

Woodbrook Vale School

Grasmere Road, Loughborough, LE11 2ST

Inspection dates 1–2 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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, senior staff and governors have planned the expansion of the school carefully.
- Leaders have established a clear focus on teaching and academic progress throughout the school. As a result, the quality of teaching and students' achievement are improving steadily.
- Leaders have forged effective partnerships with other local schools and colleges. These have enabled the school to offer a wider range of courses, to check the accuracy of teachers' assessments and to keep the rate of exclusions low.
- Governors' oversight of the work of the school is exemplary.
- Attendance is high because students enjoy coming to school.
- Students learn how to manage different kinds of risks well and rightly feel very safe in school.
- Students' behaviour is generally good. The attitudes to learning of the great majority of students are very positive. They work hard and they behave responsibly during social times.
- Teaching is good. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and most have high expectations of their students' achievement and behaviour.
- Students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics are strongly promoted across a range of subjects.
- Students make good progress in almost all subjects, including English and mathematics. Standards in modern foreign languages have risen since the last inspection and are now good at Key Stage 3.
- Students particularly enjoy lessons in science. They develop a good understanding of how to devise valid practical investigations and how scientists go about testing out new ideas.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some subject leaders do not check sufficiently that teaching is consistently challenging in their areas of responsibility.
- In a few lessons, the work is not sufficiently challenging for pupils of different abilities and teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are sometimes too low. When this happens, a few students lose concentration and their progress falters.
- Some teachers do not always insist on high standards of presentation for written work.
- Although teachers mark students' work frequently and accurately, some do not meet the school's expectation that they tell students clearly how well they are learning.
- Reports to parents are not always clearly written so some parents are uncertain about the progress their children are making.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 32 lessons taught by 31 teachers; ten observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also visited several form groups, and observed children’s conduct at social times.
- All Year 10 students were on work experience placements for the week of the inspection.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, other leaders, class teachers and governors.
- Inspectors met with three groups of students, including two selected at random, and spoke with many others informally. Inspectors listened to students reading.
- Inspectors looked at students’ work in lessons. They scrutinised in depth a considerable number of exercise books from all year groups, and checked the standards against the teachers’ assessments of attainment and progress. They also looked at information on students’ targets and current levels of achievement.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents. These included: development plans and their evaluations; records of how leaders check on teaching and students’ behaviour; minutes of governing body meetings; case studies; policies; records showing how the school supports vulnerable children; reports on students’ progress sent home to parents; and school publicity material.
- Inspectors took into consideration the 72 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, the results of the school’s own survey of parental opinion, and a small number of letters and telephone calls from individual parents. They also considered the 59 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Martin Spoor, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Russell Barr	Additional Inspector
Michael Hiscox	Additional Inspector
Kathryn England	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Woodbrook Vale School is a smaller than average secondary school, although student numbers have been growing rapidly in recent years. The school admitted Year 10 students for the first time in 2013/4 academic year and Year 11 students this academic year.
- The large majority of students come from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of students who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is the additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- At Key Stage 4, 17 students currently attend Loughborough College to follow work-related courses for two mornings a week. A very small number of Key Stage 4 students have recently taken up full-time placements at Loughborough Inclusion Partnership under a collaborative arrangement with several other local schools.
- There are no published results because the school has not taken Year 11 students before this academic year. The school's performance cannot be measured against the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that more students make outstanding progress, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have high expectations for the progress that students can make in every lesson
 - consistently set appropriately challenging work for different groups of students in all lessons, so that all students maintain their concentration and achieve good standards of behaviour and motivation at all times
 - insist on the very highest standards for the presentation of students' written work
 - consistently implement the school's new Key Stage 3 assessment arrangements so that students always know precisely how much progress they are making.
- Improve the leadership and management by:
 - making middle leaders responsible for checking whether teaching is consistently and appropriately challenging in their areas of responsibility
 - providing written reports on students' progress that are clear and informative so that parents, and the students themselves, know how well students are progressing towards their targets.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Since the last inspection, the school has grown considerably and now also takes Key Stage 4 students. During this period of rapid growth, senior leaders have successfully made the necessary changes to the school's curriculum, culture, organisation and facilities. They have achieved this while maintaining a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching, maintaining high standards of behaviour and raising academic standards.
- The academic targets set for individuals are challenging and information about students' progress is analysed carefully, so that students at risk of falling behind are targeted for additional help. Staff respect each other's views and work together conspicuously well. The result is a confident school ethos, fully centred on further improving the quality of teaching and raising students' achievements.
- The headteacher has ensured that the school benefits from working in partnership with other local schools and colleges. These partnerships enable the school to offer work-related learning to some Key Stage 4 students, to check on the accuracy of teachers' assessments and to improve the management of students' behaviour. The school also works well with local primary schools, for example to plan a new approach in the next academic year to assessment following the removal of national curriculum levels.
- Leaders' judgements about the quality of teaching accord with those of inspectors. Evaluation of the school's work is accurate and based on a broad range of evidence. The results of GCSE examinations sat in 2014 by Year 10 students proved to be very close to the school's predictions. Improvement plans are well-structured and give appropriate consideration to resource and training requirements. They contain clear milestones that enable leaders to track progress.
- Subject and other middle leaders are generally effective but leaders acknowledge that there is scope for them to take greater responsibility for improving aspects of teaching within their areas of responsibility. They entirely share senior leaders' commitment to high standards, appreciate the clear guidance provided by senior leaders, and readily acknowledge their accountability for students' achievement. Their plans and evaluations complement those of the whole school. They make sure that teachers' judgments about students' work in their areas of responsibility are consistent and they work closely with other schools to confirm the accuracy of these assessments. Nevertheless, not all middle leaders have ensured that teaching is consistently challenging or checked that students know how well they are progressing towards their targets.
- The school has placed a particularly high importance on improving the achievement of disadvantaged students, for example through incorporating this formally into teachers' performance targets. The pupil premium is spent effectively on providing additional teaching in all year groups and on strategies to ensure that disadvantaged students engage fully with learning. Leaders have made raising their aspirations concerning their future careers a priority. The impact of this expenditure is checked carefully.
- Leaders pay close attention to the learning and welfare of individuals. Their good support for disadvantaged students and the school's clear willingness to tackle discrimination ensures they promote equality of opportunity effectively.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. There is a strong commitment to the English Baccalaureate at Key Stage 4, but students have access to a wide range of courses including some which are work-related. The school provides carefully adapted programmes for students with the lowest levels of prior attainment and offers an impressive range of after-school sport and cultural activities.
- The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development strongly through taught lessons in humanities subjects, as well as through assemblies that focus on important social issues that students need to understand. These are reinforced through a well-coordinated programme of activities in tutor time. The school has an active parliament and a debating society, and these ensure students learn about the key values and institutions that underpin the British way of life. Together this provision means

that students are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are strong and meet statutory requirements. Staff are well-trained and able to identify students who may be at risk. The school's robust procedures ensure that it is able to act quickly to involve other agencies to help students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Strategies to protect students from all identifiable risks are successfully incorporated into the plans for the extensive building work currently in progress in the school.
- Students receive effective careers guidance and are encouraged to have high aspirations. For example, Year 9 students who spoke to inspectors were aware of the implications of their Key Stage 4 option choices for future university courses. The school anticipates that almost all students from the first Year 11 cohort will find an appropriate place in further education or training. Staff work most effectively with colleagues from other institutions to monitor the progress, behaviour and attendance of students attending alternative provision. They amend or terminate provision if it is not proving successful.
- Staff work well with parents, including those who may have been distrustful of the school, especially in addressing students' social or behavioural needs. However, leaders are aware that some parents have not found recent school reports helpful in explaining their children's progress and are reviewing these procedures.
- Senior leaders evaluate teachers' performance effectively and use the results to make decisions about pay rises and promotion. Staff, including teachers at an early stage of their careers, report that training is proving very helpful in improving their skills.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors maintain exemplary oversight of all aspects of the school's work. They are ambitious and practical, and are closely involved in the life of the school. They are impressively well informed about current developments in education, and they ask searching questions about students' attainment, the quality of teaching in the school, standards of behaviour and the impact of the pupil premium. They compare students' achievement with that of students nationally. Consequently, they are able to hold leaders closely to account for the school's performance.
 - Governors understand the local community and make sure that the culture of the school promotes respect for people from differing cultural and religious backgrounds.
 - Governors have a strong command of any staffing issues facing the school. They ensure that the headteacher manages the pay and performance of the staff so that only good teaching is rewarded and weaker performance is tackled effectively. They involve an independent adviser in their management of the headteacher's performance so all decisions concerning his role are well founded.
 - Governors have planned carefully the development of the school site and used the school's money wisely to fund the expansion programme. Their careful management of the extensive building work has kept the risks to students and staff to a minimum and, together with leaders, they regularly check that all other safeguarding requirements are met in full. As a result, students in the school are very safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students understand the purpose of their learning and approach it with commitment. They arrive promptly at lessons, bring the right equipment and work hard.
- Students are polite and helpful. They take particular care with their appearance. Their conduct at social times is very orderly and responsible, and they move quickly to classes at the end of breaks. They respect the school environment and inspectors saw only a very small amount of litter.
- School records show few serious incidents of poor behaviour and indicate that the school responds to these with an appropriate degree of seriousness. The school has successfully adapted the way it manages students' behaviour to reflect the growing maturity of its Key Stage 4 students, with the result that the rate of fixed-term exclusion is low and slowly declining further. There have been no permanent exclusions since the last inspection.

- Students told inspectors that there is a little low-level disruption in lessons on rare occasions. In a very small minority of lessons, where tasks fail to engage students fully, some students are content to make limited effort to sustain their progress.
- Those students who attend alternative provision know that their behaviour is closely monitored, and generally appreciate the arrangements that have been made for them. Consequently, students' attitudes and conduct in such provision are good.
- Students usually present their work neatly. In a small minority of classes, notably where teachers do not insist on the school's expectations, standards slip and work sometimes becomes a little untidy.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Child protection procedures are very robust, and staff are alert to the potential risks to students' safety, including those related to extremism. Leaders check thoroughly that volunteers and visitors, including contractors, pose no risk to students. They take decisive action when needed. Leaders and governors review all relevant policies and procedures regularly.
- Students are clear that they feel safe in school and almost all their parents agree. Students report that bullying is very rare, and they have great confidence that staff would resolve any issues quickly and to their satisfaction. Students are well informed about how to stay safe, for example when using the internet, and know about the dangers of substance abuse and of the importance of consent in sexual relationships.
- The school has daily contact with the staff working for alternative providers and any absence is pursued straight away. Leaders visit the alternative provision to check on its safety and its quality, so the school knows that students are safe and that they are benefiting from the programmes they are following.
- Attendance has been sustained at a high level. The school acts promptly to investigate any evidence of unexplained or frequent absence.

The quality of teaching is good

- Relationships between teachers and their classes are strong. Teachers use information from marking and informal assessment to plan and shape lessons so that they reflect students' prior learning. As a result, students are able to place activities in the context of what they already know.
- Activities engage students' interest well and they participate readily in lessons, showing perseverance when the work is challenging. Teachers encourage students to put forward their own views and listen to those of others. They have good subject knowledge and generally explain ideas in a clear and well-structured manner, so that students make secure gains in their understanding.
- Most teachers exhibit high expectations of their students, both in terms of learning and behaviour. Activities are almost always challenging for students of different abilities. As a result, students make at least good progress in the very large majority of lessons. Very occasionally, teachers' expectations fall short of the high standard the school expects and the work set is sometimes insufficiently challenging.
- Although inspectors were unable to observe any Key Stage 4 teaching during the inspection, they visited students in Year 9 who were learning the skills required for GCSE examinations. Teachers provide clear guidance on how students in Key Stage 4 can improve their work by relating it to the published examination criteria. They encourage students to develop an impressive vocabulary about their own work, which demonstrates students' deepening understanding of the subject matter and of the requirements of the examination.
- Teachers promote reading most effectively. Students read aloud in lessons with confidence and clarity. The effective use of the weekly whole-school reading lesson promotes students' enjoyment of fiction. The school ensures that those who arrive with low reading levels catch up using a structured phonics

programme tailored to the requirements of individuals. Students are encouraged to read texts in modern foreign languages with a demanding range of vocabulary and grammatical structure. Teachers in many subjects promote accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar and insist on the correct use of technical terms.

- The teaching of mathematics is good. Teachers identify students' errors precisely and ensure that they learn from their mistakes. The lively discussions that teachers lead in most classes ensure that students can explain the reasons for particular mathematical procedures, rather than merely learn a formula. Numeracy is promoted effectively in other subjects; students receive clear guidance on how to complete calculations and draw graphs to represent their findings.
- Students particularly value their science lessons. These are characterised by a high proportion of practical activities, accompanied by a clear emphasis on the scientific method.
- Teachers plan the learning of disabled students and those who have special educational needs carefully, working in close conjunction with teaching assistants when appropriate. Leaders check on the progress these students make frequently and this ensures that provision is good.
- In the few lessons where some students make slower progress, teachers do not provide work which is sufficiently challenging for all the students throughout the lesson. At Key Stage 4, recent teaching in a minority of subjects has not been strong enough to enable students to make up for weaker teaching in the past.
- Teachers mark work frequently and accurately. They identify 'next steps' which form a good basis for students to improve their work. However, at Key Stage 3, they do not summarise students' progress effectively enough, so students are sometimes unclear about their overall progress and how it compares with their individual targets. Written reports to parents, similarly, are not always clear enough to inform parents fully about how their children are doing.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' achievement is improving steadily. Students who have just completed their courses in 2015 started Year 7 with attainment that was broadly average. According to data supplied by the school and confirmed by inspection evidence, they have left the school with attainment in English, mathematics and overall that is likely to be above average when results are published later in the year.
- Similarly, according to progress data supplied by the school, most students who have left the school in 2015 made at least the expected progress in English, and many made more than expected progress. In mathematics, both the proportion that made expected progress and the proportion that made more than expected progress were well above the latest national average.
- In the very large majority of lessons across the school, students make good or better progress and this is supported by the work in their books. Inspectors' scrutiny of books and test papers from Year 7, Year 8, Year 9 and Year 10 shows a similar picture. Work is mostly challenging and enables the majority of students to make progress from the start of the academic year which is at, or more usually above, the level expected. Standards in modern foreign languages have improved and are now good at Key Stage 3.
- The school tracks the progress of disadvantaged students carefully. School data suggest that disadvantaged students in Year 11 left the school this term having made progress in English and mathematics that was, in almost all instances, better than that typically made by disadvantaged students nationally. Gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged students in English and mathematics and other students in the school also narrowed during the course of Year 11, and students in Year 10 and lower years are on track to close these gaps even further.
- The school entered all Year 10 students for GCSE statistics in 2014; the results represented attainment and progress which were above the national average. The school repeated this pattern of entry in 2015, and reports that it has increased students' confidence in taking examinations and enhanced their learning

in mathematics. This use of early entry does not adversely affect any student's chance of getting the best possible grade in mathematics at the end of Year 11.

- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is because teachers and teaching assistants know their students well and work closely together to plan and set work which builds carefully on what they can already do.
- The school has supported the achievement of students who join the school with below average attainment very well. Leaders have used Year 7 'catch-up' funding very effectively to provide specialist phonics teaching which ensures that their reading catches up with that of their peers. The programme extends into Year 8 for any students that are still behind.
- The most-able students respond well to work that is appropriately challenging, as it generally is, and achieve well. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson on *Macbeth*, some of the most-able students were making outstanding progress in using psychological models to inform their understanding of character.
- The students undertaking work-related courses are making good progress in acquiring the technical knowledge and skill required for employment. They are on track to attain the main qualification for which they are studying, as well as GCSEs in English and mathematics. The very small number of students attending the Key Stage 4 alternative provision are making good progress in addressing the social and emotional difficulties that present a barrier to their academic progress.
- In a small minority of subjects, students' progress has not always been as rapid as it could have been. School data suggests that their attainment is likely to be average at best when Year 11 results are published later this year.

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	137401
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	450000

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	742
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Gostelow
Headteacher	Gary Peat
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2013
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