

The Avon Valley School and Performing Arts College

Newbold Road, Newbold-on-Avon, Rugby, CV21 1EH

Inspection dates 14–15 November 2013

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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers provide lively and exciting tasks that enable students to build their learning step by step.
- Students' behaviour in lessons is good and they are keen to learn. Around the school, they are polite and welcoming, and talk positively about their school.
- The headteacher, senior team and governing body take a strong lead in driving improvement. Rigorous checks on teaching, with good training and support where it is needed, maintain the quality of classroom practice and improve achievement.
- Students' achievement is good because attainment is well below the national average when they start in Year 7 and, over time, students make good progress so that they leave with attainment broadly in line with national averages.
- The range of subjects that students follow is extensive and subjects are well matched to their individual needs.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is at the centre of the school's work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In some lessons, teachers do not give enough time for students to work independently.
- Sometimes the quality of teachers' questioning prevents students from thinking more deeply about the subject or topic being studied.
- Some teachers do not always make enough use of information about what students already know to move them on quickly with new learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 45 lessons, including nine shared observations with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors observed a school assembly, looked at samples of students' recent work and listened to several students read.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team, faculty leaders, teachers, and the Chair of the Governing Body. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of school documents, including: the school's self-evaluation; the school development plan; behaviour records; governing body documents; and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- The views of the 50 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. Inspectors also considered the views expressed in questionnaires returned by 77 school staff and a letter from a parent.

Inspection team

Steven Cartlidge, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Rosemary Barnfield	Additional Inspector
Jalil Shaikh	Additional Inspector
Paul Bartlett	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Needham	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those who speak English as an additional language, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for secondary schools, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Alternative provision at Heart of England Training, Warwickshire College, Princes Trust, TAP and Shaftesbury PAYP offers additional support to a small number of students.
- The school enters approximately a third of students for GCSE examinations in mathematics in the winter of Year 11 and all have the opportunity to resit in Year 11 to gain their highest grade.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that the quality of teaching is consistently good and increase the proportion that is outstanding, so that rates of progress rise further by:
 - making sure that teachers' checks on students' learning are used to provide harder work for students who need it
 - checking that staff questioning allows students the opportunity to think more deeply.
 - giving students time to respond to the advice given in written marking of their work
 - ensuring that teachers' explanations are not too long, so that students have more time to work independently

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students start at the school with well-below-average attainment in the basic skills of reading, writing, communication and mathematics. The headteacher and senior leaders have done a great deal since the last inspection to improve the organisation and use of assessment information to check the progress made by individuals and groups. As a result, students in Year 11, including the more-able students, achieved average levels of attainment in their GCSE courses in 2013.
- Teaching and learning in English have traditionally been a relative strength of the school. Since the last inspection, the school has built on successes in this subject to improve mathematics. Students now learn just as well in mathematics as in English, with extra resources and the appointment of new specialist staff. Class sizes have been reduced and this, too, has helped students make faster progress.
- The improved standards and rates of progress are reflected particularly in younger age groups and in English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages.
- Well-established strategies help accelerate reading. Catch-up courses are provided for the weakest readers, establishing a systematic approach and providing effective individual support throughout Key Stage 3. This support means that these students make good progress.
- Students are extremely well motivated and keen to do well in all their lessons, and this supports their positive progress. For example, in a Spanish lesson, students in Year 11 demonstrated their ability to use new vocabulary confidently and then extended their learning by justifying their opinions in Spanish.
- The school has entered students early for GCSE examinations in mathematics so they can gain their best possible grade. The school is ensuring that all students in mathematics have the opportunity to improve their results even further by offering extra tuition and homework clubs. This has been successful as students achieved their highest results in mathematics in 2013.
- Improved analysis of students' progress data and the earlier identification of students at risk of underachieving have led to improved GCSE results in science in 2013. There has been similar success in social sciences, which in this school includes history, geography and religious studies.
- The school is making very good use of its pupil premium funding. Extra staffing, one-to-one tuition and funding for additional educational resources, for example, are helping students to make good and sustained progress. As a result, the gap in English and mathematics between these students' attainment and that of their classmates has narrowed to less than a term in 2013.
- The school has an accurate system to direct support through 'catch-up' funding to underachieving students in Year 7. As a result, school data show that these students are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to other students because staff have identified students' individual needs and arranged the right additional help. Teachers and teaching assistants support students, providing challenge and encouragement and helping them with subject-specific vocabulary.

- The small number of students who study vocational and other subjects off the school site as part of their education are gaining appropriate qualifications and making good progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good. The vast majority of teaching observed during the inspection was good or better, and the school's records of leaders' checks on teaching show that this is typically the case.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Teachers provide a range of tasks that motivate their students and encourage them to want to succeed. Students are also keen to live up to the expectations of the adults around them and this helps them to make good progress. This was particularly noticeable in a dance lesson, where students in Year 8 had the opportunity to practise their dancing skills. The students gradually added more and more complex features to their routines and showed a clear understanding of the strategies needed to develop their work to reach the highest level.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work together effectively and the help they give is matched well to students' needs. This ensures the students make good progress in all subjects.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers use questioning well to check students' understanding, asking searching questions and encouraging discussion. For example, in a geography lesson, students in Year 11 worked cooperatively in pairs to develop their understanding of the changes to the population of the United Kingdom over time. They clearly enjoyed the task and responded positively to the teacher's probing questioning. Sometimes teachers do not question students' understanding deeply enough and progress is slower.
- Teachers often provide clear feedback for students during lessons on how well they are doing, but not all provide clear written feedback on how students can improve their work so that they reach their targets. Students do not have enough opportunities to respond to advice by practising their skills, correcting their mistakes or being set an additional challenge.
- In a few lessons, activities not always closely matched to the pupils' individual abilities and needs. As a result, some pupils, mainly the less-able pupils, do not understand clearly what is expected of them.
- Teachers' introductions to learning sometimes go on for too long when students are capable of moving on more quickly. This reduces the time available for independent work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are keen to learn in almost every lesson. Their behaviour during lessons is almost always good and this has a positive impact on their learning.
- Staff have created a strong anti-bullying culture throughout the school. Students say that there is almost no bullying in the school and that they are very well supported on the rare occasions it occurs. They are well informed about different forms of bullying and other aspects of safety, including internet safety.
- The school works effectively to maintain good behaviour and attendance, and there are clear procedures in place to monitor and support students who have difficulties in these areas.

- Attendance has improved steadily over the last three years and was above national averages in 2013. Leaders are effectively maintaining this position and are focusing on families who struggle to get their children to school, making clear the effect absence has on their children's progress and attainment.
- Students' work is usually neatly presented, and students take pride in themselves and their school.
- Students conduct themselves well. They are polite and courteous to visitors. They willingly talk to adults and are open about their feelings about the school. The school promotes positive relationships between students, and they get on well together.

The leadership and management are good

- Teachers and governors are ambitious for the school to do well. The headteacher provides very determined leadership, promoting a clear focus on continual improvement and offers teachers and parents a clearly articulated vision for the future. Subject leaders and other staff with leadership responsibilities are well supported and lead their areas well.
- The headteacher's rigorous analysis of pupils' progress and his accurate evaluation of the school's work provide all teachers and the governing body with a clear understanding of the school's performance. This ensures that improvement planning is sharply focused on identified weaknesses. This is seen, for example, in the successful action recently taken to raise attainment in mathematics and demonstrates the school's capacity for continued improvement.
- The leadership of teaching is good and the school places a high priority on improving teaching through good-quality training. Teachers' performance is checked and information is used from lesson observations and from information about students' progress to set teachers' targets for improvement. There is a clear understanding that decisions about pay increases will be based on the impact of teaching on students' progress.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively and has helped develop the role of the teaching assistants. Students identified as in need of additional help, including those eligible for pupil premium or Year 7 'catch up' funding, and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are well supported. The school's evaluation of its expenditure on the support provided shows that these students are making similarly good progress to their classmates.
- School leaders ensure that different groups of pupils have an equal chance to succeed, and they tackle effectively any instances of discrimination.
- The school is well resourced for performing arts. Its performing arts facilities benefit learning both in specialist areas as well as in other subjects. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very effectively promoted by a broad range of arts, drama, music, science and sports activities, as well as by visits and visitors.
- The range of subjects and topics taught promote a positive attitude to learning among students in all subjects and this leads to students achieving well. The curriculum has been carefully designed around students' interests and needs. As a result, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Students following alternative courses achieve well. Their progress is closely monitored and, as a

result, almost all students leave school for employment, education or training.

- The responses to the Parent View survey indicate that parents have positive views about the school, with a large majority saying they would recommend the school to another parent.
- The local authority is fully aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has worked well with senior leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well-informed. It challenges school leaders and holds them to account for students' achievement. It compares the school's performance with that of schools nationally. Governors also strongly support the school and its leaders. They have a deep insight into the quality of teaching and its impact on students' learning. They manage the performance of staff effectively and are rigorous in ensuring that the salary increases are justified by students' good progress and achievement. Governors check carefully on the use of additional funds from the pupil premium in improving the achievement of eligible students. Explanation and action from school leaders and managers are called for when performance does not advance as intended. The governing body oversees the management of finance and resources expertly. Governors rigorously check safeguarding practice and, as a result, safeguarding procedures meet current legal 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	125764
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	429609

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Damon Swindell
Headteacher	Don O'Neill
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2011
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