

Great Wyrley High School

Hall Lane, Great Wyrley, Walsall, WS6 6LQ

Inspection dates 5–6 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- In 2013, standards at the end of Year 11 were low and rates of progress too slow, particularly in mathematics. Although closely targeted support is enabling the current Year 11 to improve, they do not yet make good progress.
- Overall, teaching requires improvement. Although much teaching is good or outstanding, some inconsistency remains, particularly in mathematics.
- Not all teachers plan lessons in sufficient detail to ensure that the most able are sufficiently challenged or other groups, such as the least able, are effectively supported.
- Some students do not have a clear understanding of how to improve their work in order to achieve their targets in English and mathematics.
- Attendance rates, although slowly rising, are below average, particularly for disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- Current procedures to raise the quality of teaching further are not sufficiently systematic. Staff, including subject leaders, are not held sufficiently to account for the progress made by their students.
- Leaders in English and mathematics have too little influence in securing consistently good teaching and learning in their subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Students want to do well and are enthusiastic about their learning. They behave well in lessons and around the school. Relationships are warm and supportive.
- Disabled students and those with special needs, together with others who may find school difficult are very well cared for and supported so that all feel safe.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress and take an active part in school life. All students went on to further or higher education or employment in 2013.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students greatly enjoy the opportunities offered in the performing arts and sport.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 lessons, four of which were seen together with one of the school's senior leaders. They also made a number of further short visits to lessons. Only two sixth form lessons were observed due to most students being on study leave.
- Meetings were held with students, governors, a representative of the local authority and members of staff, including subject leaders.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at policies, the school's own assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and its development planning, minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of lesson observations, information about students' progress, safeguarding documents, and samples of students' work.
- The views of the 25 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, together with the school's own survey of the views of parents and carers. A telephone conversation also took place with a parent. In addition, inspectors took account of 16 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Mary Davis, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kelvin Hornsby	Additional Inspector
Helen Owen	Additional Inspector
Julia Morris	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average, while the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is low. Very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is average.
- Forty students from Years 10 to 11 follow a variety of full or part-time alternative courses at South Staffordshire College, VIP Academy, and Wightwick Hall School.
- The school regularly accepts students who are at the risk of permanent exclusion from other schools.
- The school meets the current government floor standards for secondary schools, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Over recent years the mathematics department has experienced staffing shortages and long-term absence. It is now fully staffed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Move all teaching to good or outstanding, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that teachers consistently:
 - plan their lessons more rigorously to include tasks that challenge and stretch those of the highest ability while supporting those of the lowest ability
 - focus on increasing the proportion of students making good progress in mathematics and English
 - use the outstanding practice that exists in some subjects to improve the quality of their written feedback in English and mathematics so that students know what to do next to improve their work and achieve their targets
- Communicate with students and with their parents, the importance of good attendance, particularly disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- Improve the quality of leadership by making sure that:
 - there are systematic procedures to raise the quality of teaching further and all staff and subject leaders are held to account for the progress made by students
 - the leaders in English and mathematics have greater influence in securing consistently good teaching and learning in those subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Over the past four years, students have typically entered the school with below-average basic skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics. The 2013 and current Year 11 cohorts entered with average basic skills. In 2013, by the end of Year 11, the proportion of students gaining five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was below average. This was partly due to staffing difficulties in mathematics encountered by this year group earlier in their secondary school education.
- Current Year 11 students have received additional support in mathematics and this has had a positive impact. Consequently they are on track to achieve levels of attainment that are closer to average than last year.
- Progress of students in English was below that of students in other schools during 2013, and well below in mathematics. The most-able students did not achieve the highest grades of which they were capable in many subjects including in English and mathematics.
- School leaders, along with most subject leaders, have addressed many of the underlying issues. Though current rates of progress in different year groups and subjects remain inconsistent, the school's data indicate they have improved. Thus, more students are expected to gain A and A* grades at GCSE or reach the higher levels at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2014. However, the proportion of students making good progress in both English and mathematics is still too low. Hence, too few are on track to gain the highest grades or levels in these subjects.
- The gap between the achievement in English and mathematics of students for whom the school receives additional pupil premium funding and that of their classmates narrowed slightly in 2013. Students were over two terms behind their peers in English and six terms behind in mathematics. The school's tracking shows that, for the current Year 11, the gap in progress rates is closing in mathematics but is proving more stubborn in English. This gap remains wide in Year 10 for English and mathematics.
- The school does not limit students' chances of achieving higher grades by entering them early for their GCSE in mathematics. Leaders are reviewing the effectiveness of the current school policy to enter students for English in Year 10.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are very well supported to ensure their wellbeing and enable them to learn in a safe environment. However, their progress in 2013 was below expectations and this has not improved for the current Year 11 as quickly as for other year groups, where it is mostly good. During the inspection, low ability groups in Year 7 and 8 were observed making rapid progress in literacy as a result of regular access to specialist, outstanding teaching.
- There is no significant difference in achievement between students of different ethnic backgrounds or the very few who speak English as an additional language and other students.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used appropriately to provide support for those entering the school with low basic skills in literacy and numeracy. This support continues through Key Stage 3 and beyond in order to ensure that students have the skills they need to achieve. Teachers regularly provide opportunities for students to read and promote the technical vocabulary for their subject. Students were observed reading fluently and with expression in a wide range of subjects. They expressed great enthusiasm for their reading books and even the weakest

readers were volunteering to read out loud to the rest of the class.

- Students following alternative courses achieve well as a result of the active and appropriate courses that closely match their needs and interests.
- Sixth form students achieve well. They join the sixth form with below average qualifications and make good progress. Success rates have improved from below national levels to above average in 2013, particularly disabled students and those with special educational needs and those for whom the pupil premium had previously provided additional support. Opportunities are provided to re-take English and mathematics GCSEs at several points during the course enabling students to persist until they succeed.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Much of the teaching is now good or outstanding, but the quality varies too widely across the school. Teaching in mathematics requires improvement because students are not making good enough progress across the school and students' progress over time indicates that they many have underachieved in the past.
- Sometimes there is not enough challenge for the most able, and these students are not expected to aim high enough. Particularly where students are taught in mixed ability classes, some teachers do not ensure that those of lowest ability fully understand the task. Some students told inspectors that they sometimes have to wait for others to finish or are left behind when they do not understand the work or find it too difficult.
- Some teachers in English and mathematics do not pay enough attention to the rates of progress being made in their lessons, as systems to track students' progress are often unclear. They are, therefore, not fully focused on ensuring that students make rapid progress.
- Students know their target grades or levels but are not so clear on what they need to do to achieve them. Although feedback through written marking is exemplary in some subjects, for example art and business studies, it is inconsistent across the school. This is particularly so in English and mathematics, where too little detailed information is provided to ensure that students understand clearly enough their current level or grade and how to improve their work. Teachers do not always ensure that students act upon the advice they are given.
- Where learning is most effective, opportunities are provided for students to be actively involved and take responsibility for their own learning, enabling them to build their skills rapidly during the lesson. In a Year 8 music lesson, for example, the composing task was clearly explained and demonstrated, before students set their own targets for the lesson and then worked in pairs at computers to do an arrangement of '*Yesterday*'. As a result of collaborating closely together and being totally engrossed in the task, they were able to demonstrate rapid progress.
- The school is ensuring the development of literacy skills by providing skilled teaching for small groups of lower attaining students in Key Stage 3, where they can build their confidence. Here tasks are very well planned to enable students to build their knowledge and understanding in a supportive atmosphere. Relationships are strong and learning is fun so that students are fully engaged, show pride in their success and are keen to learn more.
- Sixth form leaders and students say that teaching in the sixth form is consistently good. The few lessons that were observed during the inspection confirmed that teachers have good subject knowledge, provide challenging activities which fully stretch their students and provide work which helps to prepare them well for the forthcoming examinations. Students are given the

opportunity to reflect on their learning and to deepen their knowledge and understanding.

- Teaching assistants, when present, are usually well deployed and provide good support, using questioning well. They know when to stand back and encourage students to work on their own.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students show great enjoyment, are often excited by their learning and are keen to do well. Consequently behaviour in lessons is consistently at least good and often exemplary. Students respond quickly to instructions and good relationships between students and teachers enable lessons to flow smoothly.
- Students were observed showing great enthusiasm for learning, particularly when lessons are active and fun. For example, at the end of a German lesson about the 'House and Home', students had been encouraged to move round the room and 'Go Compare' their work. They did not want the lesson to end and stayed behind to show the teacher what they had achieved and to identify the words they wanted to learn next week.
- Behaviour around the school is calm and orderly and students are polite and welcoming. Inspectors were impressed with the mature way that they spoke to visitors, for example by showing the way or explaining their work in lessons. Most parents and staff agree that students behave well.
- Students say that there is little bullying and that rare incidents are dealt with promptly and effectively. They show a good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take but say that students show respect for others' views and are tolerant of differences.
- The school's work to keep students safe is good. One student told an inspector, 'This is a school with open arms!' A large pastoral support team who have clearly defined roles and responsibilities ensure that all are cared for. 'The House' provides specialist support for students at the risk of exclusion, including those from other schools, to remain in school in a safe environment. Exclusion rates have fallen during the current year.
- Attendance rates have been consistently below average and the school has introduced a variety of strategies to address this. As a result, persistent absence rates have fallen, although overall absence is above average, particularly for disabled students and those with special educational needs. The school is not doing enough to communicate with parents the importance of good attendance. Punctuality to lessons is good.
- Attendance to lessons in the sixth form is good and leaders monitor this carefully and take swift action if a student's attendance falls. Sixth form students take an active role in the school, supporting younger ones or organising charity events.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher, supported by his senior team and by the governing body, has worked to address the issues raised by the previous inspection. In particular, school leaders have provided support for the mathematics department and have eradicated inadequate teaching. As a result, achievement is rising and the quality of teaching has improved. However, teachers' expectations of how much pupils can achieve are still inconsistent.
- Although teaching is monitored regularly by all senior leaders, this is not systematic enough and

there are still inconsistencies in the way teachers mark pupils' work in English and mathematics and how they check on students' progress.

- Effective support to enable teachers to improve their practice includes visiting other local schools to share good practice, training courses and support from external consultants.
- The school has identified appropriate areas for future development and put new policies in place, for example the introduction of an able and talented policy to address the needs of the highest attaining students. This supports the school's capacity for further improvement.
- Leaders track progress regularly and the progress of different groups is analysed. A wide range of support is provided for students identified as underachieving, particularly in the provision of extra sessions for mathematics. The school is ensuring the inclusion and wellbeing of all, and working towards ensuring that all groups achieve equally well.
- The courses that students follow are flexible to meet their needs. Effective strategies to promote literacy across subjects, which includes literacy development being led by the humanities department, have been successful. Plans are now in place to promote numeracy.
- A mix of academic and work-based courses are offered in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, and students value the level of choice they have. Students are given appropriate independent advice at each point of entry to a new phase in their education. Alternative provision is well organised and includes growing vegetables in the school garden, motor vehicle studies and hairdressing.
- Provision for performing arts and sport is a strength of the school and supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. A wide range of opportunities is provided for creativity and to develop self-confidence, teamwork and leadership skills.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good. Student progress is carefully tracked and good support and advice provided. The 16-19 study programme is fully implemented. Employability skills are well developed through the 'skills for life' programme.
- The local authority provides good support for the school's leaders. This has included support to build the capacity of subject leaders and to raise the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a clear vision for the school and recognise the potential of the students to succeed. Governors know the school well and how it is performing compared with other schools. They have sought appropriate external training in order to question and challenge the school's leaders effectively and hold them to account for all aspects of its work. Governors know the strengths and areas for development in teaching and ensure that good performance leads to appropriate salary progression. They check thoroughly that additional funding is used appropriately and are challenging leaders to close the gap in achievement between all groups of pupils, including those eligible for pupil premium funding. They ensure that safeguarding and health and safety practices are exemplary.

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	124402
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	442566

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

Type of school	Secondary
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	995
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derek Watson
Headteacher	Chris Leach
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2013
Telephone number	01922 419311
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