

Nunnery Wood High School

Spetchley Road, Worcester, Worcestershire WR5 2LT

Inspection dates 9–10 December 2015

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have established a school culture through which the personal development of pupils thrives and academic success is cultivated. As a result, pupils are very well prepared for the next phase of their education.
- By the time pupils leave the academy in Year 11, the standards they attain are well above average. This is because they make excellent progress in some key subjects, including English and mathematics, from their average starting points.
- Actions taken to quicken the progress of disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils or those with special educational needs have had a positive impact. The achievement of these groups of pupils is rising and gaps with their classmates are closing.
- Teaching overall is good, and some features are outstanding. Teachers' strong subject knowledge and careful planning ensure that pupils learn well.
- Positive relationships and high expectations encourage pupils' good and often outstanding attitudes to learning. Pupils are keen to learn and want to achieve well. This makes a considerable contribution to their progress over time.
- The personal development of pupils is outstanding. Pupils benefit from a well-developed curriculum and a range of opportunities that foster a deep appreciation of life in modern Britain. The promotion of pupils' moral, cultural and social understanding permeates the academy's practices.
- Leaders promote the welfare and safety of pupils successfully. Pupils are safe, feel safe and know how to keep safe.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is reflected in pupils' excellent conduct around the academy site, the respect they show teachers and each other and the high rates of attendance of most groups of pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The skills of governors and middle leaders are improving, but are not yet sharp enough to secure outstanding outcomes in all areas.
- Some unevenness in the quality of teaching means that some pupils do not consistently excel in their learning in all subjects.
- A minority of pupils can stray off-task during lessons when teaching does not inspire them, slowing their progress.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is improving, but is not yet as high as that of their classmates or peers nationally.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching so that pupils consistently make outstanding progress by ensuring that all teachers:
 - plan activities that challenge and stimulate pupils' interests and build on their prior knowledge, skills and understanding
 - check carefully pupils' progress in lessons to see if pupils need additional support or are ready to move on to more demanding work
 - offer high quality verbal and written feedback that helps pupils to improve their work
- Strengthen leadership and management, including governance, in order that all areas of the academy's work are outstanding, by:
 - identifying quickly and focusing sharply on any areas of weakness in the attainment, progress and attendance of pupils and groups of pupils in all year groups
 - further developing the skills and expertise of identified middle leaders so that any remaining gaps between the quality of teaching and pupils' learning and progress across subjects, particularly foundation subject areas, close
 - sharing outstanding practice within and across subject teams so that all teaching matches that of the best.
- Improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and reduce the proportion of these pupils who are regularly absent from school by further developing strategies to work closely with families.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, governors and leaders have shaped an ethos in which pupils are encouraged to strive for their best, succeed academically, develop their talents and become responsible citizens. Pupils enjoy learning and participate actively in the life of a happy, caring school community. Consequently, standards are rising in many areas, and the personal development of pupils is excellent.
- Improvements across many areas of the academy's work over time demonstrate leaders' strong capacity to bring about sustained improvements. This is shown, for example, in the rising attainment and progress rates of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, across many subjects. The effects of the school's capacity for improvement are also evident in many pupils' high rates of attendance and a sharp reduction in the proportion of pupils who are excluded from the academy.
- Leaders have a good grasp of the academy's strengths and areas for further improvement. They use this to inform their planning of key actions needed to bring about further developments. However, leaders have not focused sharply enough on the attainment and progress of pupils across all year groups and in all subjects to have yet secured outstanding standards in all areas.
- Subject and pastoral leaders are developing rapidly under the systems implemented by the headteacher, ably supported by his senior leadership team. Detailed analyses of examination results and scrutiny of on-going performance information enable leaders to identify key groups of pupils that need additional help, so that extra support can be offered where needed. Improvement planning is focused on the key areas that need attention. However, at times, measures of success are not sharp or precise enough for leaders to hold their teams to account. Some variations between the performances of different subject areas mean that some subject leaders are not as effective as the best.
- Leaders have secured good standards of teaching across the academy. Some teaching is outstanding. A key area that leaders have recognised as needing further development is the subject-specific knowledge of teachers. Middle leaders play a prominent role in this aspect of training and, as a result, strong subject knowledge means that teachers in a number of subject areas, including English and mathematics, foster high rates of progress in their pupils. However, the quality of teaching still varies between different subject areas. Leaders have put in place a team of coaches who are working well with individual teachers to develop their skills further.
- Leaders set challenging targets for both pupils and teachers. Close checks on the work of teachers ensure that they are only rewarded for delivering high standards of teaching and promoting good or outstanding progress. Leaders have rightly recognised that these targets cut across all year groups in order that high standards are delivered across the academy.
- The curriculum is well balanced and features a broad range of subject choices that support the needs, interests and aspirations of pupils of different abilities. In Key Stage 4, the breadth of the curriculum is further enriched with opportunities for pupils to extend their learning through the pursuit of AS-levels, leadership awards and further qualifications in the arts, media and design.
- A rich offer of well-attended extra-curricular activities, the student parliament, the work of the eco-club, the study of ethics and philosophy, 'SMSC days' and an excellent array of cultural, artistic and performance activities promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) understanding very effectively. As a result, pupils develop a powerful understanding of modern British values.
- Leaders have established well-organised systems to support the needs of the most vulnerable pupils in the academy. Additional support is well coordinated and carefully monitored and tracked to ensure that it has the impact intended on individual pupils.
- The spending of pupil premium funding is largely effective. A 'tiered' approach to spending ensures that those pupils eligible benefit from additional tuition, smaller class sizes, extra pastoral support, and equality of access to opportunities such as educational visits. Leaders have recognised the importance too of 'quality-first' teaching. As a consequence, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is rising, gaps are narrowing, and a high number of disadvantaged pupils progress successfully to the next phase of their education. This funding has not yet enabled full success in tackling the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who do not attend school regularly. Some aspects of leaders' evaluation of the achievement and attendance of disadvantaged pupils have not been sharply enough focused on the gaps with others in school and nationally.
- Additional funding is deployed effectively to support those pupils with lower than average attainment on entry to the academy. A range of targeted additional support matched to pupils' needs ensures that they

catch up quickly in their reading, writing and numeracy skills. As a result, a good number of these pupils make quick progress in their basic skills and secure Level 4 in English and mathematics by the time they enter Year 8.

- The academy is held in high regard by its stakeholders, including pupils and the large majority of parents. The academy website, and the 'Nunnery News', an extremely high-quality publication that is produced by pupils, keep the community updated about the academy's activities and developments. The very large majority of staff enjoy working at the academy and feel that they are well led.
- The academy works effectively with its primary feeders and with the nearby sixth form college in order that pupils make a smooth transition between the different stages of their education.

■ The governance of the school

- Governance is good. Governors have played a full part in developing and promoting the academy's values and ethos, including the promotion of modern British values.
 - Governors have an increasingly strong awareness of performance information, helped by detailed reports from the headteacher. They have a good recognition of the need to close gaps between the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils and others and check how additional funding is spent.
 - Governors are not, however, clear enough on the lower attendance of pupil premium pupils or on pupils' progress and attainment in all year groups.
 - Governors ensure that leaders and teachers are only rewarded for securing high standards, through their overseeing of pay progression decisions.
 - The governing body has considerable financial expertise which has ensured that the academy's resources are well-managed.
 - The governing body fulfils its statutory duties, including those relating to safeguarding, efficiently.
 - Governors have pro-actively recognised the need to streamline the organisation of the governing body and reduce the number of committees to improve their efficiency and effectiveness further.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Statutory requirements are met and leaders wisely recognise the need to go 'above and beyond' these. For example, all staff receive child protection training annually. This training is supplemented by regular updates on national issues or emerging or local issues. The designated officer for safeguarding works closely with the local authority and has engaged strongly with the Prevent strategy, ensuring that staff, pupils and governors are highly aware of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Pastoral leaders and form tutors are valued by pupils who feel confident that they can always seek help when needed. This culture of openness, in which pupils are able to raise issues, and staff are alert to spotting them, coupled with the tenacious pursuit of support from other agencies, ensures that pupils at the academy are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching is good because across a range of subjects it enables pupils to achieve well. It is not outstanding because some teaching does not promote rapid gains in learning.
- In many areas, teachers' strong subject knowledge and high expectations inform the planning of well-structured activities that challenge pupils to quickly develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. This is particularly the case in English and mathematics. For example, in mathematics lessons, teachers explain and demonstrate challenging concepts with clarity. Pupils are able to apply their learning and progress through activities of varying degrees of difficulty. This ensures that they make quick progress from their starting points and master mathematical concepts and skills rapidly.
- High-quality relationships between teachers and pupils, and between pupils and their peers, foster a positive climate for learning. Pupils work hard, engage well with tasks, and collaborate effectively with their classmates to deepen their learning. Pupils are resilient when attempting challenging activities, but readily ask for help if they need it. These attitudes have a positive impact on pupils' learning over time and are further reflected in the articulate and confident manner in which pupils are able to talk about their learning and work.
- Where teaching is strongest, teachers explain clearly what pupils need to do to achieve well. Systematic checks on how well pupils are learning during the lesson enable teachers to see when pupils may need additional support and correct misunderstandings so that progress quickens. In a Year 11 English lesson, the

teacher's careful checks on pupils' work and regular feedback offered to them during the lesson helped pupils to develop their writing skills well.

- Pupils' cultural learning is very well promoted in the arts-based subjects. For example, in a Year 10 art lesson, the teacher inspired in pupils a genuine passion for art. Pupils' enthusiasm and engagement meant that they created high-quality art across a range of media and were achieving well.
- Questioning is often used to probe pupils' thinking and encourage them to develop their ideas. Many teachers skilfully elicit extended responses from pupils and invite other pupils to contribute and build on the ideas of others. This practice supports the development of pupils' oracy skills effectively. However, some instances remain where questions require only very limited responses and pupils do not deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- Teaching assistants offer effective support to disabled pupils and those with special educational needs because they have a thorough understanding of the needs of the pupils they support. They make a positive contribution to pupils' learning, ensuring that those pupils they support are fully involved in lessons and make at least good progress. In a Year 8 drama lesson, the teacher ensured that pupils with special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils were managed with care and thought, enabling them to participate fully in the lesson.
- The feedback teachers offer, both verbal and written, frequently helps pupils to move forward in their learning. At its best, this feedback is incisive and enables pupils to progress quickly in their skills and understanding. As a result, many pupils can articulate clearly what they need to do to improve. Sometimes, there are inconsistencies in practice across departments and the feedback some pupils receive is not helpful because it is vague or not linked to the skills pupils are learning. In these cases, feedback has a limited impact on pupils' progress.
- Homework is set regularly. This mostly provides good opportunities for pupils to further consolidate and extend their learning outside of class.
- Where learning is weaker, and this is particularly true in some foundation subjects, teachers do not take into account the needs and different abilities of pupils in their class when planning activities, or check carefully enough how well pupils are learning. As a consequence, some pupils struggle because they have not fully understood key concepts and other pupils, such as the most-able pupils, are not challenged sufficiently by work that is demanding enough of them.
- In a minority of lessons, when the work set does not ignite pupils' interests, or activities go on for too long, a small number of pupils can lose focus and begin to engage in low-level disruption.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils and parents agree.
- The extensive opportunities pupils engage in, both as part of their curriculum and through the wider life of the academy, mean that they are extremely well prepared for life in modern Britain and for success when they leave the academy.
- The academy's programme of 'SMSC days' focuses very effectively on promoting pupils' awareness of how to become responsible citizens and how they can keep safe. Assemblies and workshops raise pupils' knowledge of the important values of respect and tolerance. Consequently, they are able to demonstrate a deep understanding of the risks they may face, including those in social media and of radicalisation and extremism in its many forms. A wide range of charitable activities, the eco-schools programme and international links help pupils to contribute positively to local, national and global causes.
- Pupils' understanding of democratic values is harnessed through the academy's procedures and systems. Many pupils are involved in the student parliament and feel that their views and ideas are listened to and valued. Furthermore, pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities to develop their leadership skills including sports leadership programmes, the Duke of Edinburgh award, and through the pastoral system.
- The academy's thriving performing arts offer provides pupils with a wealth of opportunities to develop and showcase their talents and both pupils and parents appreciate this.
- A valued careers education programme is supported by a full-time careers adviser and partnerships with providers in the further and higher education sectors. Individual advice is offered to pupils to help them to make crucial choices in their Key Stage 4 options and when they leave the academy. Pupils who are at risk

of not entering education, employment or training are identified early and extra support is put in place. As a result, the proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, successfully moving to the next phase of education is high and rising.

- Bullying, including discriminatory bullying, at the academy is rare. This is because leaders have established a highly cohesive school community. The few cases of bullying recorded are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils say that they trust their teachers to resolve any concerns they raise.
- Highly effective pastoral and safeguarding systems and well-coordinated interventions ensure that the well-being of pupils is given a high priority.
- Off-site provision is used discerningly by the academy. Good collaborative partnerships with other schools enable leaders to undertake careful checks of providers so that they can be assured that the provision offered is safe and of high quality. This enables courses to be well-matched to pupils' needs. Systematic monitoring of pupils' attendance and progress ensures that pupils attend and achieve well. As a result, this has had a positive impact on the attendance and behaviour of pupils, re-engaging some previously disaffected or vulnerable pupils with their education.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The conduct of pupils around the academy site is often exemplary. Pupils are courteous, respectful and wear their uniforms with pride. Leaders supervise pupils well. When inspectors visited different areas of the academy site during breaktimes and lunchtimes, they found that even when unsupervised, most pupils behave very sensibly. A very small minority of pupils can engage in silly behaviour, but this is rare.
- Pupils' good and often outstanding attitudes to learning contribute well to their learning and progress in lessons. A minority of pupils can 'switch off', disengage with their learning and lose focus if activities do not interest them.
- The academy's records show that incidents of aggressive or serious behaviour are infrequent. The majority of issues relate to incidents of low-level disruption and failure to submit homework. Discussions with pupils during the inspection confirmed that this is the case.
- Improvements in behaviour over time are further reflected in the academy's rates of exclusion which have reduced sharply over the last academic year. These are now below average.
- The large majority of parents and staff at the academy say that behaviour is good.
- A wide range of work takes places to support those pupils who may present challenging behaviour.
- Overall rates of attendance are high and above average. However, although improving, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is not yet as good as their classmates or peers nationally. Too many disadvantaged pupils are still regularly absent from school. Leaders have not ignored this issue. Extensive work is taking place, including frequent home visits and closer working with families, to improve the attendance of this group. Leaders recognise that there is further work to do to secure the impact needed here.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Outcomes for pupils are good. They are not yet outstanding because, despite many areas in which pupils excel, inconsistencies occur between the quality of pupils' learning and progress in some subjects across year groups. This is inextricably linked to variations in the quality of teaching.
- Pupils enter the academy in Year 7 with standards of attainment that are broadly average. When they leave in Year 11, pupils' attainment across a broad range of measures is significantly above that of other pupils nationally. This is because they make good and sometimes outstanding progress during their time in the academy.
- In English, the progress pupils make from nearly all starting points is better than average. Most groups of pupils make outstanding progress over time. Standards of progress and attainment in mathematics on leaving Year 11 have been consistently rising. Many pupils now make outstanding progress from their starting points. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils across year groups, including Key Stage 3, are achieving high standards in English and mathematics.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils has improved and the progress they make is close to that of their classmates in the academy and that of other pupils nationally. In English, disadvantaged pupils make progress that matches that of other pupils nationally. The gaps with their classmates are also very narrow at Key Stage 3. In mathematics, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils is rising quickly, but does not yet

match that of their classmates or other pupils nationally.

- Pupils' high performance in English and mathematics means that they are well prepared for the next phase of their education.
- Across a range of subjects, pupils achieve well by the time they leave the academy. For example, analyses of pupils' provisional GCSE examination results for the last academic year show that across their best eight subjects the progress pupils made was within the top 15% of all schools nationally. Current pupils in Year 11 are also expected to achieve well in most subjects and inspection evidence confirms this.
- In some areas, including modern foreign languages, technology, science and some areas of the humanities, pupils do not acquire their knowledge and skills as rapidly as in others. This is further reflected in some variations in pupils' outcomes. Current pupils in Key Stage 4 are not attaining as well in relation to the challenging targets set for them in some of these subjects.
- Excellent provision both in and outside lessons in the visual and performing arts is supporting pupils' high achievement in these areas.
- Effective support and well-focused interventions help disabled pupils or those with special educational needs to make good progress, particularly in their reading and writing skills. Progress is improving in mathematics, but more slowly than in English. Carefully thought through provision mapping also ensures that those pupils who enter the academy with lower than average attainment quickly catch up. Occasionally, the learning of these groups of pupils is slowed when teachers do not consider the needs of these pupils carefully enough in their planning of tasks.
- The most-able pupils achieve well, but do not always make progress that is as strong as that of other groups in the academy. This is because sometimes pupils are not stretched sufficiently where they are set work similar to that expected of other pupils in their class. When the work set is demanding, pupils rise to this and make quick progress.
- Pupils who attend courses away from the academy achieve well. Leaders ensure that courses followed match the abilities and interests of pupils. Regular reporting from providers helps leaders to keep close checks on pupils' progress.
- Pupils read widely in tutor time and outside lessons. A high profile given to the importance of reading has stimulated a greater interest in reading for pleasure. In lessons pupils read out loud confidently and fluently. A wide range of reading programmes, including work on phonics (the sounds that letters make), help weaker readers to develop their skills.

School details

Unique reference number	137051
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10001518

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1324
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Heather Hazell
Headteacher	Stephen Powell
Telephone number	01905 363636
Website	www.nunnerywood.worcs.sch.uk
Email address	office@nunnerywood.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 June 2012

Information about this school

- Nunnery Wood High School is a much larger-than-average secondary converter academy.
- The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, who are those eligible for support from the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after in public care), is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- The current headteacher took up post in Easter 2015.
- Eighteen pupils from the academy attend classes away from the academy for part of the week and two for all of the week. The institutions providing these pupils with alternative and work-related courses are Newbridge Short Stay Secondary School, the Aspire Academy and the Heart of Worcestershire College.
- In 2014, the academy exceeded the floor standards, which are the government's minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 50 lessons or parts of lessons. A small number of these observations took place during the academy's 'SMSC' day on the first day of the inspection. Inspectors carried out some observations jointly with the academy's senior leaders. Observations of other aspects of the academy's work were also made, such as tutor time and assemblies. One inspector visited 'The Base' where support is given to pupils with additional needs.
- Inspectors also looked at pupils' books and folders during lessons.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and academy staff, including senior and middle leaders. Informal discussions also took place with staff and pupils.
- There were 52 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire that provided evidence for the inspection.
- Questionnaire returns from 39 members of staff were analysed.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the academy's self-evaluation and improvement plans, academy policies, external reviews of the academy and minutes of meetings of the governing body. Information about pupils' progress, attainment, attendance and exclusions was also examined as were the academy's records of safeguarding, checks on the quality of teaching and marking, and information about the way teachers' performance is linked to salary scales.

Inspection team

Chris Chapman, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rob Hackfath	Her Majesty's Inspector
Patrick Amieli	Ofsted Inspector
Robert Steed	Ofsted Inspector
Anthony Ellis	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Hickerton	Ofsted Inspector
Graham Tyrer	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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