

Oldbury Wells School

Oldbury Wells, Bridgnorth, WV16 5JD

Inspection dates 25 – 26 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, is improving rapidly and is now above national averages
- Students make good progress as a result of teaching that is usually good and sometimes outstanding.
- Teachers plan lessons that are carefully matched to the different needs of students in their class. Questioning is used well to probe and challenge students' understanding.
- Students enjoy being at school and behave well. They feel safe and treat each other with respect.
- The headteacher provides highly effective leadership and is well supported by senior leaders and the recently introduced cluster group leaders. The governing body shares her vision of a highly inclusive school, committed to providing high quality education for all students.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress as a result of teaching that is sharply focused on individual needs and effectively develops independent learning skills.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teaching requires improvement. In these lessons teachers give too much direction and their questioning does not develop students' learning. On occasions, marking does not give students useful advice on how to improve.
- For the past three years attendance had been improving. However, this year attendance has dipped and is below the national average.
- There is some variation in the achievement of students in different subject areas. Students achieve very well in humanities and design and technology but do less well in modern foreign language and science.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons, eight of which were jointly observed with senior leaders. Inspectors also made a number of short visits to other lessons.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, teachers with responsibilities for specific subject areas, members of the governing body and groups of students. Inspectors also spoke with many students informally, in lessons and around the school.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including information on students' progress, school improvement plans, monitoring documentation, behaviour and safeguarding records and documents relating to the management of teacher performance.
- Inspectors took account of 28 responses from parents and carers from the Parent View website, and the questionnaires completed for the inspection by 43 staff. They also considered the results of surveys of parent and carers carried out by the school.

Inspection team

Deborah James, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Michelle Parker

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Taylor

Additional Inspector

Gwendoline Onyon

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller than average secondary school.
- Almost all students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium (additional funding for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, or those who have a parent in the armed forces) is lower than average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below national averages
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' progress and attainment in English and mathematics.
- A small group of students in Years 10 and 11 undertake part-time vocational courses at Idsall School and another student receives full-time provision through the Shropshire Tuition, Medical and Behaviour Support Service.
- Sixth form provision is provided in partnership with the Bridgnorth Endowed School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eliminate the small proportion of teaching that requires improvement to ensure all students make good progress, through
 - giving students less direction about their learning so they can become better at working independently
 - improving questioning so that teachers know how well students understand their work and then adapt the lesson to meet their needs
 - improving the quality and frequency of marking so students are clear about how to improve their work.
- Take rapid action to reverse the dip in attendance this year.
- Ensure all subject areas deliver good student achievement by sharing the best practice in the use of assessment information, intervention to support underachievement and the monitoring of teaching.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards are rising. GCSE results have improved well since the last inspection. The standards reached by students in history, geography and religious education are well above national levels. However, students do less well in science and modern foreign languages.
- There has been a considerable focus on improving students' achievement in English because Year 11 students did not make the expected levels of progress in 2011. By 2012, this had improved considerably and this year the school has secure assessment information to show that students are making consistently good progress from all starting points.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is because teachers carefully plan lessons that meet the individual needs of each student and the school provides additional support in lessons from a team of well-trained teaching assistants.
- The school's inclusive ethos is evident in the high proportion of students that gain at least five GCSE passes. Students, including those eligible for the pupil premium and those taking alternative courses away from the school, make good progress in a broad range of subjects.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium achieve grades in English and mathematics that are about half a grade below those of other students. The school is using pupil premium funding provided by the government to provide extra tuition for these students to help them catch up and this has been effective in narrowing the gap in results.
- For the last two years the school has entered a small group of students early for GCSE mathematics. Some students who take the examinations early will continue to study mathematics and sit the examination again at the end of the year. Others, if they have reached their target grade, use the time to concentrate on improving their English grade. Teachers have given careful consideration to this decision and believe it will increase the confidence and examination skills of the target group of middle-ability students.
- The majority of students in the sixth form make good progress and reach their predicted grades. Students are encouraged to read and research independently and have a good understanding of technical and subject specific language.
- Students develop their writing, communication and mathematics skills across a range of subjects. Year 7 catch-up funding is used to give students, with low literacy or numeracy skills on entry to the school, additional help. This ensures they can make progress in line with their peers. Detailed information on reading ages and numeracy skills are given to all class teachers to support their planning. Students have access to book boxes during form periods as part of a project this year on encouraging more students to read.
- All parents and carers responding to the on-line questionnaire believe their child is making good progress; a view supported by the evidence found in this inspection.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is good with a significant proportion that is outstanding, particularly in the sixth form.

- Teachers carefully plan varied activities that take account of students' earlier learning and individual needs. Students are often given opportunities to decide their own starting point or level of challenge. Challenging extension tasks are used well to require more able students to think more deeply.
- In many lessons students make good progress as a result of skilful questioning. Teachers carefully target questions, give students thinking time before requiring an answer and support them in articulating more complex answers.
- Teachers keep the pace of learning high by using a number of different activities within the lesson. For example, in a Year 8 cricket lesson the teacher interspersed practical work with short video clips to illustrate key learning points.
- Teachers are beginning to make good use of new technologies, like hand-held computer tablets and electronic voting handsets to engage students' interest and ensure they participate actively in their learning.
- In most classes marking is good and helps students improve their work. Year 10 students find the marking in mathematics particularly helpful; teachers provide links to websites and textbook pages that will help them improve in topics they have found difficult. There is some variation in the quality of marking. Where marking is less useful it is infrequent, with brief comments and little guidance on how to get better.
- A small amount of teaching requires improvement. This is sometimes because teachers provide too much direction so students have limited opportunities to work by themselves. In other cases, students make less progress because the teaching does not engage their interest and the pace of work is too slow so they become bored or distracted.
- Teaching in the sixth form is highly effective in ensuring students make good progress. Teachers make use of a wide range of teaching strategies, giving students many opportunities to work independently and in pairs and groups. Teachers question students thoroughly to ensure they understand topics in depth. In a Year 12 geology lesson students compared rock samples by producing their own 'mind map' then reviewing the 'mind maps' of other students, adding a constructive and a developmental comment to each student's work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Evidence from parents, carers and students suggest that the good behaviour seen during the inspection is typical of the behaviour of students over time. Students tell us that they get on well together and behaviour out of lessons is good.
- Most students have positive attitudes to their learning. They are keen to do well and enjoy working collaboratively. They are friendly, polite and were keen to share their views of the school with the inspection team. The isolated instances of poor behaviour in lessons are closely linked to teaching that does not engage students' interest.
- The school carefully tracks incidences of poor behaviour and analysis of this information shows behaviour continues to improve. The level of fixed term exclusions is low and falling.
- Bullying is very rare and on the occasions when it does take place is dealt with firmly. Students understand what is meant by racist and homophobic bullying and can describe the actions the

school has taken to increase awareness.

- Students say they feel very safe. Good arrangements for those attending off-site provision seeks to ensure their safety while out of school.
- Attendance has dipped this year. Senior leaders believe this is due to poor weather and a high proportion of students affected by sickness bugs. However, this has not been analysed thoroughly enough to allow the school to draw firm conclusions and put appropriate actions in place for next year.
- Students in the sixth form are well prepared for their transition from school, through external speakers, visits to university, advice on finance and support in completing application forms. All students who left the sixth form last year, whether from Year 12 or 13, are in an appropriate learning or training place.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body have high expectations and provide the school with purposeful leadership. Improvements in achievement, the quality of teaching and behaviour provide strong evidence of the effectiveness of current actions and the school's capacity for further improvement.
- The curriculum is well-matched to the needs of students. At Key Stage 4, students have the opportunity to undertake vocational courses as well as a broad range of academic subjects.
- The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Students have many opportunities to work with their peers in lessons and teachers create good opportunities for students to bring their own personal reflection to their learning.
- Student achievement is carefully monitored, both for individuals and for groups of students, and discussed in regular progress meetings. There are a number of intervention strategies that are used to support students that are falling behind although these are not used consistently across all subject areas.
- Additional resources, including pupil premium funding and Year 7 catch-up funding, are currently used to fund a range of projects including additional teaching in mathematics and English and revision support materials. The school's commitment to equality of opportunity is very strong and the considerable additional intervention and support put in place for underachieving students ensure all groups make good progress.
- Self-evaluation is realistic and thorough. Senior leaders and staff responsible for subject clusters run a robust programme of quality checks delivered through regular 'learning walks'. These provide secure evidence on a range of areas for example, the quality of marking, the impact of training and the behaviour of students.
- The school improvement plan is based on the findings of effective self-evaluation. It has relevant priorities and actions, although it is not always clear who is accountable for delivering the action and by when. Greater clarity on these would help the governing body evaluate the effectiveness of improvement activities.
- Systems for the performance management of teachers are carefully organised although targets

linked to improving student achievement are not always driven by data and can be too vague. There is an extensive programme of school-wide training to help staff in reaching their targets but there is little opportunity for an individual programme of coaching and support to meet a specific need.

- The local authority works closely with the school on agreed priorities for improvement. The local authority advisor visits termly and has undertaken paired observations, organised additional specialist help to moderate examination coursework in English, supported the governors with the headteacher's performance management and worked with the newly appointed cluster leaders. She also makes use of expertise within the school to provide support and guidance to other schools.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors demonstrate a great commitment to the school and have recently undertaken a skills audit to map their personal skills and professional expertise against the future needs of the governing body. They ensure that statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding students, are met. They have a clear understanding of how well students are performing and have undertaken training on the use of data. They check that teachers' pay rises are linked closely to students' achievement and the quality of teaching. Members of the finance committee play a key role in deciding school spending priorities and understand, for example, the importance of carefully spending pupil premium funds to close gaps in achievement for eligible students

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	123583
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	402181

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	799
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	121
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judy Mondon
Headteacher	Sarah Godden
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2009
Telephone number	01746 765454
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