

Christopher Whitehead Language College

Bromwich Road, St John's, Worcester, WR2 4AF

Inspection dates 9–10 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Overall, students make good progress. Students' achievement in science, dance and religious education is outstanding.
- Teaching is usually good and often outstanding. Teachers' good knowledge and enthusiasm for their subjects are very evident.
- Students' positive attitudes are reflected in their behaviour and safety which are outstanding. Attendance is above average and students are proud of their school.
- There are examples of outstanding teaching across a number of subject areas, including: English, mathematics, science, performing arts and history.
- The headteacher and his leadership team are relentless in their drive to make sure that the school provides a high-quality all-round education for all.
- Spiritual, social, moral and cultural provision is outstanding and significantly helps students' personal development.
- The governing body is well informed about the school's work and provides an appropriate level of challenge.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of students who make outstanding progress, both within groups and across subjects, is not high enough.
- The teaching in a small minority of lessons requires improvement; these lessons lack challenge, particularly for less-able students.
- Marking does not always clearly identify how students can improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 43 lessons, 11 of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, groups of students and the Chair of the Governing Body. They spoke with an external consultant who supports the school’s leadership.
- Inspectors considered the views of the 58 parents who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire. They analysed the results of the staff questionnaire to which 66 replies were received.
- Inspectors analysed the 2012 examination results and the published results for previous years. They looked at the school’s data on students’ progress, lesson plans, minutes of meetings and records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance. They also reviewed the school’s checks on how well it is doing and school improvement plans.

Inspection team

Lisa Fraser, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Terence Payne	Additional Inspector
Robert Steed	Additional Inspector
Peter Lawley	Additional Inspector
Susan Hickerton	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than most 11–16 secondary schools.
- The large majority of students are from White British backgrounds, and the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, from service families, and for students known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Christopher Whitehead Language College converted to become an academy school in July 2011. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Twenty-three students in Key Stage 4 attend off-site alternative provision for part of their learning to follow a course in animal care at The Bridge in Worcester.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' achievement from good to outstanding across all subject areas by:
 - sharing the outstanding practice in assessment which exists within the school so that the quality of marking in all subjects is good or better
 - ensuring that all groups of students, particularly less-able students, make accelerated rates of progress across all subject areas by increasing the level of challenge in lessons
 - improving all teaching which requires improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average for their age when they join the school. Although the proportion of students achieving five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is broadly average, an above-average proportion of students achieve the English Baccalaureate.
- Achievement in science, dance, design and technology, geography and religious education is good because teaching in these subjects is often outstanding. The proportion of students achieving A* and A grades in science is very high.
- Students make good progress on a range of BTEC courses.
- In mathematics, students make better progress than that expected because teaching is regularly outstanding. Selective use of early entry GCSE mathematics in November of Year 11 has been effective in improving the achievement of students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. More-able students do not sit their examination early.
- In English, students' achievement dipped in 2012 but the school's focus on improving students' reading and writing skills in all subjects is starting to have an impact. Inspectors observed good and outstanding teaching in English lessons. The school's data indicate that students are now making much better progress in English.
- Students' achievement in modern foreign languages is usually good, reflecting well on the school's specialism.
- Students' achievement in information and communication technology is outstanding because outstanding teaching and subject leadership ensure that almost all students achieve a level 2 functional skills qualification.
- Students supported by the pupil premium receive additional help through small-group tuition, one-to-one guidance, breakfast clubs and a specialist teacher who supports their progress in English and mathematics. Some students supported by the pupil premium have the opportunity to participate in the 'Garden Project' where they can use their mathematics for real-life purposes. Current data indicate the achievement gap between these students and their peers in English and mathematics has narrowed to three terms.
- In 2012, boys achieved less well than girls overall but current data indicate they are now achieving as well in mathematics and are only half a grade behind in English. Less-able students, however, are not making the same good rates of progress as their peers.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are supported well by teaching assistants in lessons and make similar progress to their peers. Students on the 'rapid reading' programme have made seven months improvement in their reading over a period of less than four months.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is being used to support students with resources, school uniform, trips and one-to-one support in reading and mathematics. These students are two terms behind their peers but the gap is closing.

- Senior leaders have worked hard to make sure that teachers in all subjects help students to improve their literacy and numeracy. Inspectors observed students' good engagement in the school's DEAR ('Drop everything and read') initiative. Numeracy games and puzzles in tutor time and special events to celebrate World Maths Day are helping students improve in mathematics.
- The attendance and progress of the small number of students who attend alternative provision away from the school is monitored carefully to make sure they are making good progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good and not outstanding because a small minority of teaching requires improvement.
- Teaching in over a third of lessons observed during the inspection was outstanding, indicating that senior leaders have been successful in improving the quality of teaching. Leaders rigorously check the quality of students' learning; they put actions in place to improve any teaching that falls short of their high expectations and plan well-focused training sessions.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers have high levels of subject expertise and use innovative and imaginative methods to develop students' learning and confidence. Students are motivated by teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects. Relationships are exceptionally positive and teachers know students well. Teachers make sure their teaching and the work they provide challenge all students to do their best. Lessons are thoroughly planned and paced with plenty of opportunities for paired work and discussion.
- As part of the staff training programme, there has been a strong whole-school focus on improving students' literacy and numeracy levels. This has led to all teachers providing opportunities for improving speaking and listening, reading, writing and calculation skills in lessons. Recent teacher training on the use of questioning has also helped improve the quality of teaching; inspectors observed many examples of teachers' skilful use of questioning to check students' understanding.
- The quality of marking across subject areas ranges from outstanding to requiring improvement. In the majority of subjects, there are examples of outstanding marking which clearly identifies what students need to do to improve their work, but this is not consistent across every subject area.
- In some less effective lessons, work is not always challenging enough for all students, particularly less-able learners.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students are happy and proud to be members of their school community which creates an outstandingly positive ethos. Students behave exceptionally well, have a clear understanding of what is expected of them, and are keen, committed and enthusiastic learners.
- Attendance is above average because students enjoy coming to school. Excellent systems and prizes to improve attendance have made sure that persistent absence is below the national average.

- Outstanding assemblies support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as well as often celebrating students' achievement in the performing arts and encouraging students to reflect upon how they can keep themselves safe.
- Students are especially positive about the school's mixed-age tutor group structure which aids their learning and social development. Tutors give students good support to develop their literacy and numeracy skills because tutor-time is extremely well organised.
- Care and support for students are outstanding because the school works well with a number of outside agencies to promote students' physical and mental health. In-school programmes, such as anger-management courses, support students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable.
- Parents and students agree that students are safe in school. Senior leaders regularly conduct surveys to gauge parents' perceptions. School behaviour records confirm that instances of bullying are very rare. Students understand the dangers of bullying in all its forms, including that based on racism and homophobia. They say that bullying is rare and if it occurs it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff.
- Relationships between staff and students are always positive. Low-level disruption in lessons is rare, because staff manage behaviour consistently and fairly.
- Around the building, students manage their own behaviour extremely well. They are courteous, considerate and polite.
- A significant number of students who have found it difficult to learn in other schools receive high-quality academic and emotional support which enables them to remain in education.
- The active school council gives students the opportunity to have a say in the running of the school. Recent changes influenced by student opinion include the introduction of blazers and increased choice in the canteen.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong and determined leadership. He has high expectations and is uncompromising in his commitment to build on the school's success and promote equality of opportunity. Together with his experienced senior team, he has made sure that many aspects of the school's work are outstanding and in doing so has the full support of staff and parents.
- Senior leaders hold staff to account for the quality of their teaching through lesson observations and curriculum reviews. Systems to manage the performance of teachers are rigorous, set clear targets for improving teaching and are linked to Teachers' Standards. Salary progression is closely related to teaching success. Several teachers are identified as 'lead teachers' and work with other primary and secondary schools in the local area to model good teaching.
- Training time is well planned and helps staff to develop new skills. Close links with the University of Worcester encourage teachers to be more creative and incorporate the latest approaches in learning. Newly qualified teachers, in particular, benefit from the observational classroom which allows lessons to be observed and recorded. Several leaders are completing the National College's middle leaders' development programme because they are keen to further improve their skills.

- School development plans are well focused. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses but their assessment of the school's performance does not always judge the school in comparison to that of other schools.
- The range of subjects provides an appropriate balance of academic, practical and vocational learning that matches the needs and abilities of students. Students and their parents receive clear information, advice and guidance to help them with their choice of curriculum pathway.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding because it is supported well by outstanding teaching and subject leadership in religious education, additional events and a well-planned programme of thought-provoking assemblies. Students demonstrate high levels of understanding and respect for the views and beliefs of others.
- Students appreciate the wide range of after-school clubs and visits, including the school's Astroturf and sporting facilities. One student spoke enthusiastically about a school trip to Wales which helped to develop his team-building skills. Recent study visits to France, Kenya and New York have developed students' international cultural awareness.
- As an academy, the school is no longer obliged to work with the local authority. Links have been maintained but minimal support is required for this good and improving school. Senior leaders make good use of an external consultant to help identify areas for improvement and act swiftly on this advice.
- Safeguarding requirements are met. Staff are fully trained and knowledgeable about risk assessment and child protection issues.
- Leadership and management are not outstanding because they have not yet secured outstanding achievement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school well and are both supportive and challenging. They are kept well informed by the headteacher and are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching, how staff are rewarded and how underperformance is tackled. Governors understand published data on the school's performance. They know how pupil premium funding is spent because they receive detailed information at governing body meetings. Governors are committed to supporting the school by attending appropriate training and complete two online courses annually to ensure they are up to date with safeguarding and equalities issues.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136890
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	411802

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Evans
Headteacher	Neil Morris
Date of previous school inspection	29 June 2010
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