

Coppice Performing Arts School

Ecclestone Road, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, WV11 2QE

Inspection dates 22–23 January 2014

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		Requires improvement	3
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

- Results in mathematics and science remain below average. Not enough students are making rapid progress in these subjects.
- Too much teaching still requires improvement. There is not enough good teaching to raise achievement to consistently good, especially for the most able.
- Teaching sometimes lacks challenge. In some lessons, teachers do not use the information they have to make sure that the work given to students is at the right level of difficulty.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Results are not yet high enough to represent good progress in A and AS levels. However, the programmes that students study are now well chosen.
- Marking is not always good enough to ensure that students know how to improve their work.
- Teachers do not consistently follow up on their marking to check that students have improved their knowledge or understanding.
- Students do not use their writing skills well enough in different subjects. The development of writing still needs to be improved.
- Time is sometimes wasted in lessons as students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are not always as good as they should be.
- Subject leaders are not rigorous enough in frequently checking the quality of teaching and its impact on all students' learning. This means they are not all effective enough in improving students' rates of progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Students are taught well in drama, dance and music and so their achievement in these subjects is good.
- Achievement is improving quickly in English, modern foreign languages and humanities.
- The gap between the performance of students entitled to free school meals and their peers is narrowing in English.
- Attendance rates have improved rapidly and are now above national averages.
- Students enjoy school and say they feel safe in school. Bullying is dealt with well.
- Determined leadership from the current headteacher and senior staff has resulted in poor teaching and leadership being addressed.
- Governors are able and caring. They know how well the school is doing and challenge leaders to do better.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and are generally well pleased with its work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 35 lessons, of which eight were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, they made a number of shorter visits to lessons and tutorial sessions.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the school’s leaders and managers, and groups of staff.
- Members of the inspection team held meetings with four groups of students, representing all age groups in the school. Discussions also took place with students informally.
- Additional meetings were held with the Chair and other members of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work and scrutinised documents, including the school’s own evaluation of how well it is doing, the school improvement plan and statistical information about students’ achievement, attendance and exclusions.
- There were 48 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 45 responses to the staff questionnaires. Additional comments were received from parents, and consideration was given to the views expressed by families in response to the school’s own surveys completed by almost 450 parents and approximately 60 sixth form students.

Inspection team

Robert Ridout, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Louise Lee	Additional Inspector
Helen Booth	Additional Inspector
Alan Jones	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school with a sixth form and specialist status for the performing arts.
- It serves a wide area of Wolverhampton.
- Over 90% of the students are from White British, Irish or other White or mixed White backgrounds. The proportion from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is typical for the average school in England. The pupil premium is additional funding given to the school for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority, and those with a parent in the armed services.
- The proportion of disabled students or those who have special educational needs supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The proportion of students supported by school action is well below average.
- A very small number of students are enrolled on alternative programmes operated by Wolverhampton College and the Orchard Centre.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is typically good or better by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have high expectations of all students and challenge them with work at the right level of difficulty
 - provide effective feedback to students through their marking
 - check that students have acted upon comments made in marking and improved their knowledge and understanding of the work.
- Raise achievement in Key Stages 3 and 4 in mathematics and science by:
 - ensuring that more-able students are set hard enough work
 - in mathematics, closely tracking the impact of help received by students supported through the pupil premium, and taking improvement action rapidly where needed.
- Build on the improving picture in the sixth form so more students make good progress in A-level and AS-level subjects, by closely checking on individuals and taking action where needed.
- Improve behaviour by making consistent use of the behaviour policy and ensuring that students take more responsibility for their actions and the way they approach learning.
- Ensure that all subject leaders:
 - are fully effective in evaluating teaching and checking on students' work and progress, using the results to plan improvements and evaluating the impact of improvements made
 - further develop the work in their subject to better support writing skills.

An external review of 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 requires improvement

- There are a number of subjects where students do not make good progress. Though progress is rapid in some subjects, and courses that count as equivalent to GCSEs raise overall scores, these mask significantly slower progress in mathematics and science. In mathematics, more-able students and those receiving support through the pupil premium make slower progress than others. In science, progress is not rapid enough because expectations are not high enough for the more able to make good progress.
- Students in the current and the previous Year 11 joined the school with skills that were significantly below average. In 2013, 60% of students gained five or more GCSEs at A* to C including English and mathematics. Results were broadly in line with the national averages in both 2012 and 2013.
- Students make better progress in English than in mathematics and science. In English, current students are making faster progress from their individual starting points than in the past.
- Evidence gathered during the inspection from robust data provided by the school, observations of teaching, scrutiny of students' books and discussions with students shows that progress is accelerating in many subjects but is still not yet consistently good.
- Students who are disabled or who have special educational needs make progress similar to other students. Students who are currently in the school supported at school action plus are making good progress. This is because of the additional lessons, coaching, mentoring and targeted support they receive.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium have narrowed the progress gap when compared to similar groups nationally. In 2013, these students made about the same progress in English as their peers in the school, and similar proportions secured five or more GCSEs at A* to C including English and mathematics. However, not enough has been done to raise rates of progress in mathematics. The gap in attainment in both English and mathematics has narrowed. The difference in English halved between 2012 and 2013, to now just over one half of a grade, while the difference in mathematics has fallen to just over one full grade. This can be attributed to better teaching and targeted support.
- A significant number of students join the school with weak reading skills and are supported well using Year 7 'catch up' funding. A good range of support, including a whole-school focus on support for reading in lessons and during tutorial time, is securing good improvements in the reading ages of students during their first year at the school.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement because results are not yet consistently good or better across all subjects, including sociology and psychology. Over recent years, standards at both A and AS levels have started to improve, so no subjects are now below their national average. School data suggests standards are continuing to rise. Attainment is particularly strong in English, music and physics, in addition to the BTEC business and BTEC health and social care courses.
- A very small number of students have extended experience in the work place and attend alternative courses and provision away from the school site. Their progress and attendance has improved and is now good because they are closely monitored and supported and follow courses

that both interest and engage them more fully.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because, although improving, not enough is good or outstanding.
- Too many inconsistencies remain across different subjects and year groups. Information held on students is not always used well enough to make sure that the work they get, including homework, is at the right level. This is particularly true for the most-able groups of students, who sometimes go unchallenged and, as a result, do not achieve their best.
- Although most work is marked regularly, the practice adopted by teachers varies considerably both across and within subjects. When good practice is consistent, such as in English, drama and dance, students are clearly aware of how well they are doing and how to improve. In English, one strategy that is working is that students often mark and discuss each other's work before making improvements. Some teachers follow up students' corrections to check their grasp of ideas before moving on. However, sometimes, teachers are not sure whether students have responded to advice, and this can lead to the unnecessary repetition of work and slower progress.
- Students who talked to inspectors said that they learn best when they are able to discuss, question and apply what they have come across in their lessons to new, real-life problems and situations drawn from examples around the world. This sort of work was seen in some of the good and better lessons.
- Classroom assistants are used effectively in most lessons to support disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and those who sometimes find it hard to maintain concentration or good behaviour. Where teachers plan their work with the teaching assistants, this results in students receiving the specific support they need, engaging positively with their learning and achieving well.
- Students appreciate the commitment of teachers in supporting their learning outside the classroom, through additional study and support programmes before, during and after school.
- Teachers pose well-targeted questions for students to answer during class discussions. They also support the development of literacy skills, particularly reading. They often emphasise key words and many check and correct spelling, grammar and punctuation. However, the development of writing skills in subjects other than English is patchy. Few departments have undertaken a check of planning to ensure that their approach provides coherent support for the development of strong writing skills.
- The greatest improvement to teaching has been in English, where some is now outstanding. This has had an impact on achievement, so more students are making good progress than at the time of the previous inspection. Inspectors observed good maths teaching but it is too early to see the impact of this on results.
- Teaching is strongest in the sixth form because teachers display good levels of subject knowledge and many better support individuals and groups of students to develop an improved understanding of their work. As a result, standards are rising and more students are securing good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Students do not always take responsibility for their own conduct or for their own learning behaviour in or out of the classroom to help them make good progress.
- Most students settle well and show good attitudes to learning in lessons that interest, challenge and engage them. However, though few disrupt learning, some students lose interest and chat amongst themselves rather than working.
- The majority of students move around the school in a sensible way but, again, there are a small number who make noise and disturb the learning of others. A little litter was seen about the building.
- Some staff expressed concerns about this sort of behaviour and, particularly the inconsistent way in which they feel it is managed within the school. School leaders are working with staff to ensure behaviour is managed consistently. Most parents responding to the online survey, Parent View, and to the school's own recent surveys believe that behaviour is well managed.
- The percentage of exclusions was below the national average last year because of raised expectations of behaviour within the school. The number of exclusions continues to decline.
- Attendance has risen over the last three years as a result of the determined efforts of the school and robust intervention strategies put in place to improve it. For the first time in three years, attendance at the school is now above the national average for secondary schools.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students are aware of the dangers of the internet and of other potential threats to themselves from outside the school. They report that they feel safe.
- Students have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying and express confidence that the school will deal effectively with any incidents. The work of the more senior students within the mixed-age tutor groups has contributed significantly to the good relationships that now exist within the school and has proved extremely popular amongst students.
- Sixth form students act as good role models and set a good example to their younger peers. They adopt good attitudes towards their work, although some have yet to acquire the skills needed to manage their own time effectively.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity, positive relationships and ensures that discrimination of any type is not tolerated.
- Parents and staff confirm the views expressed by students and believe the school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. The large majority of parents would recommend the school to other families.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because subject leadership is not yet securely good. Though new leaders are now in post, the progress of students in mathematics and science has been too slow and standards have not risen enough. New initiatives, such as a changed curriculum at Key Stage 3, have not yet had the time to have a positive impact on students'

attainment.

- The school and local authority's overall evaluation of the school's current position gives too much attention to headline figures which present a better picture of progress and attainment than is the actual case. Despite this, the headteacher and the senior leadership team have a good grasp of the key issues that the school has to address, including the slower progress in mathematics and science. They have made some good strategic decisions based on their analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses, which have included staff and responsibility changes.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have successfully established a culture in which teaching is improving and staff are focused on raising achievement. The school's actions have had demonstrable impact in improvements in English and the sixth form, and in better attendance.
- The system for performance management is linked to the school's pay policy. Staff are clear about their roles, responsibilities and the expectations of senior leaders. The headteacher has worked with governors to tackle underperformance robustly and used capability procedures when required. Teachers' professional training is provided through a variety of in-house and external provision, and is good.
- A number of middle leaders, especially in the core subjects, are new to role. The subject leader for mathematics has made a good start in strengthening the department's work. However, in mathematics, science and some other subjects, middle managers have not in the past established a rigorous or sufficiently frequent enough cycle of checks and action to improve. Not all subject leaders are consistently effective in:
 - checking on the written work of students and their learning in lessons
 - using this information to plan the next steps in improving teaching and student achievement
 - evaluating the impact of their actions on students' work.
- The school has an accurate view of the teaching currently taking place in lessons. The feedback leaders give to teachers is rightly about classroom practice, but judgements about teaching do not take full account of the progress of the students in the room. Leaders do not fully consider what students have achieved since being with the teacher.
- The curriculum has been reviewed and a more appropriate programme is now planned for students with a good balance between GCSE and vocational courses. The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- In the sixth form, there is already a good range of courses offered. In the past, entry requirements to the sixth form have not been as high as they should have been. This has been remedied and students now receive guidance to ensure that they follow courses that better match their abilities and career choice.
- The progress of sixth form students has not been checked closely enough. Nor has quick enough action been taken in subjects which are consistently underperforming.
- The school offers a range of enrichment and community programmes which promote the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The performing arts specialism makes a significant contribution in this respect. Students regularly appear at the Grand Theatre in Wolverhampton, and the school has strong national links including with the Northern School for Contemporary Dance. It is a hub for showcasing and developing talent with its Dance Troupe, who are known for some of their national performances. Students learn to value diversity and the school promotes equal opportunities and tolerance through the many activities offered.

- The school has worked closely with its local partners and has made good use of external support both to improve its provision and develop its leadership. The local authority has provided support to help develop the school's ability to manage some of the challenges it has faced in addressing underachievement in some of its core subjects.

- Safeguarding arrangements are well established and comply fully with requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- In the past, governors have not concentrated on students' achievement or actively involved themselves in the analysis and evaluation of the data regarding achievement but instead have tended to accept the information presented to them. As a result, they took too long to ensure that underachievement was addressed. This is no longer the case. Governance is now effective. Governors are regular visitors to the school and provide support and challenge to senior leaders. As a result, the governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and of those areas that require improvement.
- Governors are aware of the links between students' achievement and teachers' salary progression. They now ask more searching questions of leaders in relation to the school's performance. They are aware of the issues there have been in mathematics and science, and have supported the headteacher in addressing issues of poor teaching and leadership. They recognise that performance in these key areas is still not good but have established strategies to raise achievement in both.

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	104390
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	413391

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	922
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bill Brisco
Headteacher	Janice Fletcher
Date of previous school inspection	20 November 2008
Telephone number	01902 558500
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