

Aldridge School - A Science College

Tynings Lane, Walsall, WS9 OBG

Inspection dates

21–22 November 2012

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory | 3 |
| | 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.

- There has been a sharp increase in the proportion of students gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE, including in English and mathematics. The proportion of students obtaining the highest A* to A grades has also shown a significant improvement. Standards are well above average.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Marking consistently gives good advice to students about how to improve their work.
- Students behave well around the school and in lessons. They are respectful and polite. Students enjoy school and feel very safe.
- Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding is good. They are provided with many musical and sporting opportunities and international links.
- Leadership and management at all levels are driving the school forward with clear direction and purpose. Hence achievement is improving strongly. There are rigorous systems for checking the work of the school, including the quality of teaching. Training for staff and support programmes are improving students' learning and progress.
- Governors bring a wide range of experience and skills to the role. They know the school well and provide good challenge and support to the school.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress and the majority move on to higher education. Very effective leadership has led to significant improvements since the previous inspection in many aspects of the sixth form's work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is a small minority of teaching which requires improvement and not enough teaching is yet outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 57 lessons taught by 56 staff. Of these, 11 were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors held discussions with students, senior and middle leaders and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of 54 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the results from the school's own survey with parents and carers.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including improvement plans, safeguarding documentation, the school's self-evaluation, and data used to monitor how well the school is doing and the progress students are making.

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Davinder Dosanjh, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Ingrid Abrahams | Additional Inspector |
| Babrul Matin | Additional Inspector |
| Glenn Mayoh | Additional Inspector |
| Mark Shenton | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- This is larger than the average sized secondary school.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds, although a number of different minority ethnic groups are represented at the school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding) is lower than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special education needs is below average.
- About 18 students attend off site, work experience programmes, work-based training or courses at a local further education college; these are either part time or full time.
- The school has a specialism in science.
- In 2012, the school exceeded the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching and reduce the small minority of teaching that requires improvement by:
 - ensuring learning in lessons attracts and motivates students' interest straight away so students begin to learn more quickly
 - reducing the amount of time teachers spend talking so students are more actively involved in lessons and have more opportunities to work by themselves
 - using questioning to encourage more students to take part in discussions
 - planning questions which stretch and challenge students' knowledge and understanding about the subject in hand.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students make good progress. They enter the school working at above average levels. By the time they leave in Year 11 standards are well above average. The school has concentrated on improving attainment in mathematics and science which was lower than that in English. Both subjects showed significant improvements in 2012.
- The achievement of boys and of disabled students and those with special educational needs is rising rapidly. As a result, the gap between them and other students is closing.
- The additional pupil premium funding is being used well to provide booster classes, a homework club and more one-to-one support. This has led to an improvement in GCSE results for pupils who are eligible for free school meals and ensures all students achieve well and leave with qualifications. Students eligible for free school meals have made up considerable ground so that their attainment is now much closer to that of other students.
- The small number of students who study off site achieve well in a range of subjects and in developing a range of personal skills.
- Additional adults provide good support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. In addition, well-structured, small-group support for reading and writing is leading to good improvements. All students are encouraged to read widely in Years 7 and 8 with very good support from the library staff to check the variety of books students are reading. Lessons observed during the 'Readathon' showed students to be highly engaged in their reading and students read confidently.
- The policy of entering students early for GCSE examinations is carefully thought out. Students start GCSE courses in Year 9 because the school considers them to be ready. The steep rise in the proportion of students achieving A* to A grades at GCSE indicates the school is stretching its most able students.
- Students enjoy their learning and are well prepared for the next steps of education, work or training.
- In the sixth form, standards have risen since the previous inspection. While the progress made by students is good overall, there is some variation across different subjects. Large numbers of students take mathematics and science subjects, which reflects the strength of the specialism throughout the school.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Expectations for behaviour and achievement are high. This ensures that in the majority of lessons students get on well with their work. In the outstanding lessons observed, students were motivated to learn quickly and the teachers excited and challenged students so they made exceptional progress.
- Teachers plan lessons well, taking into account the different abilities and needs of students. They explain the purpose of learning and often demonstrate examples of good answers or skills so students know what is expected of them.
- All lessons have a strong focus on developing appropriate language and key terminology for the subject. Most teachers check regularly that students are learning well during the lesson.
- Marking is good and consistent across the school. There is often high-quality advice about how students can make further progress. Students say they like the 'yellow sticker system' used by teachers in their books and folders, which tells them what they have to do to improve. There were, however, few examples of marking picking up errors in spelling, grammar or punctuation.
- Students' spiritual, moral social and cultural understanding is good. Teachers make the most of opportunities for students to reflect on moral issues and cultural differences. Lessons provide many good opportunities for students to work together in groups and to lead presentations to

the class.

- There is a small minority of teaching which requires improvement. In these lessons, teachers talk for too long, which slows the learning of students because they are required to listen for too long without being actively involved in the lesson or having the opportunity to work by themselves. Questioning is often focused too narrowly on students who are keen to give answers and the questioning does not always challenge students to think more deeply about what they know or are learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Students clearly enjoy school and they are courteous around the site. Relationships between students and between students and staff are good. The school is an orderly and harmonious community. Minor disruptions in lessons are rare. Students treat the school building with respect.
- Students feel very safe in school. They say bullying is uncommon but if it does occur it is dealt with very effectively by staff. Students have a good understanding about the dangers of the internet, social networking sites and cyber bullying. They know how to keep themselves safe in practical lessons. Form time and assemblies provide a good structure for students to cover aspects of how to stay safe and how to respond to risk.
- Attendance has continued to improve and is above average for all groups of students, apart from those known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has already allocated additional support to encourage better attendance for these students. Systems for making checks on attendance and behaviour are robust. Exclusion rates are low. The school has a strong emphasis on rewarding good behaviour.
- Parents and carers agree that the school manages behaviour well and keeps their children safe.
- The school is thorough in taking steps to ensure the safety and well-being of students.

The leadership and management

are good

- The school has made good progress since its last inspection in raising standards, particularly the number of students achieving high grades, and in increasing the number of good lessons. This indicates plans have been successful and the school knows the areas in which it needs to continue to improve.
- At the core of the school's continuous journey of improvement are highly effective leadership and management. The headteacher provides strong leadership and he is ably supported by senior staff. Senior leaders and governors have raised the quality of the work of subject leaders and have successfully tackled weaknesses in subject areas.
- Comprehensive systems are in place to check on students' progress and any underachievement is quickly identified. This leads to appropriate support and intervention.
- Senior leaders have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching. Well-focused training and support for weaker teachers is improving teachers' skills. There are opportunities to share good practice and learn from others.
- The management of teachers' performance is rigorous. It takes account of students' achievement and enables leaders to tackle weaker teaching. Members of staff are not given salary rises if their performance does not justify it.
- The curriculum meets students' needs and abilities. There is scope for flexibility and matching the curriculum to individual needs, hence a small number of students are educated off site. The curriculum plays a key role in the rise in attendance and in helping students make good progress. In the sixth form, the number of students completing courses is high and well above

average.

- The range of enrichment opportunities is very broad and makes a valuable contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The music scholarship programme enables talented musicians to further enhance their passion for the subject with an exciting range of events and concerts.

■ **The governance of the school**

- The governing body supports the school in its work and brings a wide range of skills and expertise to the role. Governors are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and know how well students are achieving. They have a good understanding of data and are well aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are regular visitors to the school. Governors have undertaken appropriate training to fulfil their roles and hold the school to account for the achievement of students. They provide challenge in ensuring the quality of teaching is good or better and ask critical questions about underperformance. Governors are involved in performance management arrangements, pay awards, promotion and restructuring issues. The governing body has good financial checks and controls in place. Additional pupil premium funding is allocated carefully to ensure that pupils who need extra help to learn receive it. Governors confirmed that this provision made a notable difference to GCSE results in 2012.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 137974 |
| Local authority | Walsall |
| Inspection number | 406691 |

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

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| Type of school | Academy converter |
| School category | Foundation |
| 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 | 1,485 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 197 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Keith Holland |
| Headteacher | David Mountney |
| Date of previous school inspection | 17 November 2010 |
| Telephone number | 01922 743988 |
| Fax number | 01992 740119 |
| Email address | postbox@aldridge.walsall.sch.uk |

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