

The Dormston School

Mill Bank, Sedgley, Dudley, DY3 1SN

Inspection dates 18–19 November 2014

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Inadequate | 4 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Students' achievement, including the achievement of different groups of students, requires improvement.
- Disadvantaged students, particularly in Key Stage 4, do not achieve as well as their classmates. This is because of a legacy of underachievement.
- The most-able students do not make as much progress as they should.
- Teaching requires improvement.
- Teachers are not consistently taking into account what students already know and can do when planning lessons, particularly for the most able.
- Teachers' marking does not always give students clear subject-specific guidance to help them make quicker progress.
- Teachers do not make the best use of opportunities to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills.

The school has the following strengths

- This is a rapidly improving school.
- The headteacher has made sure that the whole school community has higher expectations of what students can achieve.
- Students are now making quicker progress in a range of subjects.
- The gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged students and their classmates are narrowing. This is as a result of the good strategies leaders are using to support these students, including in the spending of additional government funding.
- Teaching is improving quickly and there is now considerably more that is having a substantial impact on students' learning than was the case when the school was judged to require special measures.
- Governors know the school very well and offer a good balance of challenge and support to school leaders, including in the management of teachers' performance.
- Students behave well. They are proud of their school and respectful of each other.
- Students say that they feel safe and well cared for.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and students’ learning and behaviour in 34 lessons. Inspectors were joined on a number of these visits by senior leaders. They also observed assemblies, tutor times, breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised students’ books and folders during lessons and as a separate activity.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior and subject leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of students in meetings, as well as at other times in lessons and around the school at breaks and lunchtimes.
- There were too few responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire for parents, to gather information. However, inspectors considered the results from the school’s own survey of parents. They also considered the 53 responses to Ofsted’s staff questionnaire.
- A variety of information was analysed about students’ progress, attendance and behaviour. The inspection team also viewed a range of other documents, including the school’s improvement plans, and minutes of governing body meetings. The inspection team looked at records relating to the safeguarding of students.
- Inspectors took into account the evidence gathered during the previous three monitoring visits since the school was judged to require special measures.

Inspection team

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| James McNeillie, Lead inspector | Her Majesty’s Inspector |
| Chris Chapman | Seconded Inspector |
| Helen Reeves | Seconded Inspector |
| Mark Capel | Seconded Inspector |

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- The Dormston School is an average-sized secondary school.
- Almost all students are from White British backgrounds and few students speak English as an additional language.
- Just under a quarter of the students in the school are supported by the pupil premium funding (additional government funding that provides support to disadvantaged students who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are in the care of the local authority). This is below the national average.
- Around one in 10 of the students are disabled students or have special educational needs. This is a below-average proportion.
- A small number of students attend courses which take place away from the school site. These courses are provided by the Wolves Academy and local authority managed provision at the Cherry Tree Learning Centre and the Sycamore Centre.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations of students' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher started in September 2013.
- The Chair of the Governing Body is a National Leader of Governance.
- The school has been receiving support from Balcarras School and the headteacher of that school is a National Leader of Education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all students, and groups of students, make at least good progress by making sure that teachers consistently:
 - plan learning that takes into account what students already know and can do, including for the most able
 - provide students with written feedback that helps them to know what they need to do to improve so that the quality of that feedback is as good as the best
 - plan more opportunities for students to use and develop their reading, writing, communication and mathematics skills, including in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Accelerate the progress of disadvantaged students by embedding the successful strategies already in place to further reduce the gaps that exist between these students and their classmates.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- As a result of good leadership, the quality of teaching is improving quickly, students are making better progress and gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged students and their peers are narrowing.
- The headteacher has been highly effective in reshaping the culture of the school to one that has high expectations of equality of opportunity: every student can achieve, irrespective of that student's level of ability or background. The headteacher is an excellent role model for staff and students. Governors, staff and students appreciate his substantial role in improving the school.
- Senior leaders have responded very well to the headteacher's vision for the school and are also good role models, including in the quality of their teaching. They have a sharp understanding of the effectiveness of the school's work and their roles and responsibilities.
- Leaders track the progress, attendance and behaviour of all groups of students in forensic detail and this means that they know what is working well and what still needs to improve. They use this information well to inform plans for further improvement. Some plans written by subject leaders are less effective at identifying how improvements will be made and monitored.
- Additional government funding to support the disadvantaged students has been spent well and the impact can be seen in improvements to these students' achievement, attendance and attitudes to learning. The funding has been used to provide Saturday 'Master Classes' for Year 11 students, mentoring for students in each year group and additional teaching expertise in English and mathematics, all of which have improved these students' achievement. Leaders have also worked with students and their families to increase rates of attendance, with some students' attendance increasing by 25%. The school's breakfast club has significantly improved the punctuality of students, and leaders have made sure that any student who needs it has assistance so that they have all of the necessary equipment to take a full part in lessons.
- Senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and draw together a range of evidence to do this. They make accurate judgements. Leaders use this information to provide good-quality training for teachers. Teachers value the increased opportunities they have to work with other colleagues and to share good practice. The impact of this can be seen in the fact that teaching is improving quickly.
- Subject leaders are also intrinsically involved in checking the quality of teaching and students' achievement in the areas for which they are responsible. These leaders describe this aspect of their work to be the one which has changed the most since the last inspection. They are regularly held to account by senior leaders and by governors. This includes providing evaluations of public and internal examination results.
- Since the last monitoring visit, leaders have increased teachers' focus on developing students' literacy skills. A particular drive has been on increasing the opportunities for and quality of students' extended writing. This is beginning to have an impact and there are plans in place to improve other aspects of teaching to promote students' good literacy skills. There is a similar plan to further develop students' numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics.
- The school's Heads of House have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The impact of their work, and that of their support staff colleagues, is considerable in terms of raising the attendance of students who were previously reluctant to come to school. This group of staff have also supported other leaders well in improving the behaviour and attitudes of a range of students.
- The range of subjects and qualifications offered to students is broad and balanced. Recent changes mean that there is an increased focus on qualifications, and students are now spending more time being taught English and mathematics. There continues to be numerous opportunities for students in all years to study and learn in creative subjects, as well as in physical education.
- Students learn about respect, tolerance and the rule of law in subjects such as personal, social and health

education, religious education and citizenship, as well as in a broad programme of assemblies. They are provided with good advice and guidance when choosing their subjects for study at Key Stage 4 and for making choices when they leave school.

- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet requirements. A review of a sample of case studies show that teachers and leaders are quick to respond to concerns and are tenacious in their work with external agencies to help potentially vulnerable students or those who need additional support.
- Leaders keep checks on the small numbers of student who attend courses away from the school and make sure that these students are safe and making progress.
- The local authority has provided effective support to the school. For example, it has funded the school's work with an outstanding school and this has helped to improve teaching and leadership. The local authority has also regularly reviewed the progress the school has made while it was in special measures.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Chair of the Governing Body has used his expertise well to shape the work of his fellow governors, increasing the levels of challenge they provide to senior leaders and utilising their skills to best effect.
 - Governors have a precise understanding of how well students in this school achieve in comparison to all students nationally. They have strong oversight of the quality of teaching and the management of teachers' performance, which includes rewarding those teachers and leaders whose work has improved students' experiences and refusing pay rises when targets have not been met.
 - Governors gather a good range of first-hand evidence of the effectiveness of aspects of the school's work. For example, a governor has led a review of the school's work in promoting students' understanding of British values and another governor has led reviews of students' behaviour and of the school's use of alternative provision.
 - Governors have a comprehensive understanding of how well school leaders are spending additional government funding. For example, they know that this funding is making a difference to improving the achievement, attendance and personal development of disadvantaged students. However, they also know that this group of students' achievement needs to improve more quickly and have checked that leaders are spending the money wisely to enable this to happen.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students respond well to the school's high expectations and feel valued. They understand the clear boundaries set by staff, have good attitudes to learning and take responsibility for their own behaviour. As a result, the school is calm and orderly.
- Students are proud of their school and keen to learn. They are smartly dressed, punctual and well prepared for lessons, and respect the school environment. Year 11 students make sensible use of the new coffee bar, and the school site is kept litter free.
- Students from different backgrounds get on well together and incidences of students being unkind to each other are rare. Students are confident to say this because they have a good understanding of different kinds of bullying. Inspectors observed inspirational assemblies that took place during Anti-Bullying Week.
- Leaders manage behaviour very effectively. Robust systems and careful analysis of information, including for those attending courses away from the school site, ensure that appropriate support is provided for those students who need it.
- Attendance has improved and is now above average. This is because the school works effectively in partnership with students and their parents. Students understand the importance of attending school every day.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students, including those who are potentially vulnerable, say that they feel safe. They trust adults in the school, are confident that they will be listened to. They describe the 'house system' as supporting them with this.
- Students understand how to keep themselves safe from risks that they face out of school. Issues such as keeping safe online and cyberbullying are discussed in detail, and students are taught about how to be in respectful relationships.
- Leaders have clear procedures in place to care for students who are vulnerable or may be at risk from harm. The school works well with other agencies to make sure that quick action is taken to provide support when necessary.
- Leaders ensure that students who attend courses away from the school are safe.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has not enabled all students and all groups of students to achieve well over time. The quality of teaching is improving quickly but is not yet consistently good.
- Teachers do not use well enough the information they have about what students can already do to plan work at the right level of difficulty. This means that the most-able students often complete the same work as their classmates and so are not helped to achieve the highest grades.
- Students' books are marked regularly but not all teachers give students precise guidance to improve their work. Nonetheless, there are excellent examples of marking. For example, in some English and mathematics lessons, students routinely improve their skills and make better progress by acting on their teachers' written comments.
- Teachers do not consistently provide effective opportunities for students to develop and apply their reading, writing, communication and mathematics skills. Improving students' literacy skills has rightly been more of a priority because of weaknesses in that aspect. Although students are increasingly writing at length in some subjects, this is not consistent across the school. When teachers mark students' work, they do not always correct errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar to improve standards of writing.
- Many teachers use questioning well to assess students' learning and progress in lessons. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson focused on *Macbeth*, the teacher's carefully targeted questioning resulted in students learning more effectively. This was because students considered the reasons for the answers they and their classmates gave.
- In lessons where activities are challenging and made relevant, students are energised and enthusiastic. In a Key Stage 3 religious education lesson, for example, students were inspired by an imaginative task to reflect on how they can make a difference to the world they live in.
- Students say that the quality of teaching has significantly improved. A growing number of teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan well-structured lessons, establish effective routines and show examples of successful work to set clear expectations. As a result, students know how to do well and are more confident in their learning. This was evident in a Year 10 mathematics lesson, where students were learning for the first time about 'surds' and the teacher used his good subject knowledge to skilfully explain to students how to understand this aspect of their study.
- Teachers are provided with detailed information about strategies to support in lessons disabled students and those who have special educational needs. This information is being used increasingly well.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- The progress that students, and particular groups of students, make is not consistently good. This is because of a legacy of underachievement which is now being addressed.
- Disadvantaged students make less progress than other students in the school who have similar levels of ability, as well as other students of similar abilities nationally. However, this is improving.
- The school's analysis of 2014 GCSE results show that disadvantaged students attained about three quarters of a grade lower in English and in mathematics compared to their classmates. These students achieved about one grade below those of other students nationally in both English and mathematics. Each of these gaps is smaller than was the case in the previous year. Students currently in the school are making quicker progress than those in previous years.
- The most-able students make slower progress compared with similar students nationally and their achievement requires improvement. The achievement of this group improved slightly based on 2014 GCSE test results and compared to the previous year's results. There are now more of these students making accelerated progress in school but these improvements are still not yet quick enough.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs also requires improvement. These students, like their classmates, have not had good enough teaching in the past to help them reach their full potential. There are some individual students who have and are continuing to make better progress because teaching is increasingly effective at meeting these students' needs.
- The proportion of students who achieved five GCSE qualifications, including in English and mathematics, at grades A* to C was broadly average in 2014. This overall figure masks variation across subjects and for different groups of students. However, the school's records show that most students in that year group made quicker progress in Year 11 than they did in Year 10.
- All groups of students are now making quicker progress than they have done in the past. This is as a direct result of the better teaching they experience and the systems in place to provide additional support to those who need it.
- Students' good attitudes to learning are making a strong contribution to their improved achievement. They want to learn and the students that inspectors spoke to described how they have noticed that their classmates are now more enthusiastic.
- Students who join the school with skills that are below average are beginning to catch up quickly. This is as a result of small-group teaching, better whole-class teaching and raising the profile of the importance of reading across the school. Leaders have made sensible choices in how to spend additional government funding for these students, many of who are from families on low incomes.
- Many students have good oracy skills. For example, in a Year 10 citizenship lesson, students of different abilities were able to express with confidence and fluency their views on the issue of crime and punishment. However, weaknesses remain, such as in the accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar, and these are not being consistently addressed by teachers.
- Since the last inspection, students are no longer entered early for GCSE examinations as a matter of course. The small number of students who did sit examinations before the end of Year 11 in 2014 were not disadvantaged by doing so, including the most able.
- Students who attend courses away from the school gain appropriate qualifications and skills.

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

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| Unique reference number | 103855 |
| Local authority | Dudley |
| Inspection number | 447380 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 968 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | George Craig |
| Headteacher | Ben Stitchman |
| Date of previous school inspection | 14 June 2013 |
| Telephone number | 01384 816395 |
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