the quality of support they receive and their own hard work. There is a gap in the attainment of these students and others but the gap is narrowing each year. All these students make good progress from their different starting points.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium make good progress. Even so, the attainment of these students is not as high as it is for others in school. In 2013, the difference was slightly less than one GCSE grade in English and slightly more than one GCSE grade in mathematics. However, the school's data show that these pupils are making better progress each year. The gap is narrower in Key Stage 3.
- School leaders use the Year 7 catch-up funding to provide extra support in reading, writing and mathematics for small groups of students who start Year 7 with national curriculum grades which are below average. Students benefit from this group work and make rapid progress.
- The small number of students in Years 10 and 11 who follow alternative courses achieve well. Their attendance, progress and behaviour are carefully checked by a senior member of staff. Last year, all of the Year 11 students attending alternative provision were offered further courses at Derby College because of the good progress they had made.
- The school uses early entry for GCSE for only a tiny minority of students who cannot be present to sit GCSE examinations in the summer term.
- The most-able students achieve well because the school identifies them early, provides additional challenge and support and sets high expectations for what they can achieve.

- Reading is promoted effectively across the school. The library is well resourced and used regularly. Reading sessions in which Year 11 volunteers help to support the reading of students in Year 7 as 'reading buddies' are enjoyed by all concerned and improve the skills of all the students involved. Library records show that both fiction and non-fiction books are borrowed frequently. Reading appears to be more popular among younger students; older students say that pressure of examinations reduces the time they have for reading for pleasure.
- The school has improved the promotion of numeracy and literacy across all subjects. Students are usually articulate and confident when explaining and discussing their ideas. There are extensive opportunities for developing numeracy across the curriculum so that standards are continually rising in mathematics and science subjects.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Students reach above-average standards both at AS and A2. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades of A* and A is above average and has risen each year for the last three years. There is some variation in the achievement of girls and boys, with boys doing particularly well and still some variation in the success rate of different subjects.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Scrutiny of the work in students' books, from Years 7 to the sixth form, and in a range of subjects, as well as direct observations and discussions with students show that teaching over time is good and that all students are making good, and in some subjects, outstanding progress.
- Teachers are experts in their subjects and impart their knowledge with enthusiasm, skill and often humour. They create a good environment for learning and relationships are positive. As a result, students are confident in contributing to class discussions. Most students respond well to the high expectations set for their participation and involvement.
- Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to the quality of students' learning. Their support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs ensures that these students are interested and motivated and able to make the same good progress as others.
- Students in the hearing impaired unit make good progress both in mainstream lessons and with their specialist teachers of the deaf. Teachers support the learning of these students by providing motivation and guidance, not by doing the work for them. Students and staff communicate with each other by sign language whenever necessary. All the students have individual teaching assistants who make sure that they are able to take full part in lessons across the school.
- Teaching in the sixth form is never less than good and often outstanding. Students are serious about their future and respond well to the challenge of teachers. Teaching in the sixth form is underpinned by expert subject knowledge which enthuses and motivates students through challenging questioning and detailed feedback.
- Students make the best progress when teachers are continually checking and evaluating the effectiveness of their teaching so that each new step is based on secure understanding. When this is not the case, students sometimes fail to grasp key concepts.
- Most teachers mark books regularly, providing useful advice on how students can improve their work. However, some marking is cursory and some students say that they would like more

advice on how to improve. Sometimes, work marked by pupils themselves is not checked by teachers and so mistakes are left in. When requests are made for students to complete or further improve work, some students do not always respond, so opportunities to achieve even better are lost.

- Some teachers do not set high enough expectations for the presentation of work in students' books.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students speak with confidence about their trust in the staff and can discuss their learning on how to keep safe in a variety of situations.
- Students know about the different forms of bullying and say that the school deals with it effectively. They agree that there is not much name-calling and that racist and homophobic language is unacceptable.
- Most students are proud of their school and applaud the work of their teachers, often describing them as approachable, understanding and helpful. They appreciate the trust the school shows by allowing students to bring in e-reading books, tablet computers and smartphones for use in class to research information and record notes. They report that the school goes to considerable lengths to make them fully aware of rules for the safe use of the internet and social networking sites.
- The behaviour of students is good. Students have positive attitudes to learning in lessons. Many take up opportunities to regularly attend extra sessions provided by staff to help them catch up with gaps in their work or revise and practise for examinations.
- Queues for the canteen at break and lunch time are orderly and calm. There is only a little litter around the large site; most students use the bins which are provided. Most students behave in a civilised and socially responsible manner.
- Students say that they think the school has improved rapidly. Indeed, students in Year 11 said that they wished they were starting at Allestree Woodlands again in Year 7, 'because the school is so much better now'.
- In the past, the level of exclusions has been above average. However, this has reduced each year, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Students have a clearer understanding of the expectations for behaviour and want to be at school.
- Attendance has improved and is now above average. A new student attendance and engagement officer has made a big impact in the last 18 months. The school works to support and improve the attendance of the few students with a high rate of absence.
- Books show that some students do not take enough pride in their work.
- The conduct of students in the sixth form is outstanding. They are excellent ambassadors for the school. They value their learning and feel well supported in their ambitions for the future. They

make a significant contribution to the life of the school through numerous activities, including as prefects and house captains, fundraising, mentoring younger students, supervising lunchtime activities with staff and supporting major school events.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders saw the last inspection report as a catalyst for change. They used the areas for improvement as a blueprint and have succeeded in raising achievement and increasing progress for all students. The system for tracking and assessing students' progress is now accurate, fully understood and used by all staff so that teachers, students and parents are all aware of how well each student is progressing.
- There has been a massive and effective drive to improve the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. Senior leaders led the way for a complete overhaul of teaching, recognising there had been some complacency. They have created a culture of ambition and challenge so that all staff feel they are part of a rapidly improving school with a role to play in that improvement. Teachers are enthusiastic about attending the school's in-house 'improving teaching to outstanding' courses. Faculty meetings now put sharing good practice and improving teaching at the heart of their agenda.
- Senior leaders and governors have used performance management to ensure that staff have a clearer understanding of what is effective teaching and that students' progress and achievement are the key focus for further remuneration. Morale is high, as is shown in the comments on the staff questionnaire, where many staff wrote about their pride in the school and their enjoyment of seeing students 'grow and flourish'.
- Faculty and department leaders play a major role in improving the consistency of teaching and learning. They identify the better use of progress data by all teachers, the good collaboration between middle managers and senior leaders and the sharing of good teaching practice as key ways in which the school has improved.
- A new special educational needs coordinator, who took up post in September 2013, has reviewed and improved all aspects of the school's work for disabled students and those who have special educational needs. As a result, these students are making at least good progress.
- Strong and effective leadership in the sixth form is ensuring even better achievement over time as the proportion of A* and A grades continues to rise. Highly effective tracking systems identify any student falling short of their target and prompt action is taken. The sixth form is increasing in size and popularity.
- Management of the hearing impaired unit is highly effective. Students are fully integrated into the mainstream of the school. A skilled team of teachers and teaching assistants fully support students in lessons across the school so that these students are able to make good progress. The gap between their attainment and that of other students has narrowed.
- The school is working to further reduce the gap in attainment between students eligible for pupil premium funding and their classmates. Support is tailored to individual needs, whether academic or social and emotional. Additional mathematics and literacy lessons are provided. Summer school, one-to-one tuition, revision support, and buddy reading all contribute to better progress.
- The curriculum offers a largely traditional, academic range of subjects in Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form because this best meets the needs of the vast majority of students. There are some BTEC courses and some cross-curricular topics; for example, the arts and humanities

combine to focus on the Holocaust. The school has adapted some teaching to address the previous underperformance of boys who achieved less well in the past. The breadth of work in sciences, languages, English and the arts contributes well to students' good spiritual, moral social and cultural development.

- Numerous opportunities for enrichment exist in the form of clubs, school trips, visits overseas to Gambia, Germany, Poland and Japan, sporting links, lectures by the Royal Geographical Society and many opportunities to visit universities.
- The parents who responded to the online questionnaire were extremely positive about the work of the school.
- Senior leaders and governors have used outside expertise from the local authority and the school improvement partners to verify their judgements that the school has improved significantly.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors regarded the previous inspection outcome as a 'wake up call'. They have reviewed and changed much of their way of working as a result and now know they have a clear grasp of the school's strengths and what still needs to improve to become outstanding. They know that data on progress is accurate and reliable, that teaching is improving and that all staff are ambitious to make sure that the remaining gaps in progress are narrowed further. Governors know how pupil premium funds are spent and see the impact in improved grades and outcomes for students. They spend time in school in numerous ways, such as providing 'mock' interviews for sixth formers and giving careers talks. Governors have a wide range of expertise in education, finance and safeguarding which enables them to be sure that all statutory requirements are met. Since the previous inspection, they have undertaken additional training and set up a new committee structure to focus more closely on students' progress and achievement.

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	137911
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	441954

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-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	1238
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	William Bates
Headteacher	Alan Brady
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2012
Telephone number	01332 551921
Fax number	01332 553869
Email address	headteacher@woodlands.derby.sch.uk

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