

Summerhill School

Lodge Lane, Kingswinford, DY6 9XE

Inspection dates

29–30 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The large majority of teaching is good throughout the school. Some teaching and learning are outstanding.
- Students' achievement is good. Standards are above average overall by Year 11; a higher than the national proportion of students make good or better progress.
- Students' attitudes to learning are excellent. Behaviour around school is most civilized.
- There are high levels of respect shown across the school as a community.
- Students cooperate well together and know how to keep each other safe while at school.
- Staff have high expectations of the students, who appreciate what their teachers have to offer, both in terms of pastoral support and academic guidance.
- Effective leadership and teamwork have ensured good improvements in students' progress. This results from the effective checking of teaching and learning.
- The governing body is also active in checking the school's life and work. Collectively, in partnership with the staff, governors make a major contribution to the students' education.
- The school's track record confirms a strong capacity to achieve further improvement. This is based on accurate and searching self-evaluation.
- Development planning shows the school understands well what it needs to improve. Staff are focused effectively on bringing out the best in all students.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of outstanding teaching is not yet high enough; there remains some teaching which requires improvement.
- Work is not always planned specifically enough to meet the needs of individuals or some groups of students.
- Questioning is not always used consistently or regularly enough to check on students' understanding of their learning in lessons.
- Some subject leaders are still developing the skills to support fully the school's monitoring and evaluation work. This includes making sure marking is consistent in giving written feedback to students about their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 45 lessons, including six joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors undertook a scrutiny of students' work in English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including: school policies; self-evaluation reports; various monitoring files; development plans; safeguarding and curriculum materials; governing body documents; and information for parents and carers, including that provided on the school's website.
- Meetings were held with various groups of students, including those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. In addition, many informal opportunities were taken to talk with students.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and all other members of the senior leadership team, the school's pastoral team, heads of subject departments, administrative staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 48 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and the 41 responses to the questionnaire for school staff.

Inspection team

Michael Miller, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Raymond Biglin	Additional Inspector
Patrick Walsh	Additional Inspector
Balbir Kaur-Pierpoint	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized secondary school. It is a specialist languages college.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students by the end of Year 11.
- Most students are of White British heritage; very few come from other ethnic heritage backgrounds. Almost all students speak English as their first language; the percentage speaking English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, the additional funding provided by the government, is well below average.
- A very few of the school's students currently attend alternative provision for a practical engineering course and a local authority residential therapeutic school.
- The proportions of disabled students, those who have special educational needs or who are supported through school action is well below average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus, or who have a statement of special educational needs, is below average. The primary needs of most such students cover a wide range; but most have autistic spectrum disorder, moderate learning difficulties, physical disability, or speech, language and communication needs.
- The school currently holds the following awards: Investors in People; the BECTA ICT Award; a Specialist Schools Trust award; a Health Promoting Schools award; the Black Country Gold Standard Quality Award for careers education and guidance; the Black Country Gold Standard Quality Award for work placements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of outstanding teaching, and consequently students' achievement, by:
 - developing the skills of all teachers in the use of data and assessment information in their lesson planning to ensure work is sufficiently demanding for all students
 - ensuring that all lesson activities take full account of individual students' learning styles, so that their different needs are catered for more specifically
 - using questioning more regularly in lessons to check more precisely and consistently on students' progress, and to identify more clearly their next steps in learning.
- Broaden the impact of the school's leadership and management by:
 - improving the impact of the school's less-experienced subject leaders by developing fully the skills they need to support senior leaders in checking the school's work
 - using data on students' performance more often to fine tune teachers' approaches to improving teaching and learning
 - ensuring a consistent approach across the school to the regular marking of students' work, and written feedback to students, to help them understand and remember better what to improve.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The large majority of students join the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment which are usually at the higher end of the average range; a small minority of students are above average. Most students make good progress. Attainment in GCSE examinations is typically above average.
- In English and mathematics, students make better than expected progress overall, although this is currently stronger in mathematics than in English. However, all students take English language, and most have the opportunity to take English literature. The proportions gaining A* to C and higher A* and A passes in English and mathematics is above average.
- In mathematics, students in the top two Year 9 sets have the opportunity to start their GCSE courses early and take the examination in Year 10. School data show they are not disadvantaged by this and benefit from being able to take additional subjects, such as statistics, during Year 11. GCSE pass rates in mathematics and statistics are above average.
- In the sciences, the proportion of students making expected progress fell significantly in 2011, but has recovered in 2012. This resulted from very focused support and monitoring, not only by senior leaders but also with the support of a local authority advisor. This support is continuing, as a school priority, to ensure the track record for improvement is maintained.
- The school has proved particularly successful in the English Baccalaureate. Over half of the students take the required combinations, and the percentage gaining this qualification level is twice the national average.
- As a specialist languages college, almost all students take at least one modern foreign language at GCSE level. This is significantly higher than in most schools. The proportions gaining A* to C passes is broadly average. The advantage of having achieved a qualification in a second language stands students in good stead for their future, and contributes well to the development of their communications skills. A very small minority take more than one language; most who do so achieve higher level passes.
- During the inspection, students' progress was good or better in the large majority of lessons seen. In a few classes, students were not given sufficiently demanding work to do, or the work was not matched sufficiently well to their individual needs.
- Given their starting points and individual needs, school data show that disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good overall progress. As with others, their progress is currently better in mathematics than in English. However, this is now improving, particularly in Key Stage 3, as the school has introduced a programme of individual support for literacy. This is now being extended to enhance students' numeracy skills.
- The very few students known to be eligible for the pupil premium make good progress, but data show that their attainment is slightly lower than other groups. However, the school is focused well on closing the gap in performance between these students and the others. Funding is used effectively to provide individual support for such students.
- The progress of the very few individuals who speak English as an additional language is good; again, this is due to effectively targeted one-to-one support. The welfare and progress of the very few students for whom the school makes alternative provision, at other specialist

educational establishments, is monitored carefully. Given their individual circumstances, these students are making good progress.

- Overall, students are prepared very well for their future lives. In recent years, almost no Year 11 students fail either to go on to sixth form or college courses, or to find work. School data also show that students' progress is accelerating overall in Years 7 to 9, and this bodes well for increased success as students move into Key Stage 4 and start their examination work.

The quality of teaching is good

- The practical influence of the teaching extends well beyond lessons. The staff provide good, and often outstanding role models for the students. Working relationships are strong, and contribute significantly to the excellent attitudes shown by the students. There are mutually high expectations between teachers and students, and this is a strength of the school.
- In the few lessons where teaching required improvement, this was mainly because teachers talked too much, and this limited the students more active or practical involvement in learning. In such cases, the teacher often showed very good subject knowledge, but did not use this sufficiently effectively to ensure a suitably challenging pace to the lesson.
- In order to extend further the proportion of outstanding teaching, the school has identified the need to place a greater emphasis on the development of some teachers' skills in the use of questioning. This is to ensure regular checks in lessons on students' understanding of their work.
- Furthermore, lesson planning is sometimes too general, and not focused sufficiently on the needs of individual students. This is because the extensive data collected by the school on students' progress is not used consistently well enough by some teachers to aid their planning.
- Oral feedback to students is mostly good. Discussions with students show students value the verbal feedback teachers give them during lessons. However, the quality of written marking is too inconsistent both across the school and within departments. In a few cases, marking is not regular enough. Discussions with students also highlighted this inconsistency.
- Some particularly outstanding teaching and learning were seen in Year 9 during an English and a French lesson, a Year 10 food studies lesson, and a Year 11 science lesson. The quality these had in common was the high levels of challenge, which enabled students to show their individuality and creativity. There were also opportunities for students, of all abilities, to reflect together on their learning. This contributed significantly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- In the Year 10 food studies lesson, students made splendid use of the ideas they had gleaned the previous day from their visit to a national food exhibition. Working very effectively in pairs, they planned a most imaginative range of both sweet and savoury pies. This included using historical knowledge to design a mediaeval, 'peasant poachers' pie and a witty 'spy pie' where the decoration spelt out the ingredients in morse code. The lesson contained high quality ideas and work and was enjoyed immensely by all the students who made significant gains in their progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- There is a strong focus on the students' all-round, personal development, and not simply their academic achievement. Students appreciate the many ways their teachers are always there for

them, not least through the regular 15 minutes after school when teachers make themselves available for individual advice and mentoring. Such approaches help the students to understand, and value their education.

- Students are confident learners who demonstrate an excellent willingness to take on new challenges. They respond extraordinarily well to such opportunities and have exemplary attitudes to learning. Even where the teaching requires improvement, and students find themselves more passive learners, they maintain high levels of attention. Students listen to their teachers because they appreciate staff have much to offer them.
- Life at the school never lacks interest. Students are too engrossed in their work to become distracted. They want to come to school, and this is reflected in above-average attendance rates. Behaviour and safety are outstanding because the students develop self-confidence, socialise exceptionally well, and sustain high levels of concentration throughout the school day.
- Discussions with students show that the influence of the school's pastoral team is extensive. The school aids significantly their development as responsible young citizens. Students show very good levels of self-control, reflecting the high quality of their social and moral development. They say they feel safe at school and have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves free from harm in a range of situations.
- Students show high levels of awareness of the potential impact of any anti-social behaviour. This includes the different types of bullying, particularly cyber bullying, homophobia and racism in contemporary society. They applaud the school's zero tolerance of such activities. As one Year 7 student said, 'I just love this school. It is so secure.'

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leadership team encourage the energy and enthusiasm of staff which are enabling the school to build securely on its strengths. Leaders and managers have a realistic view of how well the school is doing and this is reflected in their priorities for improvement. This is linked closely to performance management and teachers' professional support and training. It has also helped to establish the school's high expectations which have resulted in students' excellent attitudes to learning.
- The good and better teaching has been secured through focused monitoring by the school's leaders at all levels. Joint observations during the inspection confirmed the accuracy of the senior leadership team's assessments of the quality of teaching and learning. Heads of department are held to account, on a weekly basis, by senior leaders. Any points identified for further improvement are linked well to teachers' professional development. The school has developed its own 'Teaching Toolbox' to guide and support staff.
- The key element for improvement lies in strengthening the role and experience of a number of subject leaders. This is related specifically to helping them develop fully the skills to support the senior leadership team in their monitoring and evaluation work. There also remain some inconsistencies in the effectiveness with which leaders check on the marking of students' work.
- The school ensures that all students are treated equally and that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. It fosters good relations with parents and outside agencies in supporting students' learning.
- There is a positive working relationship between the school and the local authority. Monitoring

by the local authority is 'light touch' but effective; this includes regular termly reviews of the school's performance, and helpful advice about performance management. The local authority has also supported the school in its work to develop the science department, and in advice for subject leaders to help improve teachers' techniques in the use of questioning in lessons.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body makes an important contribution to the school's everyday life and work. It is well-informed, not only through the headteacher's regular reports but also through monitoring visits. There are good systems to ensure regular dialogue, and accountability, between subject leaders and the governing body. Individual governors use their personal and professional expertise effectively to the benefit of the school. Records show governors attend relevant professional training to help them fulfil their roles. The governing body checks systematically on the impact of teachers' performance management targets. Together with the senior leadership team, they ensure such targets are linked directly to the quality of teaching, accountability and salary structure. This approach is focused very well on maintaining and developing further the quality of learning and ensuring students' progress. Governors have a good understanding of performance data and how this compares with similar schools. The school's finances are managed effectively. The governing body evaluates regularly the use of the pupil premium funding and produces a specific statement showing how it is spent. This funding is being used to finance a range of focused individual support and enrichment opportunities for the few students concerned. This ranges from specific literacy support to funding to help develop individual students' personal gifts and talents. This is helping to close any gap between such students' own performance and all other students. The governing body takes the safeguarding of students very seriously. Systems and processes for safeguarding students are secure.

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	103854
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	402928

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1012
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Knowles
Headteacher	Ben Warren
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2008
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