

Ludlow Church of England School

Bromfield Road, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1GY

Inspection dates 29–30 September 2015

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The determined leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders, has led to improving teaching and better outcomes for students over recent years.
- The governing body is highly effective. It supports and challenges the school's leaders in equal measure and has played an important part in the school's recent improvement.
- Leaders know their school very well, including its strengths and weaknesses. Weaknesses are tackled with vigour.
- Most students now make at least good progress in most of their subjects. Progress is particularly strong in English and mathematics.
- Lower-attaining students, disabled students and those with special educational needs make particularly good progress because of the excellent support that they receive.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge that they use effectively when planning lessons and questioning students in class.
- Teachers, and other adults, know their students very well and they use this knowledge successfully to help and support them in lessons. Relationships between students and adults are excellent.
- The school's work to promote students' personal development and welfare is outstanding, and ensures that students develop into well-rounded young people while at Ludlow School.
- The school's work to keep students safe, and to teach them how to keep themselves safe, is highly effective.
- Students are thoughtful, courteous, polite and well behaved, both in lessons and at other times of the day. The school is calm and orderly.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Outcomes in some subjects, such as science and geography, are not as good as those in English and mathematics.
- Although outcomes for disadvantaged students have improved, the improvement has been inconsistent and gaps remain.
- Teachers' marking and feedback does not always help students to know specifically what they have to do to improve their work and reach their targets.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of teaching and the outcomes in all subjects, especially science and geography, match the high standards evident in English and mathematics by sharing the good practice that already exists in those more successful areas.
- Ensure that students know what they must do to improve their work and reach their targets by:
 - making sure that teachers' feedback, whether through marking or otherwise, is clear, precise and focused on how to improve
 - carefully checking that students understand how to improve their work and put this knowledge into practice.
- Improve outcomes for disadvantaged students so that the gaps between their achievement, and attendance, with those of other students nationally narrow consistently over time by:
 - carefully evaluating the impact of all actions taken to close such gaps, discarding those that have little impact, and maintaining those that are successful
 - seeking out new strategies that have worked successfully elsewhere.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and the two deputy headteachers make a formidable team who have driven the rapid improvement of Ludlow School. They have successfully recreated a school that has an ambitious vision of success for every student, and this vision is shared by governors, staff and increasingly by parents and students also. Staff and students are very proud of their school.
- Leaders and governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses very well. Their analysis is informed by a wide array of accurate information which is used to draw up clear and focused plans for improvement. This rigorous and methodical approach has led to weaknesses being eliminated, improved teaching and better outcomes for students.
- The curriculum has been thoughtfully constructed and it effectively meets the needs of students. Leaders constantly review the subjects that students take, the time allocated to each subject and the way that students are grouped into classes, in order to maximise students' interest and progress. Examples include the addition of a class to a year group where several students had poor levels of numeracy and the addition of a practical, land-based course at Key Stage 4 that greatly enhances some students' employability skills.
- The formal, taught curriculum is enhanced by a very broad range of extra-curricular clubs, activities and opportunities with many having been suggested by students. As a result, most students take part in at least one activity and these contribute positively to their broader development as young people.
- Students are very well prepared for life in modern Britain. Through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, students develop an understanding of democracy and the rule of law. They also develop positive values and attitudes including an understanding of, and respect for, people from different cultures and faiths. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students remains a strength of the school.
- Leaders carefully monitor the quality of teaching across the school and are quick to take action when any problems arise. Teaching has improved because leaders ensure that teachers are set clear targets and receive appropriate, targeted and on-going training. Teachers appreciate this continuous development, a fact confirmed to inspectors in discussions with many teachers and through the staff questionnaire.
- Leaders and governors carefully plan the spending of additional funding that is given to the school and they also measure the difference that the money makes. The Year 7 catch-up premium, money given by the government to help students who enter the school behind their peers in English or mathematics, has been very effective in helping these students to catch up, especially with their reading. Activities funded by the pupil premium, which is additional money for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, have resulted in overall improving outcomes for these students. However, the improvement has been inconsistent, with some interventions being successful and others not. Leaders recognise that consistently improving outcomes for these students remains a key priority for the school.
- Subject and pastoral leaders form a hard-working and committed team. Some are new to their posts and a small number have not yet been successful in substantially raising standards in their subjects. Senior leaders and governors acknowledge that the further development of this team's skills will lead to further improvement across the school.
- The local authority provides only a small amount of support and advice to the school, because of its faith in the school's leaders to drive improvement. This light-touch support is helpful and appreciated by leaders and governors.
- **The governance of the school**
 - is committed to the school's vision of success for each student
 - plays an important and very effective part in helping leaders to drive the school forward
 - is forensic in its analysis of school data and rigorous in its challenge to school leaders
 - is meticulous in its monitoring of how the school uses its funding.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have created a culture where all adults understand their responsibility, and play their part, to keep students safe. As a result, students feel safe and are safe and parents concur with this view.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Students are making good progress because they are well taught by a team of committed professionals who know their subjects well.
- Teaching is good across all year groups and across most subjects. It is particularly effective in subjects where students are making most progress, including English, mathematics and physical education. In most lessons across the school, teachers have high expectations of students and they plan interesting activities that stretch the most-able students and that provide support for those who need extra help.
- Relationships between students and teachers are excellent. Teachers know their students very well and are therefore able to target individual support to where it is needed most and to help students to catch up when they do not understand.
- Because of high expectations, strong relationships and interesting activities, students' attitudes to learning in lessons are excellent. Students usually concentrate well, work hard and are keen to succeed.
- In many lessons, teachers use questions skilfully to help students to think about their work and to deepen their understanding. They expect students to answer questions with detail and precision. However, in a few lessons, teachers accept brief, closed responses and this does not encourage students to think hard.
- Across all year groups, teachers' accurate assessment of students' work helps leaders and teachers to know when a student is falling behind, so extra support can be given to get them back on track.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support in lessons for disabled students and those with special educational needs. In several lessons, inspectors saw teaching assistants encouraging, explaining and prompting individuals and groups of students, so helping them to keep up with others in the class. Their support for students is one reason that disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress.
- The teaching of literacy, especially reading, is well planned and a strong focus for the school. A number of students join the school in Year 7 with reading ages well below their chronological age and they are given extra help that quickly enables them to catch up. Reading also remains a priority throughout the school. For example, all students read for 25 minutes each Wednesday morning in their tutor time, with many bringing books from home.
- Homework is set regularly in accordance with the school's policy and it helps to reinforce and consolidate students' learning.
- Where teaching is currently less strong, for example in science and geography, some lessons do not challenge students because teachers do not expect enough from them and tasks are mundane and repetitive.
- The school has a clear policy on the nature and frequency of marking and feedback to students, and teachers follow the school's expectations. However, teachers' marking and feedback does not always tell students clearly and specifically how to improve. As a result, although students understand that they need to improve their work, they do not know precisely what they need to do.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote students' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Because of high expectations, good teaching and excellent support, Ludlow's students grow to be confident, articulate young people who are keen to succeed and who demonstrate determination to do so. For example, on a day when the school was closed but Year 11 students were offered the option of attending for extra help prior to examinations, every student attended.
- Students show pride in themselves and their school. Year 11 students are exemplary role models for younger students, acting as prefects and house captains and taking on significant responsibility, such as leading assemblies without staff assistance. Younger students are also happy to take on responsibility, including Year 7 students who spoke to groups of parents at the school's open evening.
- Students are very well prepared for life beyond school. They achieve relevant qualifications and a high-quality careers education programme that runs throughout the school ensures that students are well placed to make informed decisions about their next steps in education. Almost all students who leave the

school move on to college courses or further training.

- Students demonstrate tolerance, respect and compassion in many ways. They have supported, raised money for and visited an orphanage in South Africa. The school's students, who are almost all of White British heritage, show a good understanding of, and respect for, people of different faiths or cultures. They are very clear about the unacceptability of any prejudice-based language.
- The school's work to keep students safe is exceptionally thorough. Because of this, students feel safe and they are safe. Students with special educational needs commented that 'there is nowhere in the school that you aren't safe'. Citizenship lessons ensure that students understand how to stay safe and healthy. They understand how to keep themselves safe when online and they understand other potential risks including those from abuse and radicalisation.
- Students understand bullying in all of its forms and what to do if someone is being bullied. School records show that bullying is very rare and this is confirmed by students who also confirmed their confidence in staff to deal with any bullying that does occur.
- The small number of students who attend off-site alternative education and training at a farm for part of the week all attend very regularly, behave very well, enjoy their course and develop significant social and employability skills as a result.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- In almost all lessons, students are well behaved, keen to do well and polite. They listen respectfully to their teachers and to other students, and contribute their own ideas in a sensible and mature fashion. In a small number of lessons, inspectors observed students chatting and being silly, usually because the work set was too repetitive or mundane.
- Around the school between lessons and at break and lunchtime, students are considerate, polite and courteous to other students and adults. The school is calm, orderly, completely free of graffiti and almost free of litter, even at the end of a busy lunchtime.
- School records show that the number of 'exits' from lessons, where a student is removed because of poor behaviour, is low and declining. The number of exclusions from the school is also low. Students, staff and parents are correct in their view that behaviour of students at Ludlow is good and improving.
- Students enjoy school; attendance is high and above the national average. Leaders are aware that the attendance of disadvantaged students has been lower than that of others and they are working hard to remedy this. Early signs of improvement are apparent this year.
- Students are punctual and well prepared for lessons.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Students make good progress in most subjects and in all year groups during their time at the school. Although there is a focus on achievement at Key Stage 4, the school is now ensuring that students are also challenged and making good progress across subjects throughout Key Stage 3.
- Students' progress in English and mathematics is particularly strong and the proportions of students making and exceeding expected progress in 2015 rose sharply and is now well above national averages.
- As a result of strong progress, especially in English and mathematics, students leave Ludlow having achieved qualifications that mean that they are very well prepared to move on to their next stage of education, which for most is a higher-level college course. In 2015, more than two thirds of students attained grade C or above in both English and mathematics.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make very good progress. This is because they receive high-quality support from teachers and teaching assistants, both in class and through additional lessons in the school's 'Pupil Support Centre'.
- Other students who have fallen behind with their learning and who need to catch up also receive excellent support through additional lessons, and also from their class teachers who know them very well. Students who are behind in English, especially reading, or mathematics when they start school in Year 7 are given extra help and they catch up quickly as a result.
- The most-able students in the school are now making good progress because teachers in most subjects are stretching and challenging them in lessons. The number of GCSE A and A* grades achieved by students in 2015 rose sharply and is now high in several subjects including mathematics, food

technology, physical education and French.

- The small number of students who take a practical land-based course away from the school for one day of the week achieve well. The course interests and enthuses them and helps to prepare them for life after school. In 2015, all students who took the course achieved a qualification appropriate to their ability.
- Students' progress in some subjects, especially science and geography, is not yet good. Leaders are well aware of this fact and have put plans in place to improve teaching and learning in these subjects. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these plans.
- Over time, the progress that disadvantaged students have made has improved, but somewhat inconsistently, and therefore gaps between their attainment and that of others have not narrowed consistently. For example in 2015, the progress of disadvantaged students improved sharply in English but declined slightly in mathematics. Prior to 2015, progress has been rising steadily in mathematics but less so in English. The school's own assessment information indicates that 2016 will see better progress in both subjects, but this remains a key improvement priority for the school.

School details

Unique reference number	123587
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10002494

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	648
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Annabel Gilmour
Headteacher	Philip Poulton
Telephone number	01584 872691
Website	www.ludlowschool.com
Email address	admin@ludlowschool.com
Date of previous inspection	18 October 2013

Information about this school

- Ludlow Church of England School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Since the last inspection, the governing body has been reconstituted as a group of 12 governors.
- Almost all students come from White British backgrounds.
- The percentage of students who are supported through the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 attend a land-based work-related course for one day per week at Lower Bush Farm.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school's last section 48 inspection of religious education took place in March 2012 and its next one will take place before the end of the 2016 academic year.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 32 lessons; five of these were carried out with members of the school's senior leadership team. Inspectors also observed form tutor periods and smaller tutorial interviews. They also observed students' behaviour between lessons, at break and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at students' work in lessons.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered 48 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and 52 staff questionnaire responses.
- Formal meetings were held with four groups of students and numerous informal discussions with students also took place.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed including the school's self-evaluation and plans, school policies, school data about outcomes, teaching and behaviour, and minutes of governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Alun Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Derek Barnes	Ofsted Inspector
Robert Steed	Ofsted Inspector
Gwen Onyon	Ofsted Inspector

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