

# Castle High School and Visual Arts College

St James's Road, Dudley, DY1 3JE

**Inspection dates** 16–17 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students do not make enough progress in mathematics. This includes students who start at the school with lower levels of attainment.
- Teachers do not always plan lessons which help students of different abilities to make good progress. Sometimes, they do not adapt the activity to make sure that students have work at the right level of difficulty.
- At times, students have to listen for long periods without taking an active part in the lesson or learning from each other. When this happens, students make less progress.
- Teachers do not always show students what they need to do to improve in their written work. Students are often not given enough chance during lessons to respond to their teachers' comments.

### The school has the following strengths

- Students now make good progress in English. More-able students do well in many subjects.
- The headteacher has acted quickly and decisively to improve teaching. As a result, standards are rising across the school.
- Governors know what the school does well and what needs to improve. They provide good support, but also ask probing questions about the school's performance.
- Students show respect for each other and for adults. Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and they feel safe.
- There has been a year-on-year improvement in attendance, which is now nearer to average.
- The subjects students learn, including the arts, contribute well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 41 lessons taught by 36 teachers. Six lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also made shorter visits to a number of lessons. They listened to some Year 8 students read and attended an assembly. Inspectors saw students' written work during lessons and, with a school leader, looked in greater depth at a selection of their books.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other school leaders and staff, and three members of the governing body. Inspectors read the responses to the questionnaires completed by 33 members of staff and spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team considered the views given in the 12 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and the very small number of letters sent by parents. Inspectors also took account of the school's own questionnaires to parents.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including the school's checks on how well it is doing and its plans for improvement. They checked the school's information about students' progress over time and looked at records of the quality of teaching. Minutes of the governing body were also considered. Inspectors looked closely at how the school keeps its students safe and the records of students' behaviour and attendance.
- On the first day of the inspection, just under one third of students were absent from school in order to celebrate the festival of Eid.

## Inspection team

Elizabeth Cooper, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Suha Ahmad	Additional Inspector
Thomas Walton	Additional Inspector
Gwendoline Onyon	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Castle High School and Visual Arts College is a smaller-than-average secondary school.
- Just over half the students are White British. An above-average proportion of students come from minority ethnic groups. Of these, the largest group is of Pakistani heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is also above the national average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium (the additional government funding for looked after children and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is well above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average.
- A small number of Year 11 students attended work-related courses part-time at The Education Development Service, Stourbridge, during 2012–13. No students currently attend any off-site courses.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection, there have been a considerable number of changes of staff, including teachers and senior leaders.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that the rates of progress continue to improve in all subjects, especially in mathematics, by ensuring that teachers:
  - make better use of information about different students to plan and deliver lessons that help all students, including the less able, make rapid progress
  - ask questions which involve all students more actively in the learning
  - give students more opportunities to work with other students and on their own, so that they can learn in sufficient depth and at their own pace
  - make sure that they check on students' progress regularly and adjust the learning to help them to make further progress
  - give students enough feedback in their books, so that they know exactly what they need to do to improve, and provide time for students to correct their work and complete extra tasks.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students join the school with standards that are well below average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE qualifications at A\* to C including English and mathematics was below average in 2011 and 2012. Some improvements in teaching helped students gain better GCSE grades in 2013, although results are likely still to be below the national average.
- Over the past three years, students have not made enough progress in mathematics because of weaker teaching in this subject. The quality of learning seen in most mathematics lessons during the inspection and the school's records of students' current attainment show that students are now making better progress. However, this difference has yet to be seen in the school's examination results, and achievement therefore requires improvement. Results have improved in English, where most students now make good progress.
- Fewer of the less-able students do well, particularly in mathematics. The more-able students make good progress at the school, and there has been an increase in the number of A\* and A grades gained in different subjects, including in English, mathematics and the sciences.
- No students were entered early for GCSE examinations in mathematics in 2012. Students took English and mathematics early in 2013, but did less well in mathematics than in English. No students are due to be entered early for examinations in 2014.
- Students on school action do not do as well, because teachers do not set work at the right level of difficulty. In 2013, students on school action made good progress in a number of work-related courses, where their learning was better planned and more practical. The small number of students who have a statement of special educational needs or who are on school action plus do well because they receive good support from teachers and other adults in their lessons and in small groups.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium do not make as much progress in English or in mathematics as other students. In 2012, the gap in attainment between eligible students and others was just under one grade in English and over one grade in mathematics. The school used the pupil premium to pay for further tuition and one-to-one support, as well as contributing towards school visits and extra activities. In 2013, the gap between students eligible for the extra funding and others reduced to half a grade in English and just under one grade in mathematics. The gap is narrowing in other year groups currently in the school, especially during Key Stage 3.
- Students who are eligible for the Year 7 'catch-up' premium because they join the school with low attainment are doing well in reading because they receive good support from staff, who include qualified primary school teachers, and from the Year 11 reading mentors. Students who read to an inspector showed that they know how to break down and build up new words in the books they were reading.
- A small number of students took work-related courses with a local training company, while continuing the rest of their studies at Castle High. All these students gained English, mathematics and other qualifications, and this helped them to move on to the next stage in their education.
- The school is particularly successful in a number of practical qualifications, including in the

school's specialism of visual and performing arts, where many students make exceptional progress.

### **The quality of teaching** requires improvement

- Although some of the teaching seen during the inspection was good or better, teaching requires improvement because students do not yet make good progress, especially in mathematics.
- Not all teachers make the best use of the detailed information given to them to plan lessons for students of different abilities. Sometimes, all the students in the class complete the same activity or task, and this means that the work is too easy for some students and too demanding for others. On occasions, teachers do not check how much students can already do so that they can adjust the learning and help them make more progress.
- At times, teachers spend long periods of time talking to the class and, as a result, students have less chance to get involved in the learning by finding things out for themselves or discussing ideas with other students. Not all teachers make the best use of questioning to check how much students know or understand.
- Teachers check students' books regularly, but the quality of marking is uneven. Most teachers praise students' efforts and some give extra suggestions on how to improve. However, students are not routinely expected to correct their mistakes or to act on their teachers' advice. This means that students do not learn as well from teachers' comments.
- In the very best lessons, students are motivated to learn because teachers set them relevant and interesting activities where students can explore ideas in depth and learn from each other. In a Year 10 English lesson, where pairs of students discussed how to gain the best marks in their writing, the teacher helped them realise the importance of correct English. As one student said: 'It's been an eye-opener for me that I have been missing out marks in spelling.'
- In lessons where students make good or better progress, teachers frequently check that students have work at the right level of difficulty. This happened in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, where all students in the class made outstanding progress because the teacher had skilfully planned several different tasks with enough challenge for everyone.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Students learn well in lessons where the work is suitable for them and they can learn together. In most lessons, students are willing to try hard, even where teaching requires improvement.
- Students are polite and courteous towards adults and other students, giving way to each other as they move around the busy site. Students who spoke to inspectors said how safe they felt at school. Students know how to keep themselves safe and are well informed about the risks involved in using the internet. Staff and parents agree that the school is a safe place.
- The school is a harmonious community. Students know about different kinds of bullying, such as cyber-bullying, but say that there is little bullying. The school takes bullying seriously and makes sure that if instances occur they are dealt with quickly. Students on the student voice team have chosen to work on the theme of developing a culture of respect for all at the school because they know the importance of valuing people.

- The school is good at helping students who find it hard to behave well. As a result, there are now very few students who are not allowed in school for a short period because of poor behaviour.
- On occasions, a few students find it harder to concentrate because they have to listen for long periods or the work is not set at the right level of difficulty.
- The school has worked single-mindedly to improve its previously very low attendance, rewarding students for good attendance and getting in touch with parents straightaway when students are absent. Because of this, attendance has improved and is now just below the national average. Most students are punctual, and very few students need reminding by staff about getting to their lessons on time.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher is committed to improving the chances of success for all students and her determination is shared by other school leaders. Standards are rising. Teachers and other staff know what the school is trying to achieve.
- Teachers in charge of subjects check the quality of teaching and students' progress regularly. The frequent training sessions in school help teachers swap ideas about teaching and learn from each other. Teachers value the opportunities to visit other schools to moderate students' work. Teachers visit primary schools to help these schools develop art and drama activities.
- Senior leaders know the strengths and weaknesses in teaching in the school and were accurate in the joint observations with inspectors. Their regular checks of lessons and students' work are helping teaching to improve. Steps taken to remove any weaker teaching have paid off, even though this has meant school leaders have had to make many changes to the staffing in the last two years. Teaching nevertheless requires further improvement because achievement is not yet good.
- The local authority gives the school good support. The advice given by the science consultant helped the school to develop GCSE qualifications in the three sciences. The local authority correctly judges that school leaders know how to raise standards further, including in mathematics. The headteacher's strong support to another school is respected by the local authority.
- The school's curriculum has a broad and balanced range of subjects which give students a good mix of academic, practical and cultural experiences. The school looks regularly at the different courses it provides to make sure that the qualifications will equip students for the next stage in their education, training or employment. All students who spoke with inspectors said they appreciated the individual advice they were given to help them choose their option subjects.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. In their geography lesson, students thought deeply about the quality of life in their study of a *favela* (shanty town) in Brazil. The inspiring displays of art in the school's gallery and corridors are proof of the opportunities students have to use their creative skills. The many clubs, including chess, trampolining and zumba dance, are popular with students and contribute to their social, physical and cultural development.
- The school seeks every opportunity to develop students' skills in using English and mathematics. In a Year 7 and 8 assembly, students were delighted to receive prizes for the spelling bee. The

focus on attendance facts and figures in this assembly had students calculating the difference that could be made to lifetime earnings by coming to school every day.

- The school regularly gets in touch with parents and carers, who appreciate the school's dedication and extra time given to help students. A parent who wrote in praise of the school said: 'Any issue has always been quickly and competently resolved.'

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- The school benefits from an experienced governing body. Governors know the school well because they make regular visits to find out about the school's work. They go into classrooms, talk to subject leaders and attend parents' evenings and school events. Governors have made good use of training from the local authority, which helps them understand about the attainment and progress of different subjects and groups of students.
- Governors keep a close watch on the difference the pupil premium funding has made to the progress of eligible students. They know that funding for Year 7 students who arrived at the school with lower attainment in English and mathematics has helped these students to catch up.
- Records of governing body meetings show that governors ask detailed questions of school leaders as well as providing good support. Governors make sure that teachers are only awarded extra pay or more responsibility when their teaching is good or better. They fully support senior leaders in removing poor teaching. As one governor said, 'We won't make do.'
- Governors go out of their way to be approachable to parents, carers and representatives of the community, encouraging parents to contact the school if they have any concerns.
- Governors manage the school's finances well and successfully tackled an earlier shortfall in the budget. They make sure that the school meets its statutory duties, including for safeguarding students' welfare.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	103867
<b>Local authority</b>	Dudley
<b>Inspection number</b>	427038

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	636
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Marsh
<b>Headteacher</b>	Michelle King
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 January 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01384 816045
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