

Wolverley CofE Secondary School

Blakeshall Lane, Wolverley, Kidderminster DY11 5XQ

Inspection dates	22–23 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Firm and insightful leadership has energised staff and improved the standard of education. High-quality professional development ensures that teachers are committed to continually improving their practice and driving up standards.
- Good teaching is characterised by high expectations and instilling in pupils the attitudes, knowledge and skills they require to make progress. Teachers ensure the majority of current pupils make good gains in their learning, especially at key stages 3 and 4.
- The school works well with other secondary and primary schools to accelerate current standards and ensure they are sustainable, including at transition from Year 6 to 7.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.
- The gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others closed in 2015 and are now closing even more rapidly.
- Pupils behave well in and around the school. Their positive relationships with each other and their teachers support engaging and effective learning.
- Pupils, parents and staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school's improvement since the last inspection.
- Effective governance has been pivotal to the school's development. The capacity for further improvement has been secured.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards in the sixth form are not yet rising rapidly. However, improving leadership has ensured that post-16 study programmes are now delivered more effectively.
- The attendance of some groups of pupils is not improving as quickly as it should.
- Pupils' numeracy skills are not as well developed as their literacy skills.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and progress in the sixth form so that outcomes improve by:
 - ensuring that assessment information is used effectively to plan learning that meets the needs of students
 - developing effective systems to check and monitor standards, irrespective of where students study.

- Continue to improve attendance by:
 - analysing patterns and trends of attendance and using this information more effectively to inform actions to secure further improvement
 - working closely with parents of those children whose attendance is poor to impress upon them their duty to ensure regular attendance.

- Improve pupils' numeracy skills by building on the effective practices in place for promoting literacy.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders, including governors, are uncompromising and resolute in their ambition for what the school can achieve and they focus continually on improving provision. They have established very high expectations of staff and pupils, who respond well to the demands placed upon them.
- Outcomes for pupils in the school are now good because leadership has a consistent emphasis upon effective teaching. Teaching is now typically good as a result.
- Leaders feel improvement has been underpinned by adherence to the school's motto: 'Ambition Unlimited'. The headteacher has created a harmonious community. The school's Christian ethos is practised daily by a focus upon care, inclusion, equality and improving the life chances of young people through high-quality teaching and learning.
- The effective and determined headteacher and senior team have a self-critical, outward-facing approach. They have sought external challenge and moderation, and acted upon advice given so that provision is now of a higher quality than at the time of the last inspection. As a result of consultation and review, leaders have identified the correct priorities and are clear about their next steps.
- Leaders are continually working to improve the school, including using a rigorous system to support and challenge teachers. Targets set for teachers are ambitious and focused on ensuring that pupils make good progress.
- Strong leadership of the sixth form is leading to improving teaching and better outcomes for students.
- A successful programme of continuing professional development has secured improvements to teaching. This is because training meets the needs of teachers at different stages of their careers. For instance, newly qualified teachers told inspectors how useful training had been for them. The training for middle leaders supports them in identifying how to improve teaching for all groups of pupils and harnessing assessment information to monitor and evaluate standards.
- Leaders have established close working partnerships with local primary schools. This ensures continuity of learning for younger pupils through reciprocal visits of staff and shared moderation of work. This focus on new assessment methods and age-related expectations is building a secure base for continued improvement. The school is aware that some teachers are less secure in understanding age-related expectations and further training is required to ensure assessment at key stage 3 is consistent.
- Leadership of teaching and learning is highly effective and has been pivotal in driving up standards. Some subject leaders are building on progress that was at, or significantly above, average in 2014 and 2015. New subject leaders were appointed in English and mathematics for this academic year and both departments have benefited from the support of a local outstanding school. As a result, middle leaders work effectively within and across departments.
- The current Year 8 is a relatively small year group and has over 60% of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities. Pupils are known as individuals and there are school and departmental strategies to support them, secure their progress and ensure that they have equal opportunities. Strategies to remove barriers to learning for these pupils have been successful, as seen in the progress in their work.
- The school's curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant. Pupils studying for GCSEs are challenged through Wolverley's 'REBACC' curriculum, which includes the subjects covered within the English Baccalaureate and religious education as part of the school's commitment to its Church of England status. Over 80% of current Year 9 pupils will follow this and, if successful, gain relevant qualifications equipping them for the next stage of their education.
- Positive outcomes indicate that the school makes effective use of its additional funding for pupils who are looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Careers education takes place from Year 7. It is successful and contributes to the positive progression routes of pupils at the end of key stage 4 and for students in the sixth form at the end of Year 13.
- The curriculum strongly supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, inspectors observed a religious education lesson where Year 7 pupils learned about different religions and how they use festivals as acts of celebration. Also, in a very effective and challenging Year 10 history lesson, pupils related intolerance in 1950s America to current discussions about immigration into Britain.
- The curriculum is enhanced with a wide programme of extra-curricular activities, many of which develop pupils' physical and emotional well-being. These activities include sport, the school's eco club, and opportunities for pupils to be involved with animal care.
- Parents, staff and pupils are enthusiastic about the differences leaders have made. A number of parents wrote to inspectors to say how pleased they are with the school. Pupils told inspectors that, in the two

years since the headteacher has been in post, it feels like a different school. Every member of staff who responded to the online survey agreed that the school has improved since the last inspection.

■ **The governance of the school**

- Governors support and challenge leaders effectively. They display a strong moral purpose in their work, with a focus upon the school’s important role in the community.
- Governors are now reflective and have acted swiftly to address issues raised at the last inspection. They have adapted their committee structure to meet school priorities and now hold the headteacher and other leaders to account well.
- Governors have made use of external organisations to support the school and are aware of recommendations made.
- Governors are fully involved in the life of the school, carrying out appropriate duties as part of their oversight. They have, for example, visited the school to evaluate the effectiveness of pupil premium money expenditure to ensure the gains made by current pupils reflect the relatively strong progress in 2015.
- Governors have oversight of staff appraisal and are aware that pay progression is clearly linked to performance in line with the requirements of the national teachers’ standards and contributions to school improvement.
- The school’s website is not compliant with requirements from the Department for Education as it does not publish all required examination outcome information; nor does it link to the Department for Education performance tables.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. A safeguarding culture permeates the organisation. All staff have been trained in the ‘Prevent’ duty (the requirement to keep pupils safe from the risks of extremism) and in child protection. This includes training to raise staff awareness of signs that a pupil is at risk and how to report concerns. Where necessary, the school works with external agencies to keep pupils safe. An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View agreed that their children are cared for well and feel safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection. This is because of a well-implemented teaching and learning strategy, an effective programme of training and strong appointments in key areas of the school since the last inspection. Partnership work with other schools has had a positive impact on pupils’ learning and progress.
- The consistent implementation of the ‘Wolverley teaching standards’ has had a very positive effect on improving teaching. These standards focus on the school’s main priorities of ensuring that work matches pupils’ abilities, quality feedback, positive dialogue and close tracking and monitoring of progress. Inspectors saw evidence of these priorities in teaching and pupils’ work, enabling many pupils to make good progress from their different starting points.
- Most teaching is now characterised by a focus on promoting good progress. High-quality questioning builds on prior knowledge and probes pupils’ understanding. Activities challenge and engage pupils’ learning. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to promote pupils’ self-confidence and self-assurance as they advise and guide them as they learn.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils’ work and this is reflected in most pupils’ books, which contain well-presented work of a high standard. Teachers give pupils time to practise the subject-specific skills needed to succeed, in line with the school’s approach to assessment. Inspectors observed this practice in sixth form lessons in which students confidently explained how the techniques and processes they were demonstrating were improving their current work and preparing them for examinations.
- Pupils’ willingness to improve their work was demonstrated through inspectors’ scrutiny of feedback given over time. Teachers’ guidance is generally accepted and followed and, in line with the school’s assessment practices, pupils are given sufficient time to reflect on and make positive adjustments to their work.
- Teaching in mathematics is effective and enables most pupils to make good progress from their starting points. Teachers use well-judged and often imaginative approaches that meet individual needs accurately. Well-directed questioning, praise and encouragement result in pupils developing a strong grasp of concepts, which are reinforced effectively when teachers relate work to examination criteria.

- In subjects other than mathematics, teachers are less confident in advising pupils on applying numeracy skills. This is not the case with literacy, where teachers consistently use the school's literacy policy across all subjects.
- Assessment in subjects across the school is accurate. For example, in English assessments are checked through moderation with a local outstanding school. Inspectors saw progress over time in many books, including analytical and descriptive skills being developed.
- Many pupils in classes are committed, hard-working and resilient. They welcome new ideas and concepts. Teachers set progress targets in all subjects and pupils could explain to inspectors what they needed to do to reach them.
- Teaching assistants typically support pupils' learning well, although there remains some inconsistency. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson the teaching assistant worked with a group of lower-ability pupils on solving problems using practical equipment. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson skilful questioning and the use of resources by the teaching assistant encouraged pupils to try and achieve their best. Where practice is not as effective, teaching assistants are less proactive during lessons.
- Positive relationships between teachers and pupils are a strength in teaching. This leads to pupils enjoying learning, as was seen in a Year 9 music lesson. Pupils were able to demonstrate appropriate degrees of skill in relation to performing extracts from various musicals either using instruments or singing.
- There are extensive opportunities to extend basic literacy skills in many subjects, including the constant reinforcement of key words. Numeracy is far less well developed and a relatively weaker aspect of teaching. Leaders have done less to promote numeracy throughout the school and this had an impact on outcomes in 2015.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and complement the work being done by teachers to improve progress.
- Students in the sixth form told inspectors how the school motto of 'Ambition Unlimited' applied to expectations of their involvement in school life.
- The most able pupils develop initiative and leadership skills as they are given opportunities to work with younger pupils.
- Pupils can explain how the school helps them make informed choices about lifestyles, keeping safe, including on the internet, and how to live cooperatively in modern Britain. They feel safe at school and their view that bullying is rare and dealt with effectively was supported by inspectors' observations and analysis of school records.
- An inspector observed a tutor group discussion about homophobia in which pupils were mature and addressed issues with sensitivity.
- Pupils explained to inspectors how they expressed their social and moral maturity through discussions on areas such as terrorism and the European Union referendum.
- Pupils demonstrate respect and tolerance of people with different beliefs and from other cultures. They explained to inspectors that being different in the school is not a problem and that any discriminatory behaviour would not be tolerated.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite and helpful. They cooperate positively with each other in class and at social times. Relationships with school staff are very positive, contributing to a harmonious community. The site is litter and graffiti free, showing pupils' respect for their school.
- Exclusions have fallen dramatically over the past three years and are now well below the national average.
- The attendance of pupils is improving and is now close to the national average. The attendance of different groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, is monitored rigorously. This has resulted in improved attendance for these groups.

- Despite these efforts, the attendance of a number of pupils has not improved. Leaders know there is still more to do to address the poorer attendance of these pupils. Leaders realise that they need to work more closely with parents of pupils who are regularly absent from school, so they understand the potential negative impact of low attendance on their children's learning and progress.
- The school works well with partner organisations to ensure that the small number of pupils in alternative provision are progressing well in all aspects of their learning.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils who sat GCSEs in 2014 and 2015 entered the school with skills that were significantly below average. They made good progress across a range of subjects so that, by the end of Year 11, they achieved standards close to those achieved nationally.
- Current information from the school's records and pupils' books shows that achievement is good for the majority of pupils at key stages 3 and 4 across a range of subject areas. This is because of focused leadership developing consistently high-quality teaching, good attitudes to learning from pupils and productive partnership work with other schools.
- In 2014 and 2015, the progress of different groups, including disadvantaged pupils, the most able, lower-attaining pupils, and those who have special educational needs and disabilities was at least similar to other pupils nationally. Current groups of pupils are making good progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment are improving across most of their subjects, year on year. Consequently, gaps between their achievement and that of their classmates and other pupils nationally are closing. These gaps are set to close even more quickly for current pupils.
- The achievement of pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities is improving. This is because leaders use assessment information effectively to support these pupils through teachers, teaching assistants and carefully targeted additional help. Pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities spoke enthusiastically about the support they receive.
- The most able pupils have historically made progress in line with similar pupils nationally across a range of subjects. Current pupils are on track to gain the higher grades at GCSE. This is particularly the case in in Years 9 and 10 where the numbers of most able pupils are higher than in previous years.
- Leaders are working well to close learning gaps in mathematics compared to English. Work in books seen during the inspection suggests that this is taking place but with more to be done to improve mathematical skills across different subjects.
- Those pupils in Year 7 without the required skills in numeracy and literacy receive intervention to bring them closer to the standards of their classmates. Leaders track pupils carefully to ensure they are progressing in line with others, offering additional help where required. Attainment in English has been stronger than in mathematics for these pupils and this is because literacy skills are better established than numeracy across the curriculum.
- Pupils are well supported in moving to the next stage of their education, training or employment. In 2015 all pupils moved on to a suitable destination when they left Wolverley at the end of Year 11 and Year 13.
- The small number of pupils who study away from the school for part of the week make good progress on their courses.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- Although current predictions indicate an improving trend and inspection evidence supports this, students have not historically made the progress of which they are capable. This is because teaching has been variable and poor advice and guidance has led to some students being placed on inappropriate courses. Teaching is improving but in the sixth form it is not yet regularly good enough to ensure consistently rapid progress from students' different starting points.
- Leadership in the sixth form is good. The requirements of the 16 to 19 study programme are being met and attainment exceeded the academic and vocational interim minimum standards specified by the Department for Education in both 2014 and 2015.
- The sixth form leader is very clear about the areas which require further focus and has already made changes which have had a positive impact on students' progress. Other positive developments have included relocating the sixth form to a more central position in the school. As a result, there has been

closer monitoring of students, increased involvement by them in the wider life of the school and much improved attendance.

- Teaching is not consistently good, although it is improving. Students identified that work is more challenging than before. Teaching is often characterised by good subject knowledge and positive relationships. This was seen, for example, in a Year 12 English lesson in which three students were developing skills in presentation techniques for different audiences by producing information on Shakespeare's *Othello* for Year 7 pupils.
- Students in the sixth form are predominantly drawn from the school's Year 11 and join with prior attainment typically below average. Study programmes are increasingly relevant and challenging to students because they are individualised to meet needs in terms of courses available. This has resulted in more students completing their courses.
- The sixth form is relatively small and in order to improve the quality of provision the school has recently set up in partnership with a local school to improve the range of courses available to students. Arrangements for checking the quality of students' experiences are developing and it is too early to judge the success of these systems.
- Those students who join the sixth form without a C grade in mathematics or English follow a course to help them improve their grades. The majority make good progress towards a higher grade.
- The personal development of students is well supported in the sixth form. They display positive attitudes to learning and behave well, setting a good example for younger pupils.
- Students value the advice and guidance they are given in relation to future opportunities, including apprenticeships or higher education. This effective career guidance, together with periods of work experience and work-related learning opportunities, also helps prepare students for life in modern Britain. Similarly, the many opportunities they have for extra-curricular activities and playing a role in the wider school help their personal development.
- All students applying to university in 2015 gained their first choice and all students at the end of their courses were in education, employment or training.

School details

Unique reference number	135061
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10009283
This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.	
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	506
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Brookes
Headteacher	Bryn Thomas
Telephone number	01562 859 800
Website	www.wolverley.worcs.sch.uk
Email address	admin@wolverley.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 February 2014

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The current headteacher took up post shortly after the previous inspection.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A very small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 1% of the school population speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, which is additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is slightly above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities is above the national average.
- A very small number of pupils attend courses that take place away from the school site. The provider of these courses is ContinU Plus Academy.
- Since September 2014 the sixth form has been part of a collaboration with Baxter College.
- Leaders have commissioned a local national support school, Haybridge High School, to provide middle leader and subject support in mathematics and English.
- The school does not meet all the requirements for publishing information on its website. There is no link to the Department for Education performance tables and all required examination outcome information is not present.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations of attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 11.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons or parts of lessons and some of these observations were carried out with the school's senior leaders. Observations of other aspects of the school's work were also made, including tutor time and pupils' behaviour at break and lunch periods.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' books and folders during lessons.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's development plan, its self-evaluation, departmental reviews, a range of monitoring records and school information about progress, assessment, behaviour and attendance, minutes of meetings, a review undertaken by the local authority and reports from the national support school working alongside Wolverley School. They reviewed the single central record and a range of school policies, including the safeguarding policy.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, middle leaders, subject teachers and groups of pupils from across the school and the chair and three members of the governing body. The lead inspector spoke by telephone to the headteacher of Haybridge High School and a school improvement adviser from Worcestershire local authority.
- There were 46 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire that provided evidence for the inspection. The lead inspector also spoke to one parent who requested a telephone conversation.
- Questionnaire returns from 63 members of staff were analysed.

Inspection team

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Peter Wilkes	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Ellis-Martin	Ofsted Inspector

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