

Wednesfield High School, A Specialist Engineering College

Lichfield Road, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, WV11 3ES

Inspection dates 11–12 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Although overall attainment rose in 2013, it has been consistently low in English, mathematics and science. Students' progress is too slow, particularly in mathematics.
- The gap in attainment and progress between students who are eligible for additional pupil premium funding and other students is too large and shows no sign of narrowing.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics is inadequate. In other subjects, teaching is not consistently good.
- Some teachers do not plan tasks that sufficiently meet students' differing needs, particularly for those of the highest ability who sometimes find the work too easy. The pace of learning is sometimes slow.
- The sixth form requires improvement. The 16–19 study programme has resulted in rising achievement, but it is not yet good.
- The marking of students' work is variable, so students do not always know how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.
- The leadership of mathematics is inadequate. The assessments made of students' achievements in the subject are inaccurate.
- Leaders do not have a clear understanding of how well the school is doing, and are too generous in their evaluation. They do not analyse performance data with sufficient rigour to identify or tackle areas of weakness. They have not recognised that groups of students are underachieving.
- The governing body is not effective in challenging the school's leaders. Governors are insufficiently aware of students' progress or the impact of pupil premium funding.
- Leaders are not holding staff sufficiently to account for the progress that students make.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has established an harmonious environment where staff and students feel valued. Students say that they feel safe and well cared for.
- Students behave well in lessons and around the school. They show pride in the school and are polite, courteous and keen to learn.
- Achievement in the well-resourced engineering specialism is particularly good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 37 lessons, 12 of which were seen together with one of the school’s senior leaders. They also made a number of further short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with students, governors, a representative of the local authority and staff, including subject leaders.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at policies, the school’s own assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and its development planning, minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of lesson observations, information about students’ progress, safeguarding documents, and samples of students’ work.
- The views of the 12 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, together with the school’s own survey of the views of parents and carers. Inspectors also took account of 55 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Mary Davis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Davinder Dosanjh

Additional Inspector

Sa’ad Khaldi

Additional Inspector

Christopher Crouch

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- 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 from minority ethnic heritages is above average, with the largest group being of Indian origin. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is also above average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care, known to be eligible for free school meals, is above the national average.
- Twenty-four students from Years 9 to 11 follow a variety of full- or part-time alternative courses at the Orchard Centre, MMAP (Arts), Walsall College, Second Chances, Shepwell, Timkin and Wolverhampton College.
- The school meets the current government floor standards for secondary schools, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- In 2010, the school took in students from Years 9 to 11 from a closing neighbouring school, many of whom had behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The school runs a breakfast club every morning, provided free to students eligible for the pupil premium.
- The sixth form is in a consortium with Coppice Performing Arts School.
- The school's move to new purpose-built accommodation was completed in February 2013.
- Over the past two years there has been a significant turnover in staffing.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so it is consistently at least good, by ensuring that teachers:
 - always plan engaging activities and prepare resources that are closely matched to students' differing abilities and needs, particularly to challenge those of the highest ability
 - frequently evaluate the progress made by students during a lesson
 - quickly move students on in their learning once they show understanding, and provide support for those who need it, so that a good pace of learning is maintained and no time is wasted
 - inform students clearly through written marking how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve
 - give students opportunities to respond to advice by attempting a new challenge or practising skills, so they can reach and exceed their targets.
- In mathematics, make sure all students make good or better progress in lessons, so that attainment rises to at least national averages, by:
 - improving the quality of teaching so it is consistently good or outstanding

- securing effective leadership of the department
 - ensuring that assessments of students' work and progress are accurate.
- Ensure that teaching in the sixth form is consistently at least good and the courses provided closely match students' needs, so they achieve equally well in all subjects.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, ensuring that:
- rigorous self-evaluation leads to prompt identification of areas of weakness, and fast and appropriate action is taken to address them
 - leaders, including governors, evaluate more rigorously the impact of pupil premium funding so that the gap in achievement between this group and their peers is rapidly closed
 - governors provide effective challenge for the school's leaders, checking on levels of progress and comparing them to national levels
 - teachers and leaders at all levels are fully held to account for their students' progress by linking pay rises and promotion more closely to performance.

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 governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Achievement over the last two years in mathematics, a key subject, has been inadequate. Evidence seen during the inspection indicates that this is unlikely to improve, because teaching in this subject is not good enough.
- Students have typically entered the school in Year 7 with below-average levels in the basic skills of reading, writing, communication and mathematics. In the last two years, the intake has been broadly average. Over the last three years, the proportion of students gaining five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics at the end of Year 11 has been erratic, falling in 2012 to well below average but rising in 2013 to close to national levels.
- Attainment in English, mathematics and science has been consistently below average, as has the proportion of students gaining the highest grades in many subjects. The school no longer enters students for mathematics GCSE prior to Year 11; all are now entered during their final year.
- While the proportion of students making expected progress in English improved slightly in 2013 to broadly average, the proportion exceeding expected progress was still well below average. Progress in mathematics has been consistently well below average. Leaders in science have recently changed the choice of courses in this subject, and during the inspection students observed were making good progress in this subject.
- Students from White British backgrounds make slower progress than those of other ethnic backgrounds. Those who speak English as an additional language made good progress in 2013.
- Pupil premium funding is not having the impact it should. It is used to include eligible students in trips and after-school clubs and to provide support for learning, such as mentoring for students in Year 11 and catch-up classes. It also supports students' well-being through, for example, the breakfast club. However, the attainment of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below that achieved by this group nationally in English and mathematics. In 2013, their average GCSE score was more than a grade lower than that of their classmates. The gaps in progress rates in English and mathematics almost doubled from 2012 to 2013, particularly for those of highest and lowest ability, and show no sign of closing.
- Students enter the sixth form with below-average qualifications. A-level passes have risen over the last three years, although there was a dip in 2012. In 2013, there was a 100% pass rate, although the proportion of students gaining the highest grades declined. Work-related courses are a notable strength. In 2013 all students taking engineering courses at A level and as a work-related course were successful. This led in many cases to apprenticeships or further study. Most students retaking GCSE in English gained at least a grade C. Progress varies between different subjects, particularly at AS level.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are supported well, and those on school action are currently making better progress than their peers. They benefit from being taught in small groups, enabling them to achieve well. Students who joined the school in Key Stage 4 with behavioural difficulties are also supported well and their progress is now rising.
- Strategies are in place to help to accelerate students' progress in reading. A variety of catch-up courses and one-to-one tuition are provided for the weakest readers. A systematic approach is beginning to be established. Effective support is provided, including that by members of the sixth form. This results in most of these students making good progress in reading. Students are

often encouraged to read out loud and, in most subjects, teachers place a strong focus on the use of subject-specific technical vocabulary.

- Year 7 catch-up funding supports students who enter the school with weak literacy and numeracy skills to make the transition to secondary school by providing support that includes promoting learning and life skills through, for example, drama therapy. This is enabling them to build their self-confidence and is improving their basic skills.
- Students following alternative courses achieve well. The active and appropriate courses closely match their needs and interests.
- Sixth form students act as good role models in their attitudes to learning. They can be seen using their non-lesson time productively in the school's open spaces, approaching their studies conscientiously.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Most of the teaching observed during the inspection in mathematics was less than good, and nearly half was inadequate. Therefore, teaching overall is judged to be inadequate. The quality of teaching varies in all subjects, although the majority observed, including in the sixth form, was good, and there was some outstanding practice.
- Where teaching is less than good, teachers expect the whole class to undertake the same task, and this sometimes results in students doing something that they can already do easily, or that they find too difficult. These tasks are sometimes mundane or repetitive. Time is often wasted and the most able students have to wait for others to finish before they can move on to something new. Teachers do not check frequently enough on how well individual students are learning, so they can move them on once they show that they understand.
- Marking of work is often superficial and sometimes non-existent. Although students know their targets and are sometimes provided with assessment criteria, teachers do not consistently provide advice on how to reach these targets or how to do even better, and do not set further challenges. Opportunities are being missed to encourage students to respond to advice by correcting or editing their work or answering a new question.
- In the best lessons, teachers make learning fun by introducing an element of challenge and competition. In these lessons, teachers provide opportunities for students to work collaboratively, developing their teamwork and leadership skills. In a lesson observed where the teaching was outstanding, students were absorbed in deep discussion about the connection between words. Here, the teacher, asked pertinent questions to probe their understanding further.
- Most teachers take opportunities to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by, for example, reflecting on world issues or, in a music lesson, discussing how to make their keyboard performances more musical.
- Students enjoy their learning and are keen to do well because constant encouragement from adults generates increased self-confidence, rising aspirations and positive attitudes to learning. For example, in an English lesson in a low-ability set in Year 10, students showed great enthusiasm for their set text, *Of Mice and Men*, excitedly explaining to a student who had been absent how the story ended. They discussed the contrasting characters confidently as a result of supportive and encouraging questioning from their teacher.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students of all ages told inspectors that behaviour in lessons is good and their learning is rarely disrupted. When, very occasionally, this happens because an individual student has a problem in controlling their behaviour, adults deal with it effectively and swiftly. All staff and most parents agree that behaviour is good.
- Leaders and teachers demonstrate high expectations of behaviour, and students show a high level of respect for others and for the school environment. Warm and supportive relationships ensure that students feel safe and secure. All adults greet students cheerfully by name, promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere throughout the school.
- Students express pride in the inspirational new building and their gratitude for the wealth of facilities. Behaviour in corridors and in the dining hall is calm and well ordered. They consistently display positive attitudes in their lessons, asking questions and trying their best even when tasks are not sufficiently interesting or challenging.
- Students told inspectors that the school keeps them safe, that bullying is rare and that the school will not tolerate racism or other discrimination. They have a good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take, including cyber-bullying, and say that adults support them well, as do 'peer-mentors', so there is always someone they can turn to.
- Sixth form students take an active role in the school, providing support for younger students and organising activities. They are encouraged to undertake roles as ambassadors for the school, developing leadership and teamwork skills. Behaviour and safety in the sixth form are good.
- Exclusions have been high in the past, a result of the school insisting on high standards of behaviour from those who joined the school during Key Stage 4 with behavioural issues. They have now declined. Students understand this sanction and that the school shows zero tolerance for bad behaviour.
- The school works hard to promote the importance of good attendance and provides a wealth of support to families facing challenging circumstances to improve attendance levels. New staff, including a safeguarding officer, have been recently appointed to address previously high persistent absence rates. As a result, attendance rates have risen and are currently above average. The attendance and well-being of students following alternative off-site courses are checked frequently.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Although leaders analyse performance data to identify which individual students require additional support, they have failed to identify when different groups of students have fallen behind others and, therefore, to ensure equality of opportunity for all groups. For example, they had not identified that the achievement gap between those eligible for the pupil premium and other students, which was already wide in 2012, had widened further in 2013. Neither this nor the underperformance of students in mathematics were recognised in the school's self-evaluation, which was too generous in all areas and lacking rigour.
- The leadership of mathematics is inadequate. Leaders have not ensured that assessment practices within the department are secure. During the inspection, conflicting performance data was provided for inspectors, and assessments seen in students' books were inaccurate.

- Leaders have, in the past, taken robust action to raise the quality of teaching and to strengthen the leadership of subjects where attainment has been low. Leaders regularly check on teaching by dropping into lessons every day to supplement more formal lesson observations. Where teaching has been judged to require improvement, however, action taken to address weaknesses has sometimes been too slow and lacking in rigour.
- The headteacher has successfully established a warm and positive learning environment. She is constantly visible around the school and her persistent focus on encouraging staff and students and promoting their well-being has resulted in a harmonious and welcoming atmosphere where all feel valued. Many staff commented on how they enjoy working at the school.
- External advice has been sought to ensure the effectiveness of monitoring procedures and to support subject leaders in ensuring good teaching within their areas of responsibility. Partnership between departments is encouraged to enable good practice to be shared, and teachers are keen to support each other. As a result, the quality of teaching in some areas has improved. Teaching observed in science and English during the inspection was good and sometimes outstanding, although leaders recognise that teachers in these subjects sometimes miss opportunities to fully stretch students of the highest ability.
- The courses that students follow are flexible to meet their individual needs, and the school's engineering specialism is a particular strength. This has enabled strong partnerships to be developed with industry and RAF Cosford, providing opportunities for further education and apprenticeships. Students value the good careers guidance provided through these partnerships. They speak appreciatively of the wide range of enrichment activities provided for them, including those in sport.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form require improvement. Sixth form courses include a range of work-related and academic courses and the opportunity to retake GCSEs in English and mathematics. Sixth form leaders have been quick to evaluate the success of this range and to withdraw courses if they fail to meet students' needs. However, there is a lack of rigour here, too, in the analysis of performance and in the monitoring of teaching quality. Leaders were unable to provide inspectors with recent sixth form results in GCSE mathematics.
- Parents are provided with appropriate information through the website and through parents' evenings. Families facing challenging circumstances are closely supported.
- The local authority has provided regular support, and has raised concerns with the school's leaders regarding the slow progress in English and mathematics. Specialist support has been provided to raise the quality of teaching in modern foreign languages, following a review of this subject.
- The school should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Although governors are supportive, they have an insufficient understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are provided with information about the school's performance, but do not challenge leaders robustly by holding them to account for raising achievement and the quality of teaching. They have focused too much on headline attainment figures, rather than students' progress and how it compares to national levels. Although they know how the pupil premium is spent, they are not aware of its lack of impact on closing the gap. They are aware of the procedures to manage teachers' performance, but are not ensuring that salary progression is linked sufficiently to students' progress. They have ensured

that safeguarding procedures meet current 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	104392
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	427140

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

Type of school	Secondary
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	875
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Chalk
Headteacher	Claire Evans
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2010
Telephone number	01902 558222
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