

# Paulet High School

Violet Way, Stapenhill, Burton-on-Trent, DE15 9RT

**Inspection dates** 17–18 September 2014

| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Good                        | 2        |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Requires improvement</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Good                        | 2        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Sixth form provision           |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- By the end of Year 11, the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and that of other students has been too wide and slow to narrow.
- Students whose attainment is low on joining the school make slower progress than they should.
- Evaluations of the school's performance by leaders at all levels have not given sufficient prominence to shortcomings in the outcomes for key groups of students.
- Staff and leaders across the school have not been accountable enough for improving the achievement of specific groups of students.
- Not all teachers check regularly enough on the progress of students in lessons and provide challenge and support where it is needed.
- Less-able students in some classes struggle to understand and complete work because they are set work at the same level of challenge as their more-able peers without additional help and guidance.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Students' attainment and progress in Year 12, in AS level examinations and in GCSE resits of English and mathematics, have been weak.
- Sixth-form students do not always make best use of the substantial amount of independent study time they have.

### The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders have developed a highly cohesive school community, with good communications and a great deal of mutual respect between leaders, staff, students and parents.
- A strong ethos prevails and students behave well, show positive attitudes to learning and readily take on responsibilities.
- The safety and well-being of students is given a very high priority in school policies and actions.
- Governors have been asking increasingly searching questions about underachievement in key areas and improving their systems for holding the school to account.
- Programmes to support students' literacy and numeracy skills are supporting better learning and progress, especially for students in Key Stage 3.
- Some teaching is inspirational, with high expectations that challenge students to think deeply about the subject or widely across a range of spiritual, moral, social or cultural issues.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 32 lessons. They carried out some joint observations with school senior leaders. Inspectors also looked at the books of a sample of students with the students present, discussing their work with them in a range of subjects. Observations of other aspects of the school’s work were also made, such as assembly and tutor time, and students at work in the library and inclusion centre.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, governors and school staff, including senior and middle leaders. Informal discussions also took place with staff and students. A telephone discussion was held with the local authority’s school improvement adviser.
- There were 49 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire to provide evidence for the inspection. Inspectors also received some written correspondence from parents.
- Questionnaire returns from 40 members of staff were analysed.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including assessment records, the school’s self-evaluation and development plans, its safeguarding policies, and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

## Inspection team

Ian Hodgkinson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Gwen Onyon

Additional Inspector

Lisa Crausby

Additional Inspector

Mary Myatt

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Paulet High School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school, with a small but growing sixth form.
- Until the current academic year, sixth-form provision in the Stapenhill area was jointly managed and taught at Paulet High School in partnership with the Blessed Robert Sutton School nearby. This collaboration has now been formally ended so that students in Year 12 are taught wholly by Paulet High School staff. Joint provision will continue for students in Year 13 until the end of the current academic year.
- Most students in the school are White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students, who are those supported through the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government for students known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority) is average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who special education needs is below average. The proportion supported through an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs is average.
- Two students are on full-time placements at the Burton Alternative Education pupil referral unit. In addition, over a typical year around 60 students in Key Stages 3 and 4 attend part-time short-term placements with specialist vocational training providers; these are currently Shire Oak Motorcycle Training, Brewhouse and Arts Development (Project Wired), and Moreland Adventure Mountain and Paddle Sports.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school's acting headteacher, who is the substantive deputy headteacher, had been in post for two weeks before this inspection. A number of other senior leaders are also in 'acting' roles until a new substantive headteacher is appointed.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by ensuring that all teachers:
  - check regularly on the progress of students in lessons and offer extra support or challenge as necessary
  - set tasks that are consistently adapted to match students' abilities and needs
  - support students in the sixth form in making best use of their independent study time.
- Improve achievement by:
  - ensuring that gaps in attainment and progress between disadvantaged students and others in the school close quickly
  - accelerating the progress of pupils with low attainment on entry
  - continuing to improve the attendance of disadvantaged students
  - accelerating the progress in English and mathematics of those retaking GCSE examinations in the sixth form
  - accelerating the progress of students following academic programmes in Year 12.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - strengthening the quality of evaluation at all levels through a sharper focus on current strengths and weaknesses in outcomes for students
  - linking the evaluation of performance of staff and subjects more closely to the progress made by all groups of students.
- Improve the effectiveness of the sixth form by:
  - promoting better achievement through more rigorous checking of students' progress against challenging targets and intervening swiftly to support students when problems arise

– promoting more consistent high-quality teaching by linking evaluations of teaching quality more explicitly to the progress students make against their targets.

- 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 management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management requires improvement

- Evaluations of the school's performance at all levels have focused too much on past successes in raising headline attainment, without getting to grips with the reasons for persistent gaps in achievement between disadvantaged students and others in the school and for the slow progress made by low-attaining students. This problem has not been ignored, but the lack of speed in closing these gaps has been downplayed in whole-school and departmental evaluations of performance. Actions devised to remedy the problem have therefore dwelt on establishing a raft of interventions outside the classroom rather than strengthening expectations that all pupils will make good progress through their day-to-day lessons.
- Performance targets for raising achievement of all groups and closing gaps are imprecise. The school development plan identifies important priorities and actions but success criteria are not clearly measurable. Subject development plans are too often vague about exactly how subjects and teachers will close gaps and do not set sharply focused criteria for success. Teachers are held to account for their performance against their targets and do not receive pay increases if targets are not met; however these targets do not in all cases clearly set out the need to ensure good progress for all groups of students.
- Spending of pupil premium funding is documented on the school website, but the evaluation of the impact of this spending lacks depth and presents too favourable a picture of Year 11 outcomes. Nonetheless, this spending is beginning to have an impact in boosting the progress of students in current cohorts, especially in Key Stage 3. For example students have found additional tuition in mathematics and English very helpful. Those who choose to access additional support value in particular extended access to homework and study support, before and after school and on Saturdays. The creation of a 'Narrowing the Gaps' team and appointment of a Progress and Achievement Coordinator is helping to identify more readily students whose achievement is declining and direct support to them.
- The acting headteacher and senior leadership team have recognised that evaluation of school performance needs to be more rigorous, both in the main school and the sixth form. Imminent departmental reviews of examination performance, for example, will now all be led by the headteacher with a governor present.
- The school is very well regarded by all its stakeholders, including staff, students and the overwhelming majority of parents. The school website keeps parents well informed of school activities and curriculum developments. Staff, including newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the school, feel very well supported in their professional development. Teachers collaborate openly through peer support arrangements, and teaching and learning forums, to share ideas and approaches.
- Middle leaders play a prominent role in school developments. Pastoral leaders are valued by students who feel confident that they can always seek help when needed. Heads of subject have reviewed schemes of work in the light of National Curriculum changes and examination specifications, with a number of positive outcomes, including the introduction of a rigorous computing course at Key Stage 3 and improving science results. The school continues to assess using National Curriculum levels, and has established a cross-curricular working group to consider whether to adapt these levels or adopt a new assessment system.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, featuring academic and vocational options and pathways in the main school and sixth form. Contact time with teachers is lower than usual in the sixth form, which potentially affects students' progress. The personal, social, health, economic and citizenship education curriculum is planned across subject lessons, 'drop-down' days and a school assembly programme. It includes a strong focus on enterprise and personal responsibility. Appropriate outside speakers and visitors supplement this programme. Religious education across all year groups ensures a balanced understanding of world religions. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a prominent feature of the curriculum and individual lessons.
- Careers guidance is mostly well-regarded by students and the proportion of leavers not in education, employment or training is low. The school encourages active citizenship through participation in a range of activities that prepare students well for responsibilities of later life.

- The school meets all requirements to safeguard the well-being of its students. Staff, however, have not all been trained in recognising dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
- The school has been kept under a 'light touch' monitoring by its local authority, reflecting a general rise in standards in the years immediately following the last inspection. This monitoring has until now not challenged the school to look hard enough at its performance in closing gaps for disadvantaged students.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - the governing body is efficient in ensuring that its statutory duties are met, especially with regard to safeguarding, although they do not always ensure that policies are updated on the school website
  - governors have become increasingly assertive through the last academic year in raising questions about the school's performance, including in the sixth form, variations in performance between subjects, and gaps in performance for disadvantaged students; this reflects governors' better training in and understanding of school performance data
  - governors have steadily increased their monitoring of the work of the school, through twice-yearly governor review-day visits to the school and lessons, and through planned governor presence in examination reviews
  - governors recognise the need for school leaders to provide more detailed records of the impact of pupil premium spending on students' achievement through the school, as a means of securing greater accountability
  - governors ensure that the performance management system only rewards staff who meet their targets
  - governors play a full part in promoting the school's values and ethos of tolerance and respect among all stakeholders, including leaders, staff, students and parents.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite and courteous to each other and to members of staff and visitors. One student, asked for reasons why students behave well in lessons, said it is 'because teachers treat you with the respect which they expect from you'. Behaviour around the school corridors and grounds is calm and the site is litter-free. Parents are overwhelmingly of the view that the school makes sure its students are well behaved.
- Pastoral leaders and other staff analyse behaviour in detail and take immediate action to tackle incidents of poor behaviour. The behaviour log efficiently records incidents, actions taken and their impact. Successful systems are in place to involve staff, parents, carers and external agencies in developing strategies to moderate students' behaviour. The reductions in the number of behavioural incidents and sharp reductions in the number of exclusions over the time since the last inspection show that actions and interventions are having a very positive impact.
- The school promotes good attitudes and behaviour through a valued and well-understood system of rewards and sanctions. Students themselves, through their effective 'student voice' panels, contributed to the development of the behaviour policy which is therefore fully recognised and accepted by all. The policy is mainly implemented consistently across the school, but very occasionally, teachers are slow to intervene to address distracting, off-task chatter which slows learning.
- Students have positive attitudes which support their learning in most classes. Students are proud of their school. They arrive promptly and well-prepared to school and lessons. They are encouraged to play a full part in school decision-making, for example as 'student voice' representatives and subject ambassadors, or by assuming the roles of school leaders during 'takeover day'. They readily take on and carry out efficiently a range of leadership opportunities within the school, including as prefects. A balanced programme of assemblies supports the school's personal, social, health and economic education programme which prepares students well with the understanding and values to play a full part in modern Britain.
- During the academic year ending July 14, attendance improved overall and was broadly in line with the national average. Persistent absence fell by two-thirds on the previous year. Attendance also improved for

all groups of students in that year; it improved especially sharply for disadvantaged students as a result of more rigorous monitoring and follow-up. The gap between the attendance of disadvantaged students and others nonetheless remained wider than the national gap, and remains a priority in the school's drive to raise achievement for that group.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Student safety is afforded a very high priority within the school.
- Bullying of any kind is not tolerated and, according to students, is very rare. As a result, while records are well-maintained, few incidents of bullying or racism have been noted, and these were dealt with appropriately. A programme of school activities highlights the school's strong stance against bullying and how to deal with it. Students are taught about e-safety and staff and parents can use Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) software to report incidents or concerns.
- Procedures to ensure the safeguarding of students using alternative provision are thorough and robust. A designated member of staff monitors the progress and well-being of students on full-time placement at the pupil referral unit through weekly progress reports and reports from local authority officers. The decision about whether students are ready to return to school is kept under constant review; students have a reintegration plan which is flexible and dependent on their progress against clear targets. Expectations are appropriately high, so that one student is targeted to attain five or more GCSE grades at grade C and above, including English and mathematics. The temporary part-time vocational placements offered to students vulnerable to disaffection and underachievement has contributed to improvements in attendance, behaviour and progress for these students.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Over time, teaching does not always meet the needs of disadvantaged students, or those in other groups vulnerable to underachievement, including those with special educational needs. This means that disadvantaged students have made too little progress in comparison with their peers.
- In some classes, teachers do not check the progress of students regularly enough, even when they are spending significant time working on individual tasks. As a consequence, misconceptions or flawed approaches persist. These diminish the quality of students' work and weaken their development of skills and understanding.
- The progress of less-able students is slowed in classes where tasks and resources are not always adapted well enough to provide the support they need. For example, more-able students in a Year 7 class responded well to a peer-assessment task but less-able students floundered because not all had the skills to complete the task at the same level as their peers.
- Although there are important areas for improvement in teaching, there are also significant strengths. Teachers have very positive relationships with students and manage their classes well to maintain good behaviour. A strong vein of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development runs through much of the teaching as teachers encourage students to think deeply about current issues, moral dilemmas and cultural influences.
- Students make very strong progress in some classes where expectations are high and students are supported to think widely and deeply about topics. More-able students, particularly, thrive in these classes. Teachers' questioning of students is often very skilful in developing their confidence to articulate and extend their answers, although instances remain where questions require only very limited responses.
- Teachers are supporting students' literacy and numeracy development with increasing success, especially in Key Stage 3, by building specific and relevant tasks into programmes of work. Teachers mark work regularly in line with the school marking policy, and students value and mostly act on the feedback they receive. This marking now features reference to specific literacy targets and is contributing to a general improvement in literacy standards to support learning across the school.

- School leaders and staff have developed effective systems of communication, including through the 'pinboard' on its website and the virtual learning environment, that allow staff, students and parents to share information on the curriculum and its activities. In a computing class, the teacher communicated directly with pupils through secure social media software, allowing him to check students' work as it developed and provide instant support and feedback.
- Homework tasks are well-designed to promote wider subject understanding, independent research, and extended writing skills. Teachers offer valuable additional support to students outside of lessons, although its impact depends on students' willingness to take it up.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Gaps in attainment and progress between disadvantaged students and their peers are wide and have been slow to close. In 2013, the GCSE results of disadvantaged students were on average over a grade lower in English and a grade and a half lower in mathematics. Actions have been taken which are reducing this gap for current year groups, but their effect has been limited because they have not focused sufficiently on improving the quality of teaching.
- Too few students who join the school with low attainment make expected progress in many subjects, including English, mathematics and science, by the end of Year 11. They do not always make enough progress in lessons. Intervention measures beyond the classroom are beginning to quicken their rates of progress, especially at Key Stage 3, and help them to catch up with their peers. For example, the Year 7 catch-up programme is well regarded by students and has led to a measurable and demonstrable improvement in their literacy and numeracy.
- A whole school focus on literacy and numeracy successfully reinforces these skills across the curriculum. The reading programme for pupils in Year 7 has produced substantial improvements in their reading ages. It has also stimulated a greater interest in reading for pleasure, as evidenced in a busy library at lunchtimes.
- Students' attainment on joining the school in Year 7 is below average. Following the last inspection and up to 2013, overall GCSE attainment and that in English and mathematics rose strongly to meet the national average, although there were marked variations between subjects. Provisional, unvalidated GCSE results in 2014 suggest that attainment has fallen back sharply, in English and overall, and that wide gaps remain for disadvantaged students. The school is in the process of formally challenging some of these results. Standards have nonetheless risen in subjects such as science and humanities where achievement had been weaker, as a result of improvement actions taken by leaders.
- The school sets challenging targets and checks the progress of students against these. This system is easily understood so that students know how well they are doing. Underachievement can be identified quickly and actions taken. Parents are kept well informed about progress through regular reports, but a minority are unclear about the information given.
- The most-able students make good progress in relation to their peers nationally. They follow an appropriate curriculum that offers challenge and prepares them well for the future. In the sixth form, not enough students succeed in securing the highest grades, particularly at AS Level; plans to raise expectations through introducing higher targets have now been implemented but it is too soon to evaluate their impact.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs benefit from well-organised school provision which draws on extensive support, where appropriate from outside agencies. Progress has not always been strong for these students because of variations in the quality of teaching and support they receive in the classroom. During the last year, subjects, teachers and teaching assistants have been held increasingly accountable for progress of these students through the work of new leadership for special educational needs and the 'Narrowing the Gaps' team. Data for other groups vulnerable to underachievement suggest that progress is now improving throughout Key Stage 3, although weaknesses in progress remain in Key Stage 4.

**The sixth form provision****requires improvement**

- Achievement varies too much in the sixth form. Students following vocational courses do well, but too few students studying academic qualifications make good progress. Attainment is below average in academic qualifications. Although standards have improved at A-Level, there is too much variation between different subjects and AS-Level performance has been consistently below expectations.
- Success rates for students re-taking GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics were weak in 2013/14. Leaders are implementing plans to address these achievement issues. Unvalidated 2014 results suggest significant improvements in A\*-A grades across most subjects and higher retention rates.
- Students like being in the sixth form and enjoy the positive relationships they have with teachers and other students. They are well supported in choosing their sixth form courses and value the careers advice and guidance they receive, both in joining the sixth form and in choosing destinations when they leave. Nearly all students who left in 2014 are now in employment, further or higher education or training. Students are given opportunities for work experience and enterprise activity during their weekly programme of enrichment activities which support their studies and desired destinations.
- The checking of students' progress and the subsequent support they receive has been too loose. This reflects the constraints felt by school leaders in assuring quality across provision made jointly with the staff and leaders of another school. Some students at A-level still did not know their targets at the time of this inspection, and leaders have not used progress against targets to evaluate teaching with the same degree of rigour in the sixth form as in the main school. Teaching quality therefore varies widely. Contact time with teachers in each subject is relatively light, and students are not supported sufficiently in developing their independent self-study skills during non-contact time.

## 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

|                                |               |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 124391        |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Staffordshire |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 449406        |

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

|   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                         | Secondary                         |
| <b>School category</b>                        | Community                         |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                    | 11–18                             |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                       | Mixed                             |
| <b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>     | Mixed                             |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>    | 760                               |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b> | 137                               |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                  | The governing body                |
| <b>Chair</b>                                  | Steve Jackson                     |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                            | Ian McArthur (Acting Headteacher) |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>     | 16 March 2011                     |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                       | 01283 239710                      |
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