

# The Westminster School

Curral Road, Rowley Regis, B65 9AN

**Inspection dates** 22–23 May 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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 Westminster School has many strengths and is improving well.
- Nearly all pupils make good progress. On arrival at the school they settle quickly and start to thrive.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety is good and they enjoy using an online system of rewards and this has helped to improve the behaviour and motivation of many.
- Pupils are polite and courteous and are good ambassadors for the school.
- The sixth form is good. Students gain further nationally recognised qualifications and also attend local colleges and take part in work-related learning courses, which prepares them well for their next stage of life.
- The acting headteacher has provided confident leadership and management in an uncertain context.
- The school uses alternative providers very effectively to develop pupils' personal, social and academic development. Pupils enjoy these placements.
- The senior leaders of the school are enthusiastic and have already shown their commitment to improving teaching and raising achievement through better outcomes for pupils.
- Governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school and have provided very effective leadership when planning for the future.
- The superb purpose-built accommodation, with specialist facilities such as art, design and technology and drama rooms, enhances the quality of teaching and learning.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- On occasions, the use of questioning by teachers is not sharp enough to make pupils think more deeply.
- Good marking is not consistent across the school.
- Learning is not always active enough, as sometimes there is too much talk by teachers and some pupils do not work independently enough.
- Pupils' attendance is below average, due to the poor attendance of a few pupils.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 11 lessons, all of which were joint observations with different members of the senior leadership team.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- There were insufficient responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View), but the team also considered the school's recent survey of parents' views.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documentation including the school's information on pupils' progress, its self-evaluation, development plans and information relating to the safeguarding of students.

## Inspection team

Frank Price, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Rowena Green

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Westminster School educates pupils with a range of learning difficulties. These include pupils with moderate learning difficulties, behaviour, emotional and social difficulties and those with speech, language and communication needs.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional funding allocated by the government for certain groups of pupils, in this case, those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and who are looked after by the local authority) is above average.
- A small number of pupils are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium, which supports pupils who joined the school with below-average standards in English or mathematics.
- The school makes substantial use of alternative providers for students to study courses. The providers are NOVA Training, which provides careers and mechanics; NACRO and Startright Training for careers awareness; Rowley Village Nursery provides childcare placements; Sandwell Community Caring Trust provides opportunities for GCSE courses; The Krunch Centre delivers life skills programmes; IMPACT education provides additional academic support and horticulture. West Bromwich Albion delivers sports coaching and mentoring and Closer to the Edge provides team building programmes.
- The school moved to new purpose-built accommodation in 2011.
- The school has had an acting headteacher for the past year due to the absence of the permanent headteacher.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching and further raise pupils' achievement by:
  - identifying as a whole school staff what outstanding teaching looks like at Westminster School
  - ensuring learning is more active for pupils and increased use is made of practical activities
  - using more incisive questioning to make pupils think more deeply
  - ensuring the best practice of marking pupils' work is applied across the school
  - encouraging pupils to work more independently.
- Raise the attendance of those few pupils who do not attend regularly enough by developing the role of the family support worker in engaging with parents so that they realise the importance of their children regularly attending school.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Nearly all pupils make expected or better than expected progress. The school's assessment information over the last three years indicates that progress is generally good. However, there are some pockets of outstanding progress. For example, last year in English at Key Stage 3, pupils made outstanding progress, but progress is not yet consistently outstanding in English and mathematics across the school.
- By the time students are 16, they achieve nationally recognised qualifications, which are in line with their capabilities. To give students the best chance of succeeding, the school does not enter them early for examinations. Students at post-16 gain further qualifications at higher levels and in a wider range of subjects such as business studies.
- In a sixth form lesson, students were highly motivated by looking at familiar mobile phone technology, to research and confidently make a presentation to the rest of the class on the strengths and weaknesses of the products. Students also have good opportunities to have meaningful work-related placements to prepare them effectively for life after school.
- Pupils' literacy and numeracy are promoted well. In English there has been a concerted effort to improve pupils' reading and written skills and this is starting to improve their confidence in reading and their ability to tackle unfamiliar words by breaking down the sounds of words. One parent commented that her child will now sound out letters to a word whilst travelling in the car. In mathematics pupils learn how to perform calculations and apply mathematics to help them with everyday tasks such as telling the time and spending money.
- The school makes extensive use of alternative providers and these give pupils a wide range of academic and work-related experiences. These opportunities have improved pupils' academic and personal development, and provide enjoyable and mature experiences for them, which they look forward to taking part in.
- Some students on the autistic spectrum, for whom it is appropriate, have excellent opportunities to develop their life skills in a flat, and they learn how to tidy up, make beds and cook meals.
- The school has developed an effective 'nurture group' where pupils with more difficult social and emotional needs are taught in smaller numbers. This is a new development, but early indications are that it is beginning to improve their behaviour, attendance and achievement.
- In lessons, pupils are keen to participate and enjoy learning. One pupil stated that the school was 'lovely' and many spoke warmly of lessons such as music, drama and the off-site placements they take part in.
- All pupils regardless of background or need achieve equally well. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Poor attendance inevitably slows the rate of progress for the few pupils concerned.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium or Year 7 catch-up premium make up good ground so that their progress is similar to that of other pupils. This funding has provided further support for pupils' literacy needs. One pupil for example, made seven months' progress in reading in a few weeks, due to additional help and support being made available. This funding has enabled pupils to close the gap between their attainment and that of their peers in English and mathematics, as well as effectively promoting their personal development by giving them

opportunities to attend outdoor trips.

### **The quality of teaching** is good

- Teaching is typically good and contributes to the good achievement of pupils. Occasionally teaching is outstanding. Where teaching is not outstanding, this is because there is too much teacher talk and not enough practical activity undertaken by pupils. Not all teachers use questioning well enough, such as 'how' or 'why', to cause pupils to think hard enough to give more complex verbal answers, rather than single-word replies. On occasions more-able pupils do not work independently enough such as researching topics on their own or in pairs.
- Teachers are good at finishing lessons by asking pupils to assess how well they and their peers have done. This strengthens pupils' learning by reinforcing the main points of the lesson. It is also used as an opportunity to boost pupils' self-confidence effectively.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. This does much to promote good attitudes to learning and pupils respond well to the relaxed approach by staff, as this gets the best out of them. Humour is used well and contributes to lively and interesting learning.
- When teaching is outstanding, teachers use subject matter which pupils can relate to and this provides a high level of motivation. Practical activities are used to engage pupils well. For example, in an English lesson about pirates, pupils made a pirate ship and acted out part of a story and this grabbed pupils' attention well.
- The marking of pupils' work in the primary department is exemplary, but it is not as consistent for all secondary-aged pupils in showing them how to improve their work.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is generally good. Pupils reported that they enjoy school and that they feel safe from harm and any form of prejudicial bullying. They are confident in staff to tackle any issues quickly and fairly.
- Parents feel that the school does a good job in improving pupils' behaviour and feel that staff work well in conjunction with home to address any issues.
- The close monitoring of the use of alternative provision indicates that pupils' behaviour whilst off-site is equally good.
- The school uses an online system of rewards to promote good behaviour and attitudes. Pupils respond very well to this and it has increased their motivation and ensured that all pupils are equally valued and rewarded. It has had a positive impact upon improving behaviour, attendance and their levels of motivation. Pupils speak animatedly about gaining points that they can spend online.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions has dropped substantially and many pupils show considerable improvement in their behaviour over time. There is very good analysis of pupils' behaviour and this has shown where there are 'hotspots'. This has led the school to tackle these issues and one of its responses was to establish the nurture group to improve behaviour.
- Lunchtimes are pleasant and sociable occasions. Pupils are friendly and polite and are keen to

talk to visitors and explain what they like about the school. Many say that they enjoy school and the recent five day activity trip to North Wales was relived with much humour.

- While the attendance of pupils is below average, some pupils have had previous experience of poor attendance prior to attending the school. The attendance of many pupils improves substantially. More recently the school has employed a family support worker and this appears to be improving attendance for the more persistent absentees.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The acting headteacher has provided excellent leadership and management in an uncertain context, due to the prolonged absence of the permanent postholder. She has introduced a number of new systems and practices to improve and develop the school, such as the establishment of the nurture group, the use of the online behaviour system and the life-skills flat.
- The acting headteacher is strongly supported by an energetic, enthusiastic and committed senior leadership team. The school has the confidence of staff, parents and the local authority.
- Plans for improving the school are comprehensive and focus on the right areas for development.
- The school has a wealth of assessment information on how well pupils achieve, but this is not in a simplified format to make it more easily understood by governors or other external people. However, the progress of all pupils including age, ethnic and disability groups, gender and class groups, and those in receipt of the pupil premium, is closely checked and assessment information shows that there is no underperformance by any group of pupils.
- The local authority has given good support to the school. It has provided additional finances to increase the capacity of the senior leadership while the headteacher has been absent. It has also provided effective additional monitoring and advice through its school improvement adviser.
- The pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up premium that the school receives have been spent on additional resources to support individual students, to provide opportunities for identified pupils to attend trips and activities, to increase the range of college courses for pupils and improve literacy skills. This money has been effectively used and has resulted in improvement to pupils' personal and social development as well as improving their confidence in reading, spelling and writing. As a result it has enabled them to keep pace with the rest of the pupils in the school.
- There is a suitable match between the pay of teachers and their performance. Regular monitoring of teaching has identified where improvements are required and weak teaching has been tackled well and stronger teaching promoted. Teachers are given clear feedback on their teaching, to give them areas for improvement. Currently, there is no whole-school view as to what outstanding teaching looks like. Some teaching is outstanding but this practice is not yet widespread enough. Staff receive plenty of training and encouragement to develop their practice and implement new ideas.
- The school offers a good range of subjects and experiences for pupils to enjoy. More-able pupils are suitably challenged through being able to take higher-level examination courses. The school makes good use of outside trips and visits to promote pupils' self confidence and their personal development.
- The safeguarding of pupils is secure and the school recently was awarded the ROSPA silver

award for occupational health and safety.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governors are well informed and knowledgeable about the school. They have a wide range of skills which are used for the benefit of the school. Regular visits and involvement in school self-evaluation activities have meant they have an accurate and thorough picture of the school. Governors have been instrumental in taking important decisions on the appointment of key staff and have steered the school through a time of uncertainty and encouraged ongoing improvements and developments. They have made sure that there is an appropriate link between salary progression of staff and their performance. They have tackled underperformance of staff with courage. They understand that teaching and pupils' achievements are good and are ambitious for these to be outstanding. They know how the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch up premium have been spent and what impact this has had. They know how well pupils do in comparison with pupils in similar schools. They are well trained and have attended training in relation to safeguarding and curriculum matters. Their knowledge has helped them to provide support and challenge to the senior leaders of the school.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	132233
<b>Local authority</b>	Sandwell
<b>Inspection number</b>	400216

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	106
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	12
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sue Gough
<b>Headteacher</b>	Debra Williams Christine Hill (Acting Headteacher)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21-22 June 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 561 6884
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