

Woodrush Community High School

Shawhurst Lane, Wythall, Worcestershire B47 5JW

Inspection dates

11–12 December 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since starting her post, the headteacher has been unwavering and untiring in her drive to improve the school after it had declined significantly prior to her appointment.
- Leaders at all levels, including governors, know their school very well. They address quickly any areas that fall short of their high expectations because they have robust systems and procedures in place to monitor, track and evaluate the school's effectiveness.
- Pupils achieve well because of strong teaching and the exceptional support and care they receive. Parents, staff and pupils are unanimous in their praise for the excellent pastoral care provided to pupils, which includes a strong focus on mental health and wellbeing.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are courteous, friendly and routinely regulate their own behaviour. Pupils have very high expectations of each other's behaviour.
- Leaders have restructured the school's curriculum so that it offers a wide range of vocational and academic courses. They took the decision to broaden the curriculum in key stage 3 so that pupils develop a deep love of learning in a wide choice of subjects, including Mandarin, for example.
- Pupils, including the disadvantaged, attend school regularly. They value their education and rarely miss any time from school, including time missed for being excluded for a fixed period of time.
- The quality of teaching is strong, especially in science where teaching is outstanding. Teachers demonstrate an enthusiasm for their subjects and know their pupils very well. Some teaching, especially in key stage 3 is still variable in quality.
- Historically, students in the sixth form did not achieve well. Leaders have implemented a range of effective strategies that have resulted in improved outcomes for current students because of better subject options and bespoke and tailored careers advice and guidance.
- Disadvantaged pupils underperformed in the past. Leaders use effectively the pupil premium funding they receive. They track carefully pupils' progress and put a range of strategies in place to address any underperformance. As a result, disadvantaged pupils currently at the school make better progress than in the past. Performance gaps between them and their peers are closing but small differences remain.
- Most-able pupils have underperformed in 2018. Although their progress is improving, they continue to do less well than pupils with similar starting points. Learning tasks do not yet consistently stretch and challenge thinking.
- Leaders' work to prepare pupils for their next steps is excellent. Pupils receive a wide range of career education and advice.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that pupils, especially the most able and disadvantaged, make the progress of which they are capable by ensuring that:
 - pupils routinely complete tasks that stretch and challenge their thinking and deepen their learning, rather than tasks that are more of the same learning
 - any variability in the quality of teaching, especially in key stage 3, is addressed.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher, since starting her role, has changed the school's ethos, raised aspirations and introduced highly effective systems and robust structures to improve the school after a period of decline before she was appointed. These have resulted in significant improvements across the school. For example, teaching is strong and outcomes for all groups of pupils have improved from a low starting point in 2015.
- Leaders are unwavering and untiring in their drive for excellence. They know the school's strengths and few remaining weaknesses and work collaboratively to address any underperformance. For example, staffing turbulence has been an issue in the past. Consequently, leaders have addressed this and, as a result, the school is fully staffed with expert teachers in every learning area. Leaders review regularly their own and colleagues' performance and put in place well-focused plans to address any aspect that needs improvements.
- Morale at the school is exceptionally high. Teachers are proud to work at the school, they are fully engaged in leaders' improvement drive and all share a common goal, namely, to make their school the best it can be. Teachers commented that the school is a most supportive community and said: 'I know how lucky I am to come to work here every morning'; 'I was about to leave teaching, and then I started working here. Now I cannot imagine a better working place'; and 'This is a school for learners, including us.'
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is highly effective. Senior leaders accurately evaluate and analyse teachers' performance. They act quickly to address any underperformance they identify. As a result, teaching has improved markedly and much of it is outstanding, especially in science and the sixth form. Staff are unanimous in their praise for the many training and professional development opportunities afforded to them.
- Middle leaders form a dedicated and highly focused group of professionals. They are consistent in their messages and drive for excellence. A shared language among middle leaders is used to enable them to consistently address issues, identify any underperformance, share best practice and then disseminate that practice within their departments. Regular subject meetings with other schools offer further support and opportunities for middle leaders to sharpen their practice.
- The school's redesigned curriculum offers a balanced breadth of learning experiences which are tailored to pupils' individual needs and circumstances. Pupils choose carefully their key stage 4 courses with support from their teachers. Current curriculum developments include cross-department planning and teaching to ensure a consistent approach to learning. For example, the science and mathematics departments meet and plan approaches to teaching numeracy skills together to ensure consistency. Furthermore, leaders have made the decision to broaden the key stage 3 curriculum to ensure that pupils develop a 'deep love of learning'. Pupils now have many opportunities to learn in a range of academic and vocational courses, including Mandarin, for example. This prepares pupils well for making decisions about their future education and possible careers.

- The school's work to provide pupils with careers information, advice and guidance is highly effective. It has a positive impact on pupils' decisions about their destinations. For example, leaders provide a range of exciting opportunities for pupils to meet with employers and universities. Pupils go on to a variety of positive destinations that match their aspirations and career choices. Pupils are prepared exceptionally well for their next steps in education, training or the world of work.
- Senior leaders use and evaluate effectively the impact of any additional funding they receive, including pupil premium and funding to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) funding. For instance, targeted one-to-one support and timely interventions are planned carefully and reviewed regularly for their impact on pupils' outcomes. Consequently, disadvantaged and pupils with SEND now make better progress.
- Newly qualified teachers regard highly the support that they receive. They feel fully supported as they develop their skills in teaching and managing pupils' behaviour. They value the quality of the training and the way in which leaders encourage them to be reflective practitioners. Through this support, newly qualified teachers are able to speak with passion and knowledge about a range of educational topics. All newly qualified teachers spoken to said that they are proud to work at the school.
- Leaders have created a truly inclusive ethos in the school in which everyone is supported and cared for. Pupils and staff feel safe and valued. Leaders' focus on high performance is underpinned by support for mental health and wellbeing that is highly valued.

Governance of the school

- This school is a stand-alone academy. Governance for the school is provided by the governing body.
- Governors know their school very well and have a clear view of its strengths and the few areas where further improvement is needed. They are dedicated to the school and bring a range of relevant experiences and expertise to their roles.
- Members of the governing body have high expectations of the school's performance and provide an effective balance of support and challenge to the school's leadership team. They use information gathered through visits to school, as well as from reports provided by leaders, to ask challenging questions in order to bring about further improvements.
- Governors discharge their statutory duties with diligence. They monitor the school's budget carefully. They check that safeguarding arrangements are robust and ensure that systems to manage teachers' performance focus on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff work together to create a strong culture of safeguarding for all pupils which permeates the school. It is underpinned by regular training and frequent updates on

local, regional and national issues for every member of staff at the school. All staff say that pupils' welfare and safety is their priority.

- The safeguarding and pastoral teams work highly effectively with relevant external agencies when required. Staff are persistent when they are concerned about a pupil's welfare and follow up concerns with these agencies as necessary. Leaders complete appropriate employment checks and keep accurate records.
- All pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe in school. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. They understand the risks surrounding online safety and social media, for example.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders monitor rigorously the quality of teaching across the curriculum and provide effective support and targeted training when required. As a result, teaching has improved and is now strong, especially in key stage 4 and in the sixth form. Teaching is consistently outstanding in science. As a result of leaders' actions and improved teaching, pupils' outcomes in 2018 have improved, including for disadvantaged pupils. However, there remains some variability in the quality of teaching at key stage 3. Leaders have identified this and have effective plans in place to address this issue.
- Teachers have the highest expectations of pupils and foster respectful relationships. They believe that every pupil can and will make progress. They have strong subject knowledge, a clear enthusiasm for their subjects and plan lessons that incorporate a range of innovative teaching strategies to stimulate pupils' interest and curiosity. Pupils enjoy learning.
- Teachers give ongoing verbal feedback to pupils. They check pupils' understanding effectively and provide support and intervention when pupils fall behind and need to catch up. Pupils speak highly of the support they receive in lessons and feel well supported to do their best.
- Leaders regularly assess pupils' progress and use this information to identify priorities for staff training. Teachers work closely with colleagues from other schools to share best practice, and they frequently moderate pupils' work together. This helps everyone to reach a common understanding about the expected standards of GCSE examinations, for example. Staff are unanimous in their praise for the many training and professional development opportunities afforded to them.
- Pupils with SEND made weaker progress in the past. A focus on targeted support and bespoke intervention has resulted in pupils being able to access their learning more effectively. As a result, the progress of current pupils with SEND is improving.
- Leaders have introduced an effective and reliable system of collecting pupils' progress information. This has led to leaders and teachers being able to put timely and effective interventions in place to help pupils catch up and close any gaps in their knowledge. Consequently, pupils' outcomes have improved in 2018 and current pupils' progress is continuing to improve.
- Teachers generally plan lessons that are well matched to pupils' needs and abilities. At times, when tasks designed to stretch and challenge the most able pupils are too easy or just more of the same, pupils do not routinely deepen their thinking or learning. As a

result, most-able pupils in the past have underperformed. Although improving, current most-able pupils continue to do less well than other groups of pupils. Leaders are aware of this and have plans in place to address this issue. It is too soon to judge the impact of these actions.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The pastoral support provided by the school is a clear strength. Leaders have created a truly inclusive school where every pupil is valued and cared for. Pupils and staff are unanimous in their praise for the help, support and guidance they receive when they need it. Parents agree that the school is a safe place for their children. Leaders believe strongly that their responsibility is to educate not only academically but also ensure pupils' personal development is of the highest possible quality.
- Leaders have made mental health and wellbeing a focus at the school. Some staff have been trained as mental health first aiders to ensure that support provided to anyone experiencing difficulties is swift and appropriate. Pupils say that, 'The care and support for pupils with mental health issues is of exceptional quality.'
- Pupils say that bullying is extremely rare. They have every confidence that when it does occur it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff. Leaders have introduced a number of pupil support groups, such as the anti-bullying ambassadors and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender representation group. Pupils regularly offer support to each other through these groups. Through these and various other roles, pupils are given many and varied opportunities to take on leadership roles at the school.
- Pupils wear their uniform with pride and look smart. They are friendly, courteous and respectful of each other and staff. Pupils welcome visitors to their school and inspectors were overwhelmed by the many offerings of support from pupils when navigating their school. They are proud of their school and look after the school environment. As a result, the school's buildings are free from litter and graffiti.
- Leaders meticulously plan the curriculum to ensure that pupils have a good understanding of current and topical issues such as extremist views and online risks. The school's 'Aspire' programme is excellent. It is designed for all year groups and offers many and varied opportunities for pupils to learn about social issues appropriate to their age. For example, the school has been awarded the 'Discovering Democracy' award for their work on preparing pupils as citizens for our society.
- Leaders monitor carefully the well-being of pupils who attend alternative provision. They track pupils' attendance and progress. Leaders choose the courses for these pupils based on their interests and individual needs. When appropriate, these provide them with knowledge and experience that will help them choose further study or work. Leaders visit and keep in regular contact with providers to ensure pupils are safe. Placements are regularly reviewed to ensure pupils are completing the right courses. Leaders meet with parents and discuss how well their child is progressing on their

placements.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils behave extremely well in lessons and no learning time is wasted. Behaviour during breaktimes and lunchtimes and in corridors at lesson changeover is calm and orderly. Nearly all pupils who spoke with inspectors confirmed that the behaviour around school and in lessons is excellent. Pupils regularly regulate or correct their own or each other's behaviour. This is because all pupils have the highest expectations of themselves and each other. The school oozes a purposeful and intent learning atmosphere.
- Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils are clear about what these are and staff consistently apply the behaviour policy. As a result, the number of pupils being excluded for a fixed-period of time is and has been well below the national average. Sanctions are very rare and when they are used they have the correctional effect and pupils generally do not reoffend. Pupils are given the trust to prove that they behave well and, therefore, almost all pupils are keen to repay that trust by exhibiting high standards of behaviour.
- Pupils are immensely proud of their school and rarely have time off school. Attendance is above national averages, including for all pupil groups. Hardly any pupils are persistently absent. When a pupil is absent, leaders have robust and clear procedures in place to check on them and to ensure that they attend as soon as possible.
- The behaviour of pupils who attend alternative provision is monitored closely. Leaders communicate effectively and regularly with the providers to ensure high standards of discipline are maintained. Leaders closely liaise with parents of pupils at these settings and inform them about how well their child is doing.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' outcomes in the past have been in line with national averages, while the most able pupils, pupils who have SEND and disadvantaged pupils underachieved. In 2018, outcomes improved for almost all pupil groups, with the exception of the most able pupils. Outcomes have been and remain particularly strong in science.
- Leaders' analysis of recent assessment information and pupils' work suggests that the improvements from 2018 are set to continue and, in many cases, improve further for pupils currently in the school. This is true for all pupil groups, including disadvantaged and most-able pupils in a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress. This is because of the targeted and individualised support they receive. Teachers carefully track the progress of pupils and are able to put timely interventions in place to help pupils catch up when any underperformance is identified. Consequently, pupils with SEND achieve well.
- Disadvantaged pupils have historically underperformed significantly. Leaders have recognised this and have put targeted and individualised interventions in place. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' outcomes improved markedly. For example, in 2018 the

differences between disadvantaged pupils' progress and that of other pupils with similar starting points have narrowed considerably. Current disadvantaged pupils continue to achieve well, and achievement gaps are closing further.

- Pupils follow an appropriate curriculum at both key stages 3 and 4, which is designed to prepare them well for their next steps in education or training. A greater number of pupils now take courses leading to the English baccalaureate in which they achieve well. Leaders use the information they have about pupils to plan individually designed GCSE pathways. This paired with excellent careers advice and guidance ensures that pupils receive high-quality information. Consequently, the number of pupils who leave the school and go onto further education, employment or apprenticeships is high and rising.
- While the outcomes for most able pupils are improving, these pupils continue to do less well than other pupils in some subjects and inconsistencies remain. Leaders have analysed this information and have put effective plans in place to tackle any underperformance. It is too early to see the impact of these actions on pupils' outcomes.
- The achievement of pupils at alternative provision is carefully monitored and analysed. Their curriculum has appropriately been adapted to prepare them well for their next steps in education. Parents are kept informed of their child's progress and regular reviews ensure that pupils continue to follow the best possible pathways for them.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The sixth form has undergone some turbulence in the past. As a result, outcomes for students declined. That paired with a large post-16 offer in the local community resulted in student numbers decreasing. Leaders have put effective plans in place to bring about rapid improvements after that period of decline and improvements are now evident.
- The quality of teaching is strong and in many subjects it is outstanding. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and share their enthusiasm for their subjects with students who are keen learners. Teachers routinely plan lessons which engage and motivate students and relationships are excellent.
- In the past, outcomes in the sixth form have been weak. Outcomes for current students were very positive in 2018. Assessment information and work in students' books and folders shows that students now make good progress across a range of subjects.
- The entry requirements into the sixth form and the curriculum have been transformed to ensure that students access and complete courses that match closely their abilities and needs. Students are now on courses that support their future career aspirations and prepare them well for their next steps.
- The school's work to ensure that students have the opportunity for work-based learning is highly effective. All students benefit from work experience placements. Leaders offer paid employment to sixth-form students at the school. As a result, students gain an insight into work life and their future career choices.
- Leaders ensure that students benefit from effective careers advice and guidance.

Consequently, the vast majority of students move on to universities, further education, apprenticeships or employment. Leaders are rigorous in the tracking of students' destinations. For example, almost all pupils who left the sixth form recently went on to employment, higher or further education or apprenticeships.

- Students behave impeccably. They are courteous and very complimentary about their sixth form. They feel safe and well supported, and most would recommend the sixth form to their younger peers.
- The school's 'Aspire' programme extends into the sixth form. Here students learn about student finance, interview skills and personal-health education. Students are complimentary about the opportunities afforded to them to learn about the many varied aspects of their future lives as students and citizens.

School details

Unique reference number	136924
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10058657

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	998
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Denaro
Headteacher	Natasha Rancins
Telephone number	01564 823 777
Website	www.woodrushhigh.worcs.sch.uk
Email address	office@woodrush.org
Date of previous inspection	13–14 November 2013

Information about this school

- This school is a stand-alone academy, and governance to the school is provided by the school's governing body. The school is a teaching school.
- The school is of average size. The majority of pupils are of White British origin.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with support for SEND is below average. The number of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who are looked after is well above average.
- Full time, off-site alternative provision is currently provided for eight pupils in key stage 4 at James Brindley Hospital School, The Forge and Bournville College.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation. This included: the school’s self-evaluation and action plans; school policies; information about pupils’ attainment and progress, behaviour and attendance; and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Inspectors visited lessons in all key stages in a wide range of subjects, most jointly with senior leaders. They observed pupils’ behaviour between lessons, at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors evaluated the work in pupils’ books and folders across a range of year groups and in the sixth form when visiting lessons.
- Inspectors held formal meetings with governors, senior and middle leaders, and teachers, including those who are newly qualified.
- The views of parents were considered through the school’s own parent questionnaire, which was collected this term. Inspectors considered 42 written messages to inspectors from staff.
- Inspectors had informal discussions with a large number of pupils in lessons at breaktime and lunchtime.

Inspection team

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