

Ounsdale High School

Ounsdale Road, Wombourne, Wolverhampton, WV5 8BJ

Inspection dates 26–27 September 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- GCSE results in English and mathematics have been inconsistent in recent years and the school's leaders have not ensured sustained improvements.
- Boys are not doing as well in English as girls and this gap has grown in recent years.
- Teaching is not yet good in too many classes.
- Marking is not always detailed enough. This means students sometimes do not always know what they need to do to improve their work, and are not able to show quick improvements.
- Teachers do not always match the work set to students' abilities. This means that some groups of students are not making good enough progress.
- School leaders do not always identify underachievement at an early enough stage to provide the necessary support.
- School leaders and governors do not always check to see whether the extra help for students supported by the pupil premium is having the intended impact.
- The governing body has not been effective in holding the school to account for its performance. Governors do not challenge senior staff strongly enough over the underachievement of groups of students.

The school has the following strengths

- Students' behaviour is good. They feel safe in the school, are polite and treat each other with respect.
- Students attend regularly and persistent absence is rare.
- The most able students are making increasingly good progress.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning. They work well with each other and on their own.
- The sixth form is good. Standards are rising. Good leadership has brought about improvements in teaching and achievement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons, some of which were jointly observed with a senior leader. Inspectors also observed senior leaders reporting back to teachers on the quality of teaching and students' achievement in lessons.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior leaders, subject leaders, a group of less experienced teachers, the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Governing Body, four groups of students and a group of parents. The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority over the telephone.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan; records of teachers' performance; the analysis of students' progress; students' work; and records relating to the behaviour and safety of students.
- Inspectors looked at the 37 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also took account of responses to an inspection questionnaire from five staff.

Inspection team

Neil Stanley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Helen Owen	Additional Inspector
Jerry Seymour	Additional Inspector
Alan Jones	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds and a very small proportion are from minority ethnic groups.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for achievement and progress at the end of Year 11.
- Small numbers of students attend courses in construction and hairdressing on other sites alongside their GCSE courses.
- Small numbers of sixth form students follow some subjects at neighbouring schools.
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium is below average. This additional funding is for particular groups of students, including those who are known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is also below average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more teaching good or outstanding by making sure that:
 - lessons are planned with a range of activities that fully involve and challenge students of all abilities and build on their writing skills
 - consistently detailed marking helps students know precisely what they need to do to improve their work so that they can make rapid gains.
- Raise standards and tackle any instances of underachievement throughout the school by:
 - using the systems for tracking pupils' progress more effectively to identify individuals and groups of students who are falling behind, particularly those supported by the pupil premium, boys in English and some students who have special educational needs
 - providing extra help so that they catch up.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management on the school's performance by making sure that:
 - leaders and managers check the impact of initiatives and evaluate their success
 - the school's policies for teaching, marking and assessment are applied consistently
 - additional financial resources are used effectively, particularly funding received through the pupil premium, so that the targeted students make accelerated progress
 - the governing body holds senior leaders to account for the performance of different groups of learners in all subjects.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- The progress of different groups of students is uneven and their attainment in subjects, including English and mathematics, has been subject to significant fluctuations in recent years. Because of this, improvements have not been sustained over a period of time.
- Students join the school in Year 7 with standards in English and mathematics that are above average. The lack of consistently good progress during their time at the school means that students do not achieve as highly as they could when they reach Year 11, although standards remain above average.
- The proportion of students gaining five or more good GCSE grades A* to C has been above the national average over recent years, apart from a marked dip in 2012. Results recovered in 2013, and attainment overall was slightly above the levels reached in 2011. School data show that, based on current progress, results in 2014 are predicted to be in line with those of 2013.
- The proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A* to C in English has been above average over recent years. However, results fell in 2013 from a high point in 2012. The proportions of students making and exceeding expected progress in English compare favourably with national figures. However, this masks the fact that girls perform significantly better than boys, and the gap in attainment has widened in recent years. Boys' writing skills are weaker than their reading because they are not given enough opportunities to develop their ideas.
- The proportions of students achieving GCSE grades A* to C in mathematics have been above average over recent years. However, results fell by 13% in 2012 and then rose by 15% in 2013. In the last three years, the proportions making and exceeding expected progress in mathematics have been broadly in line with the national average.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make uneven progress. Some teachers do not always plan activities that are closely matched to their individual needs.
- Students supported by the pupil premium have been making steadily better progress over recent years. However, the gaps in attainment in English and mathematics between these students and others in the school remain larger than found nationally. In 2012, for example, those in Year 11 were on average one GCSE grade behind the classmates in English and two grades in mathematics. Although this picture was better in 2013, the gaps are still not closing quickly enough for current students.
- The most able students are increasingly making good progress. They benefit from a range of additional activities to challenge them. In recent years, the numbers of students gaining the highest grades at GCSE has steadily improved.
- The school does not have a tradition of entering students early for GCSE, and early entry was not used in 2013. In 2012, a small group of students were entered for mathematics in January. The overwhelming majority took the examination again in June and improved their results.
- Students supported through Year 7 'catch-up' funding make expected progress in literacy and numeracy, and the gaps in attainment between these students and others in the school are closing.

- Standards in the sixth form have improved. The decline in the number of students achieving grades A* to B was reversed in 2013, with a significant increase in students achieving the highest grades. The overwhelming majority of students gain grades A* to E.
- The small number of students educated on other sites for the construction and hairdressing courses and those who take A-level courses at other sixth forms make progress in line with students who stay within the school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Most teachers show an awareness of the different groups of students in their classes, including gifted and talented students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and students supported through the pupil premium. However, in too many lessons they do not vary the activities to meet students' differing needs. As a result, the gaps in attainment between different groups of students are not closing quickly enough.
- The quality of marking across the school is inconsistent. In some subjects, especially science, students are regularly given clear guidance and have the opportunity to respond to teachers' comments and make quick improvements. However, inspectors saw too many examples of infrequent marking, targets that were not specific enough and teachers' comments that had not led to improvements in the quality of students' work.
- Teachers usually ask questions effectively in class to check individual students' understanding. Most students are enthusiastic and keen to participate. This means they enjoy their lessons. Occasionally, teachers allow the most confident students to dominate class discussions and this means the less confident students do not become involved.
- Support staff provide effective support in class. They have clear information about needs of the individual students they are supporting, and this helps them give targeted support. Where this happened during the inspection, the supported students made better progress than the others.
- In some lessons, teachers promote literacy skills well. This was evident, for example, in a history lesson on the First World War, where students were analysing and applying specific word choices to persuade target audiences. However, this is inconsistent across the school.
- Teachers set regular homework. This helps students to build on what they have learnt in class and make progress as a result.
- In the best lessons, students are challenged to think for themselves. They respond to this with maturity, working well together to develop ideas. This was evident in an English lesson on *Lord of the Flies* where higher-order thinking skills were encouraged. As a result, students were making the good progress they are capable of elsewhere.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is typically good. The students are engaged and challenged by the activities and their teachers' questions. However, students do not always have a clear enough idea about how to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- In class, students' behaviour is consistently good. They enjoy their lessons and participate enthusiastically in discussions. In group work, students work readily with all their classmates, not

just their best friends.

- Through productive relationships, students help each other to improve. They listen attentively to each other and respect each other's opinions. They share their ideas confidently in class and support each other if they are not right.
- Around the school, students' behaviour is consistently good. They move quickly and calmly to lessons. The corridors, dining hall and other areas are adorned with students' work. Despite the high numbers of students moving through the school, these pieces of work remain in pristine condition. This shows the respect students have for the school environment and their classmates' achievements.
- Students participate regularly in a wide range of social, art, music and drama opportunities. They say they are proud to represent the school in sporting competitions. They are encouraged to think about the wider world through work in supporting a range of local and national charities and the school's global links with the Comenius project.
- Students say bullying is very rare in school. They have a very good awareness of the different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, racism, sex and gender bullying and other types of harassment. Students say they are confident that teachers would take any bullying seriously, and deal with it effectively. They say they would have no hesitation in talking to a member of staff if they were worried about something.
- Students say they feel safe in the school. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe in a variety of situations, including when using the internet.
- Students' enjoyment of school is reflected in their attendance, which is above the national average. Levels of persistent absence are low and students' punctuality is good. The school takes effective measures to support its work in promoting good attendance and reducing absence.
- Students are keen to take responsibility and they say school leaders listen to them. For example, the school council has successfully campaigned for improvements to the school's outdoor areas, with a covered picnic area and landscaped lawns.
- The school has a clear approach to encouraging good behaviour and students say they understand its expectations of them. Older students say behaviour around the school and in lessons has improved significantly in recent years, and instances of misbehaviour are very rare.
- Students are keen to talk to visitors to the school. In their discussions with inspectors, they were thoughtful, mature and articulate.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs say they are well supported. They say that the 'Hub' facility has made them more confident members of the school community.
- New students say teachers and older students have supported them in their first weeks at the school. As a result, they have settled into the school quickly and feel confident.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders have not had a sustained and consistent impact on achievement in recent years. For example, the dips in GCSE results in mathematics and English in 2012 and 2013 respectively were not anticipated early enough. As a result, extra help to prevent underachievement was put in place too late for it to be effective.
- The principal is keen to develop the role of senior leaders and their responsibilities have recently changed to broaden their experiences. However, senior leaders have not been given enough time to understand their new roles. This has led to uncertainty over how to monitor systems and existing initiatives, and the rate of improvement has not been sustained as a result.
- The principal and senior leaders are working to address areas of underachievement. Although the proportion of teaching that is good or better has improved, too much teaching is not yet consistently good and the school's policies for teaching, marking and assessment are not consistently applied.
- The leadership of some subjects has changed recently and subject leaders are becoming increasingly effective in monitoring students' progress, particularly in mathematics, where master-classes stretch the most able students. In English, the school has many new ideas, for example encouraging literacy across the curriculum. However, there is no clear plan to tackle boys' underachievement in English, particularly the quality of their writing.
- The principal and senior leaders have not used the pupil premium funding effectively to make sure it supports the students for which it is intended. Leaders do not have clear ways to measure the impact of the extra support it provides. As a result, although students supported by the pupil premium are beginning to make more progress, they still do not do as well as similar students nationally.
- The school makes sure students receive appropriate independent advice to help them prepare for their next steps in education, training and employment.
- The performance of staff is well managed. The school has a fair approach to awarding pay rises for staff that is linked appropriately to pupils' achievement.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students show a good understanding of their local area and region. Through well-developed links with schools across Europe, they have a good understanding of the wider world.
- In recent years, the school has received limited support from its local authority.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. This is why the quality of teaching and students' achievement have improved in recent years.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body provides good support for school leaders when setting and monitoring budgets and planning capital projects. As a result, despite steadily falling numbers of students, the school has been able to ensure financial sustainability and improve its facilities. Governors closely monitor what is being done to reward good teachers and tackle underperformance. However, governors have been less effective in using data on the school's performance to evaluate the quality of teaching and hold leaders to account for the achievement and progress of different groups of students. For example, they have not clearly understood how the pupil

premium money is spent, and as a result they have not asked probing questions about its effectiveness. This is one reason why results have fluctuated, improvements have not been sustained and the gaps in attainment between different groups of pupils are not closing quickly enough. Although there are some effective governors, overall governors' participation is uneven and some governors are not sufficiently effective in holding leaders to account. The governing body has worked with school leaders to ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet national requirements.

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	124419
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	427115

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	991
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	156
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Westwood
Principal	Christine Brown
Date of previous school inspection	11 May 2011
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