

The Kingswinford School (Academy) A Science College

Water Street, Kingswinford, DY6 7AD

Inspection dates 15–16 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.

- Standards are consistently above average and students make good progress, including in English and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is good. Students say how much they value the extra support that teachers provide if they are having difficulty. Relationships between students and staff are warm and supportive.
- Students are keen to learn. They behave well, show enthusiasm in their lessons and are keen to contribute their ideas in class.
- Behaviour around the school is calm and sensible. Students are polite and courteous to adults and get on well together.
- The school ensures students are kept very safe. Students are very well informed about the potential dangers of modern life, so know how to keep themselves safe.
- Students value opportunities to take responsibility, for example, as prefects and anti-bullying ambassadors. They show great care for each other, saying that they would quickly take action to prevent any discrimination.
- The inspirational headteacher, well supported by the senior team and by the governing body, robustly drives improvement in teaching and achievement. Leaders have been relentless in their drive to tackle any underperformance in teaching and to eliminate inadequate practice.
- The curriculum is good, offering a wealth of opportunities to support students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and understanding of British values. The use of alternative provision for those at risk of exclusion is very effective and enables these students to achieve well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A minority of teachers, particularly in mathematics, do not always set tasks that stretch the most-able students or sufficiently support disadvantaged students and the least able. As a result, some students find tasks too easy, while for others they are too difficult.
- Although the quality of marking and feedback is generally good, a minority of teachers are not sufficiently specific about what students need to do to improve their work and to reach their targets.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection took place during the last week of term. On the first day of the inspection, classes in all subjects were depleted as the majority of students were on a 'Rewards' trip. As a result, much of the evidence on the quality of teaching collected on the first day of the inspection was taken from a scrutiny of students' work and a review of records of students' progress during the year.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at policies, the school's own assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and its plans for development. They also looked at information about students' progress, minutes of governing body meetings, and safeguarding documents.
- The views of the 57 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account, together with the school's own survey of parents' views. Inspectors also took individual communications from parents into account, as well as the 32 responses to the questionnaire completed by members of staff.

Inspection team

Mary Davis, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Timothy McGuire	Additional Inspector
Paul Farr	Additional Inspector
Shahnaz Maqsood	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average, and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for looked-after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- Full-time and part-time off-site alternative courses are currently provided for 17 students in Years 7 to 11 at Stourbridge College and through the Impact, Black Country and Cherry Tree Centres.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- The school has undergone some turnover in staffing over the past two years, particularly in the English and mathematics departments.
- The school's science department has an observatory, which provides outreach support for students from local primary schools.
- The school has received the 'Gold Standard Award' in recognition of the quality of its careers advice.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics, so that all students make rapid progress, by ensuring that:
 - teachers' marking consistently informs students how well they are doing and explains clearly what they need to do next in order to reach their targets
 - all teachers set tasks that fully stretch the most-able students, and support the least able and disadvantaged students, so that tasks are never too easy or too difficult for any group of students.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is well supported by the senior team and together they have worked relentlessly to drive improvement. Staff share their vision for the school, readily expressing their pride in being part of a 'caring and compassionate' school. Leaders have ensured that students' safety is a priority at all times.
- Senior leaders have established strong systems to check on and improve the quality of teaching, and they hold subject leaders fully to account for the progress made in their areas of responsibility. Subject leaders lead their areas effectively. They meet regularly with their line managers, who ensure that they receive the support they need in order to build their leadership capacity. One middle leader commented that, 'senior leaders do the best they can to help staff progress.' This has been particularly the case for the mathematics department, which has been robustly supported following the changes in staffing during recent years. Subject leaders in turn, hold teachers to account for the progress made by their students.
- Teachers whose teaching is less good than it should be undergo an intensive programme of support until their performance matches the school's high expectations. This has proved successful over the past year. Leaders are relentless in ensuring that there is no inadequate teaching and have taken rapid action to address any underperformance.
- The training provided for staff is closely matched to their individual needs and good practice is shared. As a result, the quality of teaching is good. Leaders are working to ensure a consistency of approach across subjects particularly with regard to marking and feedback. The school has set up a working party to pilot different ways of providing students with advice on how to improve their work, so that the advice teachers offer them fully reflects the character and curriculum of each subject.
- Leaders ensure that there is no discrimination and that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed. This has included ensuring that disadvantaged students are able to take part in trips and activities related to the badminton academy, where several of the school's students have excelled. Leaders have established an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance throughout the school, which has resulted in students feeling comfortable to be themselves without fear of experiencing derogatory language or bullying.
- Leaders monitor the achievement of each student carefully and identify appropriate support in the progress meetings held with individual members of staff. This includes mentoring for individual students and the provision of additional classes. This has led to significant improvements in the achievement of students in the current Year 11.
- The curriculum is good. Students appreciate the wide range of subject choices they are offered that meet their needs and interests well. Learning is enriched by a variety of opportunities such as foreign trips, for example, to Iceland and Auschwitz, and to Belgium to visit a First World War site. The exceptional provision of a school observatory inspires students to develop an interest in science and astronomy. The school offers outstanding opportunities for students to develop their skills of creativity, leadership and teamwork, particularly in sport and drama, for example, as in the school's recent production of 'The Blues Brothers'. This helps them develop self-confidence and promotes their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Lessons in personal, social, and health education (PSHE) promote the understanding of British values well. Consequently, students are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Strategies to improve standards in literacy have been very effective. The school has used the Year 7 'catch-up' funding to support students who start at the school with low basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Support for reading extends into Year 8 and beyond for those students who need extra help. Literacy and numeracy are a strong focus in tutor time each day.
- Alternative provision is used very effectively for a small number of students at risk of exclusion. Leaders maintain very careful checks on their well being, including their progress, behaviour and attendance. The school takes great care to ensure that they are able to follow appropriate GCSE courses. As a result of the

good support they receive, these students are enabled to continue their learning and enjoy the same opportunities to gain academic success as others.

- Students told inspectors how much they value the high quality of independent careers advice they receive and the support that enables them to make appropriate option choices and for their next steps following Year 11.
- Leaders have ensured that the behaviour and safety of students are strengths of the school. The open way in which they inform students of the potential dangers of modern life, such as cyber-bullying and sexual exploitation, through tutor time and assemblies is particularly impressive. The deputy headteacher for student welfare provides outstanding leadership for his team. Together they ensure that students facing challenging circumstances are very well cared for, and that they and their families are given good support. Arrangements for safeguarding students are effective and meet statutory requirements.
- The additional funding provided through the pupil premium is being used effectively to support disadvantaged students. Leaders have addressed the weakness in these students' achievement that existed in 2014. They have provided extra classes and individual support for disadvantaged students and this is closing the gap in achievement between this group and their peers across year groups.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very knowledgeable about the school's work. They have undertaken appropriate training, which has kept them informed about their responsibilities such as for safeguarding. They have a good understanding of performance data and value the full information provided for them by the headteacher and her team. This enables them to effectively challenge and support all leaders. They were fully informed about the implications of entering the 2014 Year 11 cohort early for their mathematics GCSE and supported leaders in their decision that this would be best for their students.
 - Governors use their variety of expertise to good effect, checking on all aspects of the school's work and in particular, forming strong links with curriculum areas to develop first-hand experience of the quality of teaching. Governors are actively involved in ensuring that good teaching is rewarded and any underperformance is tackled robustly.
 - Governors are fully aware of the issues related to disadvantaged students and check closely that the pupil premium is now having a positive impact on closing the gap in attainment between these students and others in the school. They show great enthusiasm for ensuring that all groups of students are able to take part fully in the enrichment opportunities offered.
 - The governing body ensures that staff and students are kept safe and that students are fully aware of the potential dangers that may face them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are keen to learn and show great enthusiasm whenever they are given the opportunity to work together. They respond quickly to adults' instructions and calm down quickly after lively activities, so that they can listen to each other and to their teacher. They told inspectors that learning is rarely disrupted and that most teachers manage behaviour well.
- Movement around the school is calm and sensible and students are polite and courteous to adults. Inspectors were impressed by the mature manner in which students spoke to them about their work, gave their opinions on the school or offered to show them the way around the large school site.
- There is no graffiti or litter. Students are proud of their uniform and present themselves well. Most students also present their work neatly, showing pride in their work.
- Attendance levels are consistently above average and students are punctual to lessons despite sometimes having to walk a long way from one lesson to another. Leaders' close monitoring shows that the attendance of students attending alternative provision is rising and the good support they receive has resulted in better behaviour.

- The school manages students with behavioural difficulties well. It has closely involved parents in any decisions concerning individual students, and this has led to a marked improvement in behaviour over time. The school's effective use of alternative provision helps to ensure that exclusions are low and that those students at risk of exclusion are able to continue their schooling.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding and the students themselves say that they feel very safe. They are mature and caring in their approach towards each other and actively seek opportunities to look after each other. They say how much they value the support of adults, who will always listen to them and support them, but that they can also seek support from the anti-bullying ambassadors, who 'look out for anyone who is unhappy.'
- Students are committed to combating any hint of racism or homophobia and say that all students are 'free to be themselves'. One student told inspectors that, 'Everyone is open-minded'. They made it clear that they would be quick to defend anyone who was suffering any form of discrimination.
- The school makes good use of assemblies and PSHE lessons to ensure students are very well informed about safety issues, such as drug misuse and the inappropriate use of social media.
- Student welfare leaders are highly adept at identifying those at risk and working with external agencies to ensure their safety. Support for students and families facing challenging circumstances is exemplary. The school checks rigorously on the safety of those students attending alternative provision.
- Most parents and all staff agree that students are safe and most agree that they behave well. Many say how much they value the school's caring ethos. As one member of staff commented, 'The school enables students to get the best support, and to thrive and be nurtured in a way that enables them to be successful in life and to achieve their potential.'

The quality of teaching

is good

- The school's monitoring of teaching over time, together with monitoring by external consultants, indicates that its quality is good. Students say that teachers explain their subjects clearly, manage behaviour well and support them so that they are able to develop their knowledge and understanding further. In the strongest subjects, such as physical education, design and technology and art, there is a consistently high level of impressive practice that enables students to make rapid progress because they know exactly what they need to do to achieve their targets. Tasks set in these subjects are exciting and engage students' interest and enthusiasm. In some subjects, however, teachers are not always sufficiently specific about what students need to do to reach their targets.
- Teachers promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, providing many opportunities for students to discuss and work together and to share their ideas. For example, in an English lesson observed, students were presented with a wide range of visual stimuli, depicting such issues as anorexia, gay marriage, animal cruelty and racism. Students were then asked to work together and discuss their opinions and to use these images as inspiration for their creative writing. This thought-provoking exercise enabled students to think deeply about the ethical issues involved as well as their own emotional reaction to these images.
- Teachers promote literacy and numeracy well in all subjects, focusing on the correct technical language for the subject and checking on spelling and grammar. The activities teachers set at the start of a lesson often focus successfully on developing students' vocabulary. In one very effective lesson in modern languages, the teacher encouraged the students to play 'Bingo' in French to promote their understanding of number vocabulary. Their progress in this activity was marked.
- Most teachers plan tasks that fully stretch students of the highest ability. Teaching assistants provide good support for disabled students and those with special educational needs. A small minority of teachers, particularly in mathematics, do not always plan tasks that allow students to make rapid progress. In these cases, tasks tend to be repetitive rather than progressively more challenging. As a result, the most able

find them too easy. Similarly, the work set for the least able is occasionally too demanding and teachers do not always provide enough support to help these students make a start on the task that has been set.

- Marking is generally good across the school. However a small minority of teachers do not make what students need to do next in order to improve their work sufficiently clear, and their advice is sometimes too general or vague.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school with skills in reading, writing and mathematics that are broadly average, although the 2014 Year 11 cohort joined with above-average skills. The proportion of higher attaining students is also average. The proportion of students at the end of Year 11 gaining five or more good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, has been above average over the past three years.
- Rates of progress in English were also above average in 2014. Progress in mathematics was as strong as it was in English but, because students were entered early for their GCSE, their results are not included in published data. School data indicates that this year students are again on track to match to at least match last year's national figures.
- There is no significant difference in achievement between students of different ethnic backgrounds, and those who speak English as an additional language relative to other students.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs that made expected progress in English 2014 was similar to that of other students, although some made less progress in mathematics. The school is addressing this and students lower down the school are making faster progress. They receive good support from the special educational needs coordinator and her team and this has ensured that staff are now addressing these students' needs consistently and well.
- The most-able students achieve well. All of the most-able Year 11 students made expected progress in English in 2014 and almost all did so in mathematics, with the majority making more than expected progress in both subjects. All of these students also gained 5 good GCSE passes including English and mathematics, with over half at grade A or A*.
- Some of the 2014 Year 11 students were entered for their mathematics GCSE at the end of Year 10. Those who gained grade A*-B went on to study a further mathematics qualification, as preparation for Advanced Level study. Other students took the examination again to enable them to improve on their grade. From 2015, all students are entered for mathematics GCSE at the end of Year 11.
- Leaders identified that, in 2014, the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged students and other students in the school was too wide. In English, disadvantaged students in Year 11 were two thirds of a GCSE grade behind others in the school but half a grade behind students nationally. In mathematics, they were a grade behind others in the school and students nationally. There were also differences in rates of progress in both English and mathematics. Leaders have focused strongly on this group and the in-school attainment and progress gaps are closing for the current Year 11 and for Year 10. The gap between disadvantaged students and their peers is also closing lower down the school.
- Students following alternative courses achieve well. All gained GCSE qualifications and remained in education in 2014, and all improved their behaviour as a result of the school making courses available to them that better reflected their needs and interests.
- The literacy programme in Year 7 and beyond is having a good impact on improving students' reading proficiency. Students express an enjoyment of reading and the school library is well used.

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	137773
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	461836

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	899
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janice Daines
Headteacher	Bronwyn Hedley
Date of previous school inspection	30-31 May 2012
Telephone number	01384 296596
Fax number	01384 401098
Email address	admin@kingswinford.dudley.sch.uk

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