

Anthony Gell School

Wirksworth, Matlock, DE4 4DX

Inspection dates 25–26 February 2015

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Sixth form provision | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher provides inspiring leadership. His vision for the school, which puts the students at its heart, is shared by staff, governors and parents.
- Leaders and governors have responded quickly and effectively to address the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. As a result, the quality of teaching and students' achievement are now good.
- All groups of students make good progress and achieve well, including disadvantaged students.
- The sixth form is good. Achievement in the sixth form has improved with the result that students are now making good progress in their A-level studies.
- Leaders, including governors, ensure that the school is a safe environment and students are exceptionally well-cared for.
- Students' behaviour is excellent. They are very diligent with their work, courteous and highly motivated to succeed. High proportions take part in sporting and cultural activities, which contribute extremely well to their personal development.
- The school's programmes of study support the ethos of the school and meets students' needs well. They promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively.
- Governors are passionate about the school which they see as an essential part of the local community. They are well trained and provide good challenge and support to the headteacher and his staff.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teachers use their knowledge of students' achievement to plan activities that are at the right level of difficulty.
- With the exception of English and mathematics, not enough students attain the highest grades at GCSE or A level.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 30 lessons across all year groups and made seven shorter visits to different sessions to observe learning and behaviour. They made 11 observations jointly with senior leaders. The work in a sample of students’ books was evaluated. Inspectors attended two assemblies.
- The inspection team observed the behaviour of students in lessons, during lesson changeovers and at break and lunchtimes.
- Discussions were held with: staff; governors; the headteacher and other school leaders, including heads of subjects; and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met formally with four groups of students of different ages and abilities. Inspectors also had a number of informal discussions with students around the school at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors took account of the 97 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also took account of the 55 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including examination results and the school’s own records of students’ progress. Inspectors examined the school’s policies and procedures for safeguarding and child protection. Inspectors scrutinised records of students’ attendance and behaviour, the school’s plans for improvement, and documents used by leaders to check the quality of the work of staff at the school.

Inspection team

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Dilip Kadodwala, Lead inspector | Her Majesty’s Inspector |
| Daniel Burton | Her Majesty’s Inspector |
| Jayne Ashman | Her Majesty’s Inspector |
| Helen Booth | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Almost all students are from White British backgrounds. A very small proportion of students are from Other White backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is also below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for secondary schools, which set out the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- A small group of students in Years 10 and 11 attend part-time off-site alternative provision at the Dales Agriculture Rural Training Centre. Two students in Year 13 attend some shared provision with Buxton Community School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement by ensuring that all teachers use their knowledge of what the students know and can do to plan activities that are at the right level of difficulty and take students' learning forward.
- Increase the proportion of students attaining the highest grades across the full range of subjects in GCSE and A-level examinations.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Since the last inspection, the headteacher and his team have successfully improved the quality of teaching. The headteacher has established a culture of high aspirations for all students, whose academic and personal development is at the heart of the school's work. This ensures they behave well and make good progress. The governing body, senior leaders and all staff share this vision for the success of the school.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of their community school. Several parents wrote to inspectors commending its work. Every parent who responded to the online survey indicated they would recommend the school to other parents.
- Staff are equally positive about all aspects of the school's work, including the quality of leadership. One member of staff wrote: 'The ethos of the school is exceptionally strong and reinforced at all levels. Students learn and are challenged to achieve higher, whilst maintaining a happy and caring atmosphere.' This is a view endorsed by inspectors.
- The leadership of teaching is strong. Senior leaders have helped subject leaders to hone their skills in checking the quality of teaching, and ensure they maintain a sharp focus on how well students make progress. Leaders hold teachers closely to account for the progress their students make, and they only receive pay increases when they meet their targets for students' progress.
- Subject leaders, and the teachers they lead, make effective use of data to carefully analyse the progress of different groups of students. This results in more timely interventions to tackle underachievement.
- Since the last inspection, achievement in English has improved significantly, with the result that nearly all groups of students make good progress in English and some make outstanding progress.
- Strong leadership is raising the achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Like other staff, teaching assistants are also held accountable for their work. The arrangements for the performance management of teaching assistants are equally as good as those used for other staff. Teaching assistants who met with an inspector spoke highly about the training, support and respect they experience from staff and students alike.
- The school's self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate, and this has helped drive improvement planning so that the weaknesses identified at the last inspection have all been addressed. Governors play an active part in this process and carefully measure the impact of the actions taken.
- Well-thought-out teaching programmes make a strong contribution to students' achievements. Students benefit from a good range of academic courses, including in the sixth form. The school makes good use of alternative provision to meet the needs of those who prefer to learn more practical subjects, such as construction, or who want to work in agriculture. These students achieve well in these subjects.
- Students have good opportunities to develop a strong sense of fairness, tolerance and respect for British values. The school is an exceptionally harmonious community where all students are valued. Students look out for each other and report any concerns about their friends' well-being to their teachers. As one student put it, 'It's about living together, wanting to learn about different faiths and ways of seeing things.' The comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education builds well on other provision to prepare students for life in modern Britain. Discrimination is not tolerated and all students are treated fairly and equally.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through lessons, assemblies, tutor times and extra-curricular activities, including sports. A good range of visits to museums, theatres and trips abroad helps to widen students' cultural horizons. Participation in clubs and sports activities is high. Leaders make sure that all students have equal access to such opportunities. During the inspection, girls' good participation was seen in sports opportunities geared to promote their fitness.

- Leaders use the pupil premium funds effectively to support disadvantaged students. The school has provided learning mentors to work with individual and small groups of these students. Additional specialist teacher time is set aside in English and mathematics in Key Stage 4 to work with individuals. These well-tested actions have a proven track record of improving the achievement of disadvantaged students. For example, in 2014 the proportion of disadvantaged Year 11 students making expected progress in English and mathematics was higher than that of all students nationally.
- The school provides a range of effective advice and guidance to students when they are making decisions about the next stage in their lives. Students make the most of the advice they receive about option choices and future careers.
- The local authority has provided effective support, while recognising that the school has the capacity to continue to improve. External support has helped to moderate senior leaders' checks on the quality of teaching. Governors have used this support to develop a better understanding of the data about students' performance.
- Safeguarding meets requirements. The school carries out all necessary checks on staff, and ensures risk assessments are detailed and keep students as safe as possible. The staff keep a careful watch over students' attendance, behaviour and progress when they are taught in alternative provision.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have ensured that they are well trained and have the necessary skills to be able to understand the information they receive about the effectiveness of the school's work. Since the last inspection, governors have increased their visits to the school and become skilled in obtaining first-hand evidence about students' achievement. School staff welcome governors' presence, for example their attendance at departmental meetings. Governors also attend other events and are seen as good ambassadors for the school.
 - Governors understand what good quality teaching looks like and ensure the school's systems for checking teaching and linking teachers' pay to the progress of their students are rigorous, fair and effective.
 - Governors challenge leaders at all levels of leadership about how they will raise achievement and maintain a focus on continually improving teaching. Governors have a good understanding of students' performance data and confidently compare the school's performance with that of schools nationally.
 - Governors check carefully that the use of additional funds from the pupil premium is enabling disadvantaged students to improve their achievement. Governors have fully supported a mid-term review of the use and impact of this year's funds to make sure that the priorities identified are on course to meet the set objectives.
 - The governing body oversees the management of resources and finances well. Governors regularly check safeguarding arrangements to make sure that they are effective and meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the online survey agree with this statement and with good reason. Students are extremely polite, welcoming and very well mannered. Especially noteworthy is their ability to be self-disciplined. There is little need for adults to check or regulate students' conduct as they arrive at school or during break and lunchtimes.
- The school reports that students' behaviour in the community is highly commended, as is their conduct when on school trips. Students treat their facilities and building with considerable respect. Litter, graffiti or malicious damage of any kind are almost unknown.
- Students come to school ready to learn and bring the right equipment, so no learning time is wasted. Behaviour in lessons is impeccable so that low-level disruption to learning is extremely rare. There is a strong desire to learn, achieve and improve. There is high mutual respect between students and their peers and with adults. These positive relationships motivate students to achieve well.

- There have been no permanent exclusions since 2011 and there are few fixed-term exclusions. This reflects leaders' strong philosophy to keep students within the school community and to make sure that any barriers to learning are removed effectively. Students attend regularly and are very punctual to school and to lessons.
- The few students who are educated off-site for part of the week behave very well.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. All parents and carers who responded to the online survey fully endorsed this view, as do staff. Annual safeguarding training means that staff know what to do if concerns about students arise. Governors make sure that arrangements for checking the suitability of those who work at the school, together with volunteers and visitors, are robust.
- Students have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe because staff teach them about managing risks very well. During the inspection, a multimedia presentation by Year 7 students on e-safety was prominently displayed on screens around the school. This is a typical and regular reminder to students to be vigilant and to minimise risk when using social networking sites.
- Students understand the different kinds of bullying that can occur, but are adamant that incidents are rare. Students and parents are confident that any such issues are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Students very much feel part of a caring school and local community and are proud of it. School staff maintain strong and productive working relationships with other agencies. This makes sure that students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable receive good support. A member from a multi-agency team, which is based at the school, summed up the team's partnership work with the school as, 'If students are comfortable in themselves, they are comfortable in their learning.' Robust checks by leaders ensure that the few students who are educated off-site attend regularly and are kept safe.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are rigorous. As a result, teaching has improved and is now good. Notably, because of the improved teaching in English and mathematics, the proportion of students making good progress in these subjects has risen markedly.
- Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to pose carefully crafted questions which make students think deeply about the subject being studied. For example, in a Year 13 mathematics lesson students thrived on the level of expert questioning used by the teacher. This ensured that students developed their understanding of differential equations with confidence and authority.
- Positive relationships between staff and students enable teachers to create the right climate for learning, to be imaginative, and to make learning interesting. For example, in a Year 8 art lesson, which was designed to increase students' understanding of self-portraits, the teacher chose a detailed and awe-inspiring picture of an eye to help students develop their observation and painting skills. Students worked for a long time, silently and with perseverance, responding diligently to the teacher's requests, such as, 'Now can you impress me even more by choosing shades of green to create a different tone?'
- Students work hard towards their challenging targets because of their teachers' high expectations. In the wide range of books seen by inspectors, the quality of work was good and well presented. Helpful marking by teachers is usually followed up with students and this helps students to improve their work. Subject leaders are making sure that the consistency and quality of students' responses to marking are increasingly good across all subjects.
- Teachers set homework regularly and use it to extend students' learning appropriately. The range of the work is stimulating and students complete it conscientiously.
- Teaching assistants are trained well and work closely with class teachers, so that those students being supported achieve well. This ensures that most students, including disabled students, those who have

special educational needs and the most able, make good progress across all subjects.

- The teaching of mathematics is good and ensures that students are able to use their skills confidently in other subjects, for example in science and geography.
- Reading is taught well and teachers encourage students to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum. Students enjoy reading and make the most of opportunities to read during tutor time and other planned sessions every half-term across the school.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers are skilled in their subjects and provide students with informed feedback to help them improve their work. Teachers have added rigour to the planning and teaching of coursework. Consequently, student achievement in this important part of their examination work has improved significantly.
- Occasionally, teachers do not use the information they have on students' prior learning to plan for activities that are at the right level of difficulty. This results in a few students finding the work too easy or too difficult.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school with broadly average attainment, although the attainment on entry to the school of students currently in Years 9 and 10 is above average. They make good progress as a result of good teaching over time, a curriculum which is well matched to their needs and interests, and careful monitoring of their achievement by staff at all levels.
- The 2014 GCSE examinations were in line with national averages. Results in English, mathematics and science were above average. The proportion of students that made the progress expected in English and mathematics was broadly in line with national averages. The school's reliable tracking evidence suggests that current students' achievement is likely to show improvement on the 2014 results, as a greater proportion of students are making more than expected progress.
- The most-able students make excellent progress in English and mathematics, with higher proportions of students who joined the school with good attainment in these subjects securing A and A* grades at GCSE than seen nationally. This is making a strong impact on A-level take-up, particularly in mathematics. The school's most-able sixth form mathematicians recently reached the national finals of the Mathematics Trust Maths Challenge.
- In the past there has been a gap between the attainment of disadvantaged students and their peers and all students nationally. The gap is closing rapidly. In 2014 the gap in English between disadvantaged students and their peers was two thirds of a GCSE grade and one third compared with all students nationally. In mathematics, the gap between the school's disadvantaged students and their peers was a third of a GCSE grade, and half a grade compared to all students nationally. These figures reflect significant improvement on previous years, particularly in mathematics. The school's current data provides strong evidence that the gaps in achievement between disadvantaged students and others in the school continue to close across all year groups, including in the sixth form.
- Most Year 11 students entered GCSE mathematics early last year. This enabled the most-able mathematicians to focus on further mathematics in preparation for A-level study. Early entry in English has enabled some students to gain the qualification early and others to identify how they needed to improve to raise their grade at the second attempt. These strategies did not disadvantage any students, including the most able.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good and improving progress, and achieve well against their challenging targets. These students do well because teaching assistants are trained to a high standard and they use their knowledge and skills in a balanced way to help students improve their learning. Their good achievement is also evidence of the strong leadership of this aspect of the school's provision.

- The small number of students who attend alternative provision make excellent progress in developing their practical skills. Programmes are tailored very precisely to meet these students' needs, building, for example, on their prior experience in land-based studies, and provide a rich programme of activities. Many of these students go on to gain apprenticeships through their work placements. Staff in school closely monitor these students' progress in other subjects to make sure they do not fall behind in the academic lessons they miss, thus ensuring their good progress.
- The additional Year 7 'catch-up' funding is used effectively to provide extra help to a very small number of students who join the school having not attained at least Level 4 in the Key Stage 2 national tests. As a result, most eligible students make accelerated progress in English and mathematics.
- The progress of the very few students in the sixth form who attend Buxton Community school is good. They are on track to complete their courses successfully.
- Although progress overall is good, not enough students attain the highest grades in GCSE examinations, other than in English and mathematics.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Well-judged actions by school leaders to strengthen the leadership of the sixth form are raising students' achievement. Almost all are now making good progress.
- Good leadership has ensured that systems used to monitor students' achievement have improved markedly. Any student who falls behind is quickly identified, with swift action taken to support them. Students were unanimous in their praise for the additional help they get from the sixth form learning mentor, particularly in strengthening their essay-writing skills. Regular dialogue between teachers, sixth form leaders and the learning mentor ensure that support is precisely matched to students' needs.
- The strong system for monitoring the achievement of students has an equally positive impact on disadvantaged and disabled students and those who have special educational needs, resulting in their good progress.
- The school has significantly improved its sixth form application process and put in place more stringent entry requirements for academic courses. This has ensured that students are now consistently placed on courses that match their prior attainment, potential and aspirations. The school has also raised expectations with regard to the number of courses students complete and this, in turn, has raised students' aspirations and their work ethic.
- Behaviour is exemplary. Students make productive use of non-contact time, working diligently when they do not have lessons. Sixth form students are excellent role models to younger students and take a full part in the wider life of the school and local community.
- Students have a good understanding of managing risk and the challenges of adult life as a result of the school's strong programme of personal, social and health education. Wider aspects of students' programme of study make an excellent contribution to their achievement, personal development and employability skills. These activities are carefully matched to students' career aspirations, for example to support aspiring medical students in securing healthcare-related placements.
- Attendance rates are high and students say that they feel very safe and well-supported by the school. The proportion of students completing courses and achieving qualifications is consistently strong; in 2014 all students in Year 13 secured work or training on completion of their courses.
- There are very positive working relationships between students and teachers in all subjects and students' willingness to work together on challenging tasks is often impressive. For example, in a Year 12 English lesson on the poetry of W H Auden, students engaged in very high quality discussions because the teacher had devised carefully crafted materials to help shape the students' discussions. This enabled students to easily translate their understanding of the poem's narrative into sharp analytical understanding.

- The school is aspirational for its students. The advice and guidance provided have enabled students to make informed choices about their future. Students receive good support in crafting applications to universities which most likely match their attainment; this includes students who aspire to Oxford or Cambridge.

- The 16–19 programmes of study fully meet requirements and the school ensures that the very small numbers of students who have not yet secured GCSE qualifications in English or mathematics are enabled to do so. Achievement in the sixth form meets the current 16–19 national minimum standards.

- As in the main part of the school, not enough students attain the highest grades in A-level examinations in subjects outside English and mathematics.

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 | 112968 |
| Local authority | Derbyshire |
| Inspection number | 454791 |

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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 676 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 110 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Brendan Quinn |
| Headteacher | David Baker |
| Date of previous school inspection | 24 September 2013 |
| Telephone number | 01629 825577 |
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