

William Brookes School

Farley Road, Much Wenlock, TF13 6NB

Inspection dates 8–9 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Teaching is not consistently good enough to make sure that students learn well. As a result, too many students, particularly boys, are not making as much progress as they could be across all subjects during their time in the school.
- Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are not always high enough, and they do not always set work at the right level of difficulty. Sometimes the most-able students find it too easy, while the less-able students find it too hard.
- The most-able students do not achieve their full potential. In 2014 GCSE examinations, the percentage of high grades was below average or well below in most subjects.
- The way the school uses data to check students' progress does not always help to secure the rapid progress they should be making.
- Senior leaders have not ensured that the good teaching practice in the school has been shared sufficiently well between teachers.
- Not all teachers check that students follow the guidance from marking in order to improve their work.
- Until recently, subject and other leaders did not always have an accurate view of how well students were doing in their areas of responsibilities.
- Although senior leaders recognise what needs to be done to improve the school, some of the initiatives are too recent to have made a significant difference.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders have put the right systems in place to raise achievement in the school. Consequently, this is an improving school.
- The sixth form is good. Students achieve well because the good advice they receive enables them to pursue courses that suit them when they join the sixth form.
- Students say they feel safe and they behave extremely well throughout the school. Their attitudes to learning are good.
- Students' personal development as future citizens is good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The governing body has a secure knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 32 lessons, including several shared observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors listened to students read and looked at samples of their recent work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, teachers and members of the governing body. Discussions took place with groups of students.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of school documents, including: the school’s self-evaluation; its development plan; behaviour records; governing body documents; and documents relating to the management of teachers’ performance.
- The views of the 127 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account along with letters and telephone calls from parents. Inspectors also considered the views expressed in the 80 questionnaires returned by school staff.

Inspection team

Steven Cartlidge, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Marie McMahon	Additional Inspector
Susan Madgwick	Additional Inspector
Lynn Stanbridge	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- William Brookes School became an academy school on 1st June 2013. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.
- William Brookes School is an averaged-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- A fifth of the students in the school are eligible for pupil premium funding, which provides additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. This proportion is below the national average.
- One in eight students is disabled or has special educational needs. This proportion is below the national average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- There are currently 14 students attending work-related courses away from the school for part of the week at the East Shropshire Learning Forum.
- The school is the only Olympian/Coubertin school in the country. It has strong links with Olympic ideals and the Olympic movement.
- The headteacher began two years prior to the school becoming an academy.
- There have been many recent changes to staffing, including a new head of English appointed in September 2014 and head of mathematics appointed in the same week as the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve teaching and achievement throughout the school, by:
 - using information about groups of students' attainment to plan suitably challenging work for students of different abilities, particularly boys and the most-able students so that more achieve higher grades
 - sharing the best practice that exists in the school more widely between subjects
 - ensuring marking and feedback to students are of a consistently good quality so they know exactly what they need to do to improve their work, with an expectation they act upon such advice.
- Improve the effectiveness and impact of leadership and management, by:
 - making full use of assessment information, with a sharp focus on the progress of different groups of students, to identify gaps in students' learning and raise standards
 - ensuring that all staff consistently apply the new school policies and improvement strategies
 - increasing the effectiveness with which subject and other leaders analyse the school's work to identify what is working well and how improvements can be made.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders have not done enough to ensure that teaching and the progress different groups of students make across all subjects and age groups are consistently good. Policies and strategies introduced by senior leaders have not had sufficient time to have a positive impact on raising students' attainment which, until recently, was below national average.
- Leaders have also focused on strengthening a positive ethos in the school allowing good teaching and behaviour to flourish.
- There have been several staff changes at all levels and this has slowed the rate of school improvement. Leaders agree that there is still much to do before the school is operating as effectively as it needs to.
- Senior leaders have improved the tracking systems for monitoring students' progress and attainment. Information is gathered on a more regular basis and this is used to set challenging targets for students. However, leaders have not used this information rigorously enough to check the achievement of different groups of students.
- Staff are not consistently applying the new systems and policies to improve teaching and raise students' achievement. The use of assessment data to focus on progress of different groups of students and plan suitably challenging work for students of different abilities is not being fully implemented.
- The headteacher and the senior leadership team know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have introduced systems to bring about improvements including systems for monitoring the quality of teaching. Senior leaders have provided training for staff, including the sharing of best practice that exists in the school. Although this is bringing about some improvements in the quality of teaching, best practice is not shared well enough between departments to bring about rapid improvement.
- In the past, subject and other leaders have not had an accurate view about how well students are doing in their areas of responsibility leading to an inaccurate view of the performance of the school. Only recently have subject and other leaders become more effective and begun playing a greater role in checking the quality of teaching and students' progress, and challenging underperformance.
- Leaders have identified that boys' underperformance was due to teaching that was not fully engaging or sufficiently challenging. They have begun to address this by providing staff with training on how to make learning more engaging for boys. Leaders have also introduced learning mentors to work with boys to help them in their studies. Early indications, confirmed by looking at work in students' books, are that boys are now beginning to make similar progress to girls.
- More rigorous performance management links the quality of teaching to salary progression. The majority of staff who responded to the questionnaire were positive about leaders' work bringing about change for the better.
- The school has recently revised the subjects offered so that students benefit from an additional English lesson. The focus for this is to develop reading and writing skills. Improvements in students' work seen during the inspection are already having a positive impact on their progress.
- The school has a strong focus on improving the achievement of students supported by pupil premium funding. There are effective systems to support these students in making more rapid progress. For example, funding has been used to create a 'pupil premium champion' to provide students with more targeted individual support. Evidence in their books show that disadvantaged students are now making good progress, similar to that of their classmates.
- The school offers a curriculum that is well matched to the majority of students' interests and abilities. A

full range of academic courses is balanced by the provision for vocational subjects and work-based learning. In addition there is a focus on developing literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. The range of subjects covered in all year groups recognises local, regional and global differences, and it promotes an understanding of others' points of view. The school's Olympian/Coubertin status, with a focus on Olympic sporting values, also promotes these ideals.

- Planning of learning emphasises the key British values of democracy, liberty, and respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. Students from all heritages are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Information about what is taught in the school is published on the school website and meets statutory requirements. Students benefit from a wide range of after-school activities, sporting events and educational trips.
- The school is working towards applying its preferred approach to assessment. This is based on teachers explaining the objectives for each lesson and checking how well students have understood them. In most cases, teachers' marking of students' work helps them to understand how well they have achieved and what they need to do to improve their work. However, leaders have yet to ensure a consistent approach to marking across the school.
- Leadership and management in the sixth form are good as shown in the good achievement students have made and maintained during this academic year and evidenced in students' files seen during the inspection.
- The school makes sure that all students have the same opportunities to take part in all aspects of school life. Discrimination of any kind is tackled robustly.
- The school effectively commissions the support it needs. For example, several outside agencies have provided well-targeted support for school leaders.
- Leaders, including governors, ensure arrangements for safeguarding meet all statutory requirements.
- Students attending alternative provision are regularly monitored on their progress, attendance and behaviour; ensuring any issues that may arise can be dealt with quickly.
- Good careers advice aids students to make informed decisions at different points in their education. Almost all students are successful in moving to education or training at the end of Year 11. The advice about requirements of courses offered in the sixth form is accurate and helps students make the right choices. As a result the number of students successfully completing their courses in Year 12 is high.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have not historically used information presented to them successfully to hold the school to account or had the knowledge and skills to do so. However, due to the support of the headteacher and commissioned external agencies they are better placed to make decisions about what happens in school. Governors are ambitious for the school to do well and are clear about its strengths and weaknesses. They have become better informed by being more actively involved in visiting the school, talking to staff and students. Governors are able to compare the performance of the school with that locally and nationally and are increasingly challenging leaders and managers to play their part in ensuring that standards are improving.
 - Governors are also clear about their role in challenging weaker teaching. They have worked with the headteacher to set exacting targets for the performance of staff and are increasingly involved in making sure that teachers' pay is closely linked to students' achievement.
 - Governors manage the finances of the school well. They look closely at how additional government funding is spent and have a good overview of the impact this has on the achievement of disadvantaged students. They are rigorous in making sure that the school gets best value when purchasing goods and services. The governing body makes sure all statutory child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures meet current national requirements.

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

- The behaviour of students is good. They are very polite, courteous and friendly and there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere around the school.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning. They are prompt to lessons, bring the necessary equipment and settle down to work quickly. Relationships are very positive. Students work well together and respond positively to their teachers. Regular monitoring of the behaviour of students attending alternative provision also demonstrates it is good at all times.
- Attendance has been below the national average. The school is working to improve this with a recent appointment of a first day contact person and using 'fast track' meetings with parents to investigate reasons for student absence. Early indications of the effectiveness of their work are positive. Attendance is improving and is now close to the national average.
- The school maintains a detailed log of behaviour-related incidents, which includes details of any action taken. Records show that there have been very few incidents of poor behaviour. There have been no recent exclusions.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is also good. Students take an active role in the life of the school and the community. They provide support and mentoring for younger students in the school. Their attendance and punctuality are above average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school ensures that all safeguarding procedures are in place. For example, external doors can only be opened with an electronic key and public access is only possible with the permission of the school office.
- Students feel safe and are aware of how to keep safe and secure. For example, they understand the potential dangers when using the internet. They also report, and records show, that on the very rare occasions bullying occurs staff deal with it effectively. Students say that any instances of homophobia or racism are not tolerated.
- The overwhelming majority of parents feel that their children are kept safe and are well looked-after.
- The school liaises well with the alternative provider to check attendance, behaviour, safety and progress of students attending the off-site provision.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Although teaching is improving, there are still too many inconsistencies in the quality of teaching which are limiting the progress students make.
- The school has introduced whole school policies for literacy and numeracy, beginning with a focus on students' improving their writing skills in English lessons. Early indications are that whole school policies are beginning to have a positive impact on raising standards.
- Until recently too many teachers have not had high enough expectations of what students can achieve. They do not always use information about what students already know to set work at the right level for different abilities. The most-able students are not always challenged enough because work is too easy for them, while others are held back because work is too hard.
- Teachers provide constructive verbal feedback to students but written feedback, in the form of marking, varies. In the best practice, English for example, teachers' written comments explain to students what they need to do to improve their work and contribute well to the progress that students make. Students

value this kind of feedback, particularly when they are given the opportunity to reflect and act upon the comments. However, this practice is not consistently effective across the school.

- Although teaching in the past did not have a positive impact on students' achievement, improvements are resulting in better attainment and progress for most students. They are receiving effective additional support from teachers and teaching assistants.
- Teaching assistants are usually well deployed. They play a key role in supporting disabled students, those with special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium. As a result of recent improvements in more accurate targeting, the students they help are making similar progress to their peers.
- In some lessons teachers successfully plan demanding work, which follows clearly on from previous lessons and which fully engages students' interest. In a Year 10 religious studies lesson on Christian attitudes to gambling, the students responded well to the teacher's high expectations and probing questioning and made good progress. This was because the teacher had planned for students to carry out several activities associated with the problems that gambling could create. They discussed their ideas together while the teacher continually evaluated their progress during the lesson, prompting them to extend their thinking.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers know their students well and frequently challenge them to think more deeply so that students make good progress over time.
- Students' homework prepares them for the following lesson. Parents who expressed a view say that homework helps their children make good progress.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Too many students, particularly boys, are not making good progress across a number of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- In 2014 (the first GCSE results of the new school) the proportion of students gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics was well below the national average. Although GCSE results overall were disappointing, the school achieved above national average results for subjects included in the English Baccalaureate (English, mathematics, science, history or geography, and a modern foreign language). The proportion of students achieving five A* to G grades at GCSE was significantly above the national average.
- The reasons for the disappointing five A* to C including English and mathematics results have been thoroughly investigated by senior leaders. Specific training for staff through the commissioning of outside agencies to improve standards is already having a positive impact on students' achievement. The appointment of several effective new members of staff, including subject leaders, is already having a positive impact on improving students' work.
- Most-able students do not achieve their full potential because they are not always given sufficiently challenging work to enable them to reach the higher grades in GCSE examinations.
- In 2014, the achievement of students supported by the pupil premium in GCSE English was roughly one grade behind that of their own classmates and other students nationally. In mathematics the gap was just under one grade. However, the progress of students supported by the pupil premium is improving because of, for example, the additional support they are receiving, extra staffing and one-to-one tuition. Current school data indicate that the gap in attainment is narrowing across all year groups between eligible pupil premium students and others in the school.
- For the students in Year 7 who are eligible for support through the catch-up premium because they are struggling with literacy and numeracy skills, the school has accurate tracking systems which are used to direct specific support. As a result, the school's data show that these students are making good progress

in reading, writing and mathematics.

- The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs has improved and it is now good, because of better targeted support.
- Similarly, students from ethnic minorities and those who speak English as an additional language are now making good progress because of the specific help they receive.
- The school's assessment data, students' work and observations of lessons show that students currently in the school are making faster progress in many subjects than in the school's early days. This is because students are benefiting from improvements in teaching and better use of tracking information.
- Students who find difficulty with traditional subjects attend alternative courses away from the school. The quality of provision and progress of these students are checked regularly in order to ensure that they achieve at least to their expected level.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- Sixth form students' have continued to achieve well since the school opened. The school's internal assessment information indicates results are on track to improve again in next summer's results.

The sixth form provision

is good

- All groups of students make good progress in the sixth form. The sixth form is popular with increasing numbers staying on to complete their courses. In 2014, this retention rate was well above average.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Results in 2014 show above average attainment at AS level and average attainment at A level. Students have been advised to take courses suited to them and the proportion staying on and completing their year 13 is above average.
- There is no significant difference between the performance of different groups of students, including disabled students, those who have special educational needs or those disadvantaged. All students are expected to resit their GCSE English and mathematics examinations until they achieve at least a grade C.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good with little variation in the quality across and within subjects. As a result, students make good or better progress in most subjects.
- Sixth formers' behaviour is good because they provide effective role models for younger students. They demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning; they co-operate with each other and contribute a great deal to the school's activities. For example, they help younger students to become more confident by helping them with their reading, carrying out 'red coat' duties at break and lunchtime and as ambassadors at different school events.
- The sixth form meets the national 16 – 19 minimum standards. Current data indicate progress at AS and A level is further improving at a fast rate because teaching is improving.
- Students are positive about the quality of careers information they receive. The majority who complete their courses go on to study at university.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good. Leaders ensure that students are well cared for and safe. Monitoring and tracking systems check students' progress and provide support for any students who are in danger of falling behind with their work.

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	139769
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	449973

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	958
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Baker
Headteacher	Geoff Renwick
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01952 728900
Fax number	01952 728918
Email address	admin@williambrookes.com

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