

Winchcombe School

Greet Road, Winchcombe, Cheltenham, GL54 5LB

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher provides highly effective leadership for this rapidly improving school. He is very ably supported by senior leaders and governors to embed his vision for all students to receive the highest quality education.
- The leadership of teaching is exceptionally strong. The management of staff performance is rigorous, and highly effective use has been made of training, coaching and sharing of good practice to develop teachers' skills and expertise. Teaching is now good throughout the school.
- Students achieve well in a broad range of subjects. Attainment in the majority of subjects is now above the national average.
- All groups of students make good progress. Gaps between the achievement of those who are disadvantaged and others in the school are small.
- Pastoral leadership is a strength of the school and impacts strongly on accelerating students' progress.
- Students are extremely polite and courteous. They are ambitious for their futures and want to achieve well.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students and their parents say that bullying is extremely rare.
- Very strong promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures that students are very welcoming of difference. Their work to raise money for local and national charities promotes strong empathy for those facing challenging circumstances.
- There are very strong links between the school and the local community and this means that the reputation of the school is improving quickly. The school is fully subscribed in all year groups.
- Subject leaders skilfully lead their departments. They use information about students' progress and achievement to monitor the impact of teaching on students' progress and to hold teachers to account.
- Senior leaders and governors have an ambitious long-term strategic plan for the school's future. The first phases of curriculum development have been completed successfully and have provided more opportunities for students to study subjects that are well matched to their talents and aspirations.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching does not always challenge students to think deeply about what they are learning and this means that some students do not make exceptional progress.
- Some teaching does not capture students' imagination or encourage them to be curious about what they are learning.
- Fewer students make exceptional progress in mathematics than in English.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 20 lessons. Eight of these were jointly observed with members of the school’s senior leadership team. Inspectors also conducted a number of shorter visits to lessons to observe students’ behaviour and attitudes towards learning and to observe the work of teaching assistants.
- Inspectors scrutinised the work of students in their books to determine the impact of teachers’ marking on students’ progress.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, teachers, members of the governing body and with groups of students from each year group. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with the school’s improvement partner.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation relating to other aspects of the school’s work, including the school development plan and self-evaluation, records of students’ behaviour and attendance, information about students’ progress and achievement and a sample of the information provided to governors by school leaders. Inspectors also reviewed the school’s work to keep students safe and secure, including arrangements for safeguarding and child protection.
- The views of the 128 parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. Inspectors also considered written communication from parents received during the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the views of the 48 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Caroline Dearden, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Richard Johnson

Additional Inspector

Kevin Moody

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Winchcombe School is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of students who are disadvantaged and entitled to the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- A small number of Key Stage 4 students follow alternative education off-site at Launchpad or have work placements with local employers.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress of students in mathematics by ensuring that all teaching consistently helps students to develop their mathematical skills and confidence.
- Further improve teaching, and thereby increase the proportion of students making more than the expected progress, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - use their strong subject knowledge to challenge all students to think deeply about what they are learning and to make links between new and prior learning
 - plan work that captures students' imagination and empowers them to be curious about what they are learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher has taken robust and decisive action to address the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. This has resulted in rapid improvements in the quality of teaching, the standards of students' behaviour and in the achievement of all groups of students.
- The headteacher is very ably supported by senior leaders and governors. They worked together to embed the headteacher's vision for the school to provide the highest quality education for all students. This has led to impressive strengthening of leadership at all levels and in ensuring high expectations for all.
- School leaders were highly reflective following the judgements made in the previous inspection. The school's analysis of its strengths and areas for development is therefore detailed, rigorous and accurate.
- Senior leaders and governors have developed an ambitious long-term strategic plan for the school. This is known as the 2020 Plan; it clearly sets the direction for the school to be the centre of learning for the local community. The first phases of curriculum development have been completed successfully and have provided more opportunities for students to study subjects that are well matched to their talents and aspirations. Funding from external sources has already been secured and used to improve the sporting and performance facilities at the school. Further money is being raised to improve the provision for students with additional needs.
- Middle leadership has been developed and improved since the previous inspection. It is now a strength of the school. The leadership of subjects is consistently of high quality. Department leaders use information about students' progress to hold teachers strongly to account for the standards achieved by the students they teach.
- Middle leaders are extremely appreciative of the way in which senior leaders trust them to lead and manage their areas of responsibility. This means that they have the confidence to make decisions and to lead improvements in the school. This ethos is epitomised by middle leaders' view that 'if senior leaders see that you are passionate about the school, they will give you the opportunity to lead and make a difference.'
- Students' behaviour, attendance and progress is thoroughly and regularly tracked. Communication with parents has increased significantly and students know that they are expected to achieve their best.
- The leadership of teaching is exceptionally strong and has led to rapid improvements in the quality of teaching. The management of teachers' performance is robust and rigorous. Training and development is carefully matched to the school's identified improvement priorities. Coaching and sharing of good practice are embedded in the work of the school and have impacted strongly on developing teachers' skills and expertise. All teachers are expected to visit other schools as part of their professional development. Outcomes of these visits are used to plan developments in the school's provision, such as curriculum enrichment and the introduction of new subjects.
- The systems for tracking and monitoring students' progress have been refined and strengthened. Data are now 'live' and provides an accurate and up-to-date picture of students' achievement. Monthly analysis of students' performance across the curriculum enables leaders to implement timely and appropriate intervention to address any underachievement. Twice yearly meetings between students, their parents and academic mentors help to keep students on track and to underpin the high expectations the school has for students' achievement.
- Additional funding is used effectively to ensure that students who are disadvantaged are supported and encouraged to achieve well. This includes additional support for learning and to enable participation in the full range of extra-curricular trips and visits. This reflects the school's strong commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities.
- The school makes every effort to communicate with parents and involve them in the education of their children. This includes holding parents' evenings at Cheltenham Town Football Club for those parents who find it difficult to travel to the school in the evening and sessions for parents to learn how to support their children with revision or when making choices for GCSE subjects. There are also regular opportunities for parents to share their views with school leaders through the termly Parents' Forum.
- The curriculum is largely academic and this underpins the school's high aspirations for all students. The most able can now choose to study some subjects at AS level and this is promoting very high attainment for these students. Those students who are entered early for their mathematics GCSE, and who secure the highest grades, follow Level 3 courses in preparation for further education. Very thorough analysis of students' talents and aspirations enables leaders to carefully select those who would benefit from a work-related curriculum. These students receive high quality alternative education at Launchpad or through placements with local employers.

- Students are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Tolerance and appreciation of diversity are taught well through religion and philosophy lessons. Students welcome the opportunities these lessons provide for them to share their own views and to explore the views of others.
- Leadership of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong and ensures that students are very welcoming of difference. The impressive range of extra-curricular activities enables students to continue learning beyond the classroom and to lead and participate in raising money for local and national charities. This promotes strong empathy for those facing challenging circumstances.
- Levels of bullying, including incidents of racism or homophobia, have been very low for several years. This demonstrates the success of leaders in promoting strong relationships based on mutual respect and in tackling discrimination.
- Students receive very high quality information, advice and guidance through 'Future Studies' lessons, work experience placements, mock interviews with local employers and interviews with an independent careers officers. Students make good GCSE and post-16 choices. The numbers securing places at highly selective sixth forms is increasing. Over the last three years, only three students have not moved on to sustained education, employment or training.
- Leaders promote students' high aspirations for further education through a range of presentations and visits to universities. This includes universities that are strongly academic, those that are local and those that have a strong reputation for sports. Disadvantaged students and those who would be the first in their family to go to university are encouraged and supported to take part in these visits. This also reflects the school's strong commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities
- The school's arrangements to keep students safe and secure are outstanding. Very careful tracking of students' behaviour and attitudes leads to swift identification of those who might be at risk of harm.
- The behaviour, attendance and achievement of those students attending alternative provision are checked rigorously and weekly communication between the provider and school leaders ensures that these students enjoy and benefit from their placements.
- A range of external consultants, including those brokered by the local authority, have been used very effectively to secure rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and to strengthen leadership.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is highly effective. Governors have a wide range of professional skills and expertise which include child protection, finance, education and buildings and premises management. The information provided for governors is now of very high quality and enables them to scrutinise trends in students' achievement, attendance and behaviour. Governors use their very good understanding of data to track and monitor the work of the school and to robustly hold leaders to account.
 - Governors have a very good understanding of how teachers' performance is checked and how training and development have been used to improve the overall quality of teaching. Governors have been supportive of the headteacher when difficult staffing decisions have been necessary. They review all recommendations for pay progression and this ensures that pay increases are only awarded when teaching is good enough to secure good outcomes for students.
 - Governors have played a leading role in securing funding from external sources to improve the school's facilities. They have also contributed strongly to the increased use of the school facilities by the local community. They are proud of the way in which this is enhancing the reputation of the school.
 - Governors carefully monitor the school's expenditure and this means that financial resources are used effectively to secure appointments of well-qualified staff and to make the school a safe place in which to work and learn. They also ensure that all statutory safeguarding requirements, including pre-employment checks, are rigorously implemented.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students are very polite and courteous; they integrate well with each other in lessons and at social times. Adult supervision at break and lunchtime is obvious but intervention is rarely needed, even, as during the inspection, when the weather is bad and large numbers of students congregate together. The playing of the piano in the school dining hall at lunchtime helps to create a relaxed and calm atmosphere.
- Behaviour in lessons is consistently very good and low-level disruption is extremely rare. Relationships between teachers and students are very strong and this means that students trust their teachers to help them achieve well. They consistently reflect on their teachers' marking and feedback and use the advice provided to improve and extend their work.

- Students take pride in their work and in their school. This is evidenced by the neat presentation of work in books, the way in which students wear their uniform and their excellent conduct when using public transport to travel to and from school.
- Almost all parents who responded to Parent View believe that students are well behaved and happy at school. The communications received by inspectors during the inspection were all highly positive of the school and the way in which students are supported to learn and be successful.
- School records show that fixed-term exclusion rates have been very low for several years. The school's system for isolating students when their behaviour falls below the expected standard is skilfully managed and used to help students understand the impact of their behaviour on others. This contributes well to students' very good understanding of right and wrong.
- Students who join the school with known behavioural, emotional or social difficulties are extremely well managed. Their timetables are carefully crafted to enable them to make friends and to effectively access learning across the curriculum. They also benefit from small group or one-to-one support which helps them to make good progress and achieve well.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Pastoral leaders and other staff track and monitor students' behaviour, attendance and attitudes towards learning rigorously and this enables any child who might be at risk of harm to be quickly identified and supported. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is carefully and considerably implemented when students need additional help or support. Child protection procedures are exceptionally robust and key staff have been trained to recognise the signs of child sexual exploitation, radicalisation, domestic abuse and female genital mutilation.
- Students have very good understanding about how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet or social media. Religion and philosophy lessons are used to debate the risks associated with substance misuse, of being sexually active and other pressures facing young people.
- Students reported that bullying of any kind, including that which is racist or homophobic, is extremely rare. None of the students spoken to had ever experienced any form of bullying. All staff and almost all parents believe that the school deals effectively with any issues that do arise.
- Students attend school frequently and regularly. Absence rates are low. Systems to monitor students' attendance are embedded and any absence is quickly followed up.
- Many students travel to school by bus. The front of the school has recently been developed to allow buses onto the school site and this means that students are protected from potential road traffic accidents when getting on and off the school bus.
- Students who receive part of their education off-site attend and behave extremely well. Alternative education is an important motivator for students who find traditional schooling challenging. Almost all secure apprenticeships, having undertaken work placements whilst at school.
- Risk assessments for all off-site trips and visits are rigorously carried out and implemented. This includes the checks carried out on employers who provide work placements for students as part of the work experience programme or alternative education arrangements.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now consistently good across the curriculum. As a result, students make good progress.
- The majority of teachers set work that is well matched to students' different needs. Where this is expertly done, students are highly motivated, engaged and interested in what they are learning. However, occasionally, learning activities do not capture students' imagination or empower them to be curious about what they are learning and this means that progress is sometimes not as rapid as it could be.
- Most teachers use their good subject knowledge to skilfully question students and enable them to make links between new and prior learning. For example, in a Year 10 science lesson, students were able to fully explain the nature of covalent bonds and how this relates to the properties of covalent compounds, and, in a Year 10 English lesson, students were able to imaginatively compare and contrast 'The Great Gatsby' to Shakespeare's 'Othello'. However, not all teachers consistently challenge students to think deeply about what they are learning and this means that the proportion of students making exceptional progress is not as high as it could be.
- The teaching of literacy, reading and mathematics is well established across the school. This ensures that students have the confidence to undertake a range of different types of assessment across all subjects.
- Teachers' marking and feedback have been improved significantly since the last inspection. They are now frequent and of very high quality, providing precise guidance to students about how to extend or improve

their work. Students routinely reflect on the advice provided by teachers and use it to improve the quality or depth of their work.

- Teaching assistants provide a valuable contribution to students' learning and progress in lessons. They are involved in the planning of work for the students they support and this means that they are able to skilfully encourage students to confidently work independently.
- In mathematics, the work set for students sometimes does not help them to develop their mathematical skills or confidence and this means that some students do not yet make the best possible progress.
- Teachers use information from tests and assessments to identify where students are underachieving. Additional support is quickly implemented so that areas of misunderstanding are quickly addressed.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are similar to national averages. In 2014, the proportion who gained five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C was slightly above the national average. Attainment in English was significantly above the national average. Information provided by the school indicates that attainment in 2015 is likely to be above the national average in almost all subjects, including English and mathematics.
- In 2014, the proportion of students making at least the expected progress in English was much higher than the national average. The proportion making even better progress in English was also above the national average.
- In mathematics, the proportion of students making the expected progress in 2014 was similar to the national average. The proportion making even better progress in mathematics was much lower than the national average. Although information provided by the school indicates high attainment in mathematics for 2015, the proportion likely to make at least the expected progress remains lower than that in English.
- The Year 7 catch-up fund has been used effectively to accelerate the progress of those joining the school with low levels of literacy and numeracy and those who are identified by the school as not being ready for secondary school. Specialist intervention through small group work helps these students to make up the gaps in their learning. Almost all work confidently within Level 4 by the end of the year.
- Very well thought-out strategies to enable students to develop their reading competencies are embedded into most aspects of the school's work. The library is well stocked and well used. Students frequently select books to read for pleasure.
- In 2014, disadvantaged students made the same progress in English as others in the school. The attainment gap in English reversed and disadvantaged students attained approximately one sixth of a grade higher than others in the school. Compared to students nationally, they attained almost one third of a grade higher.
- In mathematics, disadvantaged students made less progress than others in the school. However, the attainment gap between those who were disadvantaged and others in the school reduced from just over one grade in 2013 to half a grade in 2014. Compared to students nationally, the gap was one third of a grade in 2014.
- Disadvantaged students benefit from specialist teaching which provides well-timed, intensive and effective intervention to address any areas of misunderstanding. Information provided by the school shows that disadvantaged students make good progress in English and mathematics in each year group.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs now make good progress from their starting points. This is because the recently appointed special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) has introduced a range of carefully planned and well thought-out interventions to help students to overcome their learning difficulties. Effective support from teaching assistants also helps these students to develop their confidence and the resilience necessary to work independently.
- The most able students make good progress. They are encouraged to aim high through the range of AS level courses available for them to choose to study in Key Stage 4. Almost all secure places at highly academic and selective sixth forms. School leaders continue to track these students through their sixth form years and almost all move on to university.
- Students following alternative education make very good progress and are successful in a range of qualifications which are carefully matched to secure future employment. Almost all move on to accredited apprenticeships when they leave the school.
- Some students are entered early for their GCSE examination in mathematics. This is not detrimental to their achievement as all attain grades A* or A and move on to study Level 3 courses in preparation for sixth form placements.

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 | 136764 |
| Local authority | Gloucestershire |
| Inspection number | 462477 |

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 | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 474 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Peter Grimshaw |
| Headteacher | Neil Hall |
| Date of previous school inspection | 16–17 May 2013 |
| Telephone number | 01242602233 |
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