

Worthing High School

South Farm Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN14 7AR

Inspection dates	19–20 April 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher's outstanding leadership has underpinned the rapid improvements made in the last three years. She is most ably supported by an effective governing body, deputy headteacher and senior and middle leaders.
- Leaders and governors have worked very effectively together to change the school's culture and to improve teaching and outcomes.
- Progress in all years and in GCSE results has gone up since the previous inspection. In 2015, pupils achieved above-average standards in many subjects. Many pupils' progress exceeds that seen nationally in English and mathematics.
- Pupils behave sensibly around the school and in practically all lessons. They feel very safe and enjoy school life and all it offers.
- Teaching is very effective and much better than it was two years ago. In many lessons, teachers' excellent subject knowledge, skilful planning and accurate assessment of progress generate extremely good understanding and learning.
- All pupils receive excellent care and support which is why pupils who have special educational needs or disability and those who are disadvantaged do so well.
- The curriculum encompasses many thoughtful elements that prepare pupils well for their future education.
- Parents speak highly of the school's work: 'A wonderful school', 'Leaders are approachable, realistic and ambitious'. The school is increasingly popular in the local community.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small amount of teaching generates less successful learning over time than most teachers. This is because their feedback to pupils is ineffective or their lack of focus on the highest standards hinders progress.
- The percentage of top GCSE grades is below the national average in a few subjects.
- Small gaps remain between the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and others in the school.
- Attendance by pupils eligible for the pupil premium and those who have special educational needs or disability is too low.
- The school council is not yet strengthening pupils' understanding of good citizenship.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to raise achievement to even higher levels by:
 - spreading the excellent quality of teaching that exists to all subjects and groups of pupils, and the exemplary subject leadership to all subjects
 - focusing on increasing the percentage of top GCSE grades, particularly those achieved by the most-able pupils
 - persevering to eliminate the small gaps that remain between disadvantaged and other pupils in the school
 - insisting that all teachers follow the school's policy on feedback to pupils.
- Intensify actions taken to improve attendance for pupils eligible for free school meals, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability.
- Improve provision for pupils' personal development through leadership skills by extending how they can contribute to school improvement and so develop their responsibility and actions as good citizens.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher has achieved a great deal since the previous inspection, particularly gaining the full support and confidence of staff, parents and pupils. A parent wrote that 'the excellent leadership filters down through all aspects of the school'; this is true. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have established that pupils must be ambitious and that teachers must have high expectations. All staff know that an important part of their work is pupils' welfare and safety.
- Apart from the far better achievement in all years, the changed culture of the school is seen in pupils' good behaviour and keenness to learn in practically all lessons. This has generated a big reduction in internal or permanent and fixed-term exclusions, which were a concern in the past. Pupils behave sensibly outside of lessons and the atmosphere is calm.
- The headteacher is most ably supported by her senior leadership team, particularly the deputy headteacher who not only produces clear information on pupils' progress but also makes sure that teachers know how to use this information to identify any underachievement and plan their work. Many middle leaders are skilful at leading very effective teams which generate outstanding progress, and their work contributes to the continuing and rapid improvements in outcomes. One teacher wrote on the questionnaire, 'I am the most motivated I have been in teaching since I qualified'.
- Senior leaders assess the quality of teaching and learning accurately and know where support is needed to improve practice. They combine lesson observations with outcomes information, examination of pupils' books and pupils' views on their learning. All members of staff know the school's priorities for improvement, which match those identified during the inspection; leaders have a clear insight into the school's strengths and relative weaknesses and teaching continues to get even better.
- Staff appreciate the high-quality training they receive. It has improved a great deal since the previous inspection, particularly in terms of sharing expertise among staff. The experienced special educational needs coordinator led a successful course on emotional literacy for learning support assistants. Leaders now take into account staff's individual development needs so that they can extend their subject expertise, carry out research in school or perhaps follow pastoral or academic leadership programmes.
- Challenging topics such as 'Should we negotiate with terrorists?' or 'The abolition of the death penalty' are tackled in assemblies and many subjects explore the relevance of topics to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. British values permeate the curriculum: democracy within a citizenship focus day, individual liberties within a relationship day or tolerance through religious education lessons. Weekly tutor discussions on news items broaden pupils' horizons – for example 'the refugee problem' and 'Trump as President' recently. A pupil observed that tutor time was 'really good to do things we don't do at home'.
- The curriculum has already been adjusted to take into account changes to the national curriculum. Well-considered arrangements for future assessments will start in September 2016. In Year 9, pupils choose from four key stage 4 pathways which are well designed to give all pupils options which match their abilities and aspirations.
- Careers education starts in Year 7 with a focus on economic well-being and an introduction to how skills and interests link into career choices. All Year 10 complete work experience. Despite the school's best efforts, a few pupils feel they need even more guidance about sixth form options or apprenticeships. Along with many aspects of the provision for pupils' broad education, the school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education; in 2015, all Year 11 pupils proceeded into further education, employment or training.
- Lunchtime and after-school clubs and activities, particularly in sport, are popular and well attended. Leaders check on attendance by activity but have not yet analysed this information to see whether vulnerable or disadvantaged pupils participate as much as others.
- In addition to taking GCSE statistics and further mathematics, the most-able pupils can choose to deepen their knowledge of timetabled subjects in extra lessons before and after school. They can also study Latin in key stage 3 and classical civilisation and critical thinking in key stage 4. They attend classes at Brighton University and visit Oxford to raise their higher education aspirations. Talented sports pupils receive bursaries towards their training. Provision for the most-able pupils is very good.
- Most teachers mark assessment tasks accurately and several subject leaders made accurate predictions about the 2015 GCSE results. The few subject leaders who overpredicted outcomes were not challenged enough to justify their ambitious figures; the headteacher is taking swift and effective action to address this.

- Pupil premium and catch-up funds are spent wisely and adjusted each year in the light of the actions which generated the most-improved progress the year before. Much thought goes into the use of funds for disadvantaged pupils' learning; many are helped to go on school trips and outings (improved fieldwork outcomes) or to own a musical instrument (improved performance skills). The assistant headteacher overseeing disadvantaged pupils checks that they eat healthy foods. The gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school and nationally have either been removed, are closing quickly or, in some cases, disadvantaged pupils make more progress than others nationally.
- Year 11 pupils' revision and intervention sessions have been intensive in the last two years, especially for those who are disadvantaged. An external reviewer observed that the school 'was fire-fighting' to raise standards and a governor commented that 'We threw the kitchen sink at academic standards first' and mentioned 'rekindling' business links to stimulate work-related learning and extend careers advice.
- The school is oversubscribed for September 2016, reflecting the community's knowledge that the school has improved rapidly. One parent wrote that 'communication with parents is excellent'. Two years ago, below seven out of ten parents would have recommended the school to others; over nine out of ten would do so now. Parents are invited to the library one day a week and to revision and subject discussion evenings. They can access good careers advice on the school's website. Parents with a child who has special educational needs or disability provided many examples of the valuable support on offer.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Since the last inspection, the governing body has moved into a higher gear; it is diligent about monitoring and probing the school's work. Governors are linked to subjects and important areas, such as safeguarding, and have much useful expertise in education, finance or social services, which they bring to their deliberations.
 - All governors have chosen to be fully involved so the committee structure has been replaced by all of them attending monthly meetings. They acquire a valuable overview of any issues and developments on a regular basis. They seek out relevant training and arrange external reviews of their work.
 - Governors, along with the business manager, keep a sharp eye on how pupil premium and catch-up funds are spent and carefully examine whether actions have generated improvements. They equally support and want feedback when, for example, pupils' transport arrangements are funded so that they can attend after-school activities.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. In addition to training for new staff on the first day of term, all staff receive signed-for safeguarding training once a year with updates as necessary. They are made aware of, for example, e-safety, radicalisation, female genital mutilation or other sensitive topics. The school is well staffed with trained duty child protection officers, and pupils are told to write the name of one of these officers in their planners.
- The school does much to keep in touch with parents, especially those of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability; community (house) leaders know pupils' individual backgrounds well and know when to offer support. First-aid-trained staff always attend trips. The school accepts and welcomes pupils moved from other schools and makes their safety and welfare a high priority. The lead duty child protection officer works with the designated officer for looked after children and their welfare is monitored consistently.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Several aspects of teaching which required improvement at the time of the previous inspection have been tackled successfully. Changes to the books which boys read in lessons have made a big difference to their progress, attitudes to learning and results in English.
- It is clear that practically all teachers have detailed knowledge about their pupils' strengths and weaknesses, their individual learning needs or any personal issues which hinder their progress. This insight may lead to a particular seating plan to get the best out of a group, adaptations to work so that all can tackle it confidently or knowing whom to keep an eye on during lessons. This knowledge has certainly contributed to stronger and more effective learning and improved outcomes.
- Many teachers have expert subject knowledge so they explain new work clearly, generate extra depth in the most-able pupils' learning, support disadvantaged or lower attainers well and quickly identify and unpick misconceptions. These, and other elements of successful learning, are seen in many subjects, for example in mathematics and modern foreign languages. Learning is not yet outstanding because a small proportion of teaching, accurately identified by senior leaders, does not generate consistently good progress for pupils.

- Characteristics of the good and sometimes outstanding learning include:
 - a well-considered, variable pace during lessons so that pupils have enough time to absorb and discuss new work and ideas but work fast as and when that is suitable
 - stimulating resources and a range of activities to capture pupils' attention and to explore the lesson content with rich and relevant materials
 - feedback which follows the school's policy so that pupils are crystal clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve, particularly evident in geography and English books and on musical compositions
 - teachers posing questions that challenge pupils' thinking and skilfully using their right or wrong, deep or superficial answers to clarify, reinforce and extend learning.
- It is evident from many pupils' books that they do not repeat errors or that their next piece of work is better when they take on board comments about their work. When inspectors discussed learning with them, pupils observed how much they appreciate and learn from observations about the quality of their work. In contrast however, if pupils ignore specific guidance or marked misspellings, the same mistakes continue. Most feedback generates good progress but in a few books this is not always the case. In a very small number of books, it is hard to identify progress over time in pupils' written work.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding because a few teachers do not follow the school's marking policy. They do not give pupils enough feedback to generate progress in their written work or check that pupils learn from their mistakes. In addition, pupils' learning is not as rapid as it should be when, on rare occasions, teachers do not clamp down fast on pupils' chatter or lack of attention.
- Following training by the mathematics subject leader, skills such as drawing graphs in science, geography or technology are taught consistently; pupils' numeracy skills develop very well by problem-solving or carrying out calculations in a range of subjects.
- The same cross-curricular application of skills is true for pupils' reading and writing. The input of the experienced librarians has meant that many pupils read for pleasure and few of them forget to bring their current book into school. A tutor session on ambition, the word of the week during the inspection, had strong links to literacy by describing the word's origins and definition.
- Teaching for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is well organised. It often involves the use of intensive and successful programmes to bring these and other pupils' reading skills up to speed. Teachers and learning support assistants with relevant expertise blend encouragement with challenge well. Even in the older years, a few pupils' learning is hindered by weak reading and comprehension. The school tackles this weakness in combination with sessions on spelling, punctuation and grammar; improved reading is evident, particularly in Years 7 and 8.
- Training and well-considered deployment has made it possible for learning support assistants to be increasingly helpful – using their subject knowledge in English, mathematics or science, guiding pupils through reading, or offering sensitive support to a looked after child or pupils who have special educational needs or disability.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The inspection confirmed what a parent wrote, that 'the school is very caring and inclusive'. The pastoral leaders and special educational needs coordinator respond fast to any concerns or issues and maintain contact with parents as much as possible. They know all pupils well, particularly looked after children and those who are vulnerable. They keep a supportive eye on pupils who lack self-confidence or struggle to cope with school life and relationships.
- Pupils enjoy being in mixed-age tutor groups. Younger pupils benefit from socialising with older ones and older pupils enjoy helping them. The group of Year 7 pupils an inspector met during the inspection were thoroughly enjoying school life and said that 'staff treat us as adults' and that 'teachers are very fair'. They mentioned the focus on e-safety being discussed in many of their computing lessons and how they were fully aware of the dangers of social media. One pupil was training to be a peer mentor; there are numerous ways in which pupils of all ages can gain leadership responsibilities and help each other.
- Personal, social and health education and assembly themes (now listed on the school's website at a parent's request) cover many useful and topical issues. These include healthy eating and lifestyles, emotional well-being, road and rail safety and coping with stress.

- Reflecting assembly themes such as 'kindness', pupils are generous in raising funds for a range of charities. The school is a champion school for 'Get set for community action'. In 2016, a group of pupils participated in national citizenship service and this continues in the future. Many pupils volunteer as helpers for the annual Sussex cricket disability day.
- Several groups mentioned that most fundraising was by having 'endless' cake sales, non-uniform days and the biannual 12-mile walk for Chestnut Tree House. Leaders acknowledge that the 'culture and ethos leaders' and school council members are not yet contributing much to school life, school improvements or pupils' appreciation of democracy. The headteacher plans to strengthen these pupils' roles. Perhaps they will come up with new ways to raise funds for charity!
- Parents, staff and pupils confirm that bullying is rare and tackled firmly. Pupils observed that they had never heard homophobic bullying. The content of personal, social and health education is well planned. Pupils speak with maturity about not using the word 'gay' and how the school promotes equality and anti-discrimination firmly.
- The very few pupils educated off-site receive good-quality guidance to develop their personal skills, and behaviour if needed.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons they are practically always attentive and respectful, contributing to their enjoyment and to at least good learning. In only a small number of lessons did pupils' behaviour hinder progress, usually by a few individuals being silly and inattentive.
- Close to nine out of ten members of staff who responded to the questionnaire feel that behaviour is good. Pupils did comment, however, on how low-level background chatter continues for too long when 'just a few' teachers do not apply the school's behaviour policy rapidly.
- Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and now hovers around average. However, absence by pupils eligible for the pupil premium and those who have special educational needs or disability is still too high, as is the proportion of persistent absentees. Staff work hard to get pupils to attend regularly. They know that they must persevere in encouraging and helping some families to value education and to make sure their children go to school.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' progress has improved in all years since the last inspection; boys no longer lag behind girls and GCSE results have gone up. The percentage of boys and girls attaining five or more GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, exceeded the national average in 2014 and went up again in 2015. The 2015 gap between disadvantaged pupils and others attaining this measure almost halved between 2014 and 2015 and pupils who have special educational needs or disability also achieved improved outcomes.
- In 2015, the percentage of pupils making even more than the nationally expected progress between Years 7 and 11 was above average in English language and well above average in mathematics; current pupils continue to make very strong progress in these subjects and in science. Pupils, mostly the most able, who took GCSEs in the three separate science subjects did exceptionally well; outcomes in science have improved since the previous inspection.
- Close to 90 out of 100 pupils attained grade C or higher in GCSE statistics and almost all the 50 pupils who took GCSE further mathematics did as well. The school's provision for the most able is very strong in this subject. In 2016, 40 of the school's top mathematicians did well in the United Kingdom Intermediate Mathematics Challenge.
- In all years, pupils continue to make at least good and sometimes outstanding progress in many subjects but outcomes overall are not yet outstanding. This is because the rapid and sustained progress needed for pupils to achieve their full potential and attain a higher percentage of top GCSE grades is not secure in a few subjects such as English literature, geography and Spanish. At the same time, linked to the quality of teaching and learning, progress for pupils following work-related or GCSE courses in subjects such as business studies, media studies and drama is not as strong as it should be in Year 11.
- In all years, the gaps in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and others in the school and nationally have narrowed significantly, particularly in English and mathematics. In both GCSE subjects, practically all disadvantaged pupils made the same or better progress than others nationally.

- The challenge facing the school is to make sure that disadvantaged pupils' progress matches that of other pupils in the school, so that the small, in-school gaps are narrowed until they are gone. The larger than normal group of disadvantaged pupils in Year 7, who had slightly lower starting points overall than other pupils, are making rapid progress to catch up with others. They benefit from using the sophisticated reading and comprehension programmes now in place, as do many pupils with education, health and care plans.

School details

Unique reference number	139109
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10012264

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	987
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Cohen
Headteacher	Carolyn Dickinson
Telephone number	01903 237864
Website	www.worthinghigh.net
Email address	achieve@worthinghigh.net
Date of previous inspection	15–16 January 2014

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized 11–16 school. Year 7 pupils joined the school for the first time in September 2015. Boys outnumber girls in all years but the gender balance is narrowing.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for looked after children.
- Due to the change in the age of transfer, disadvantaged Year 7 pupils' funding was allocated to their previous school. Worthing High will receive catch-up funding for the 40 Year 7 pupils who did not attain Level 4 in English or mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Close to nine out of ten pupils are of White British heritage with very small numbers from several minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for special educational needs or disability is slightly above average.
- Only a very small number of pupils attend full-time alternative educational provision, either for medical or specific learning needs.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school meets the requirements on the publication of information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in just under 50 part-lessons. Several lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. In practically all lessons, inspectors looked at pupils' work in books and also examined a selection of books from one year group.
- Inspectors met with several groups of pupils and talked to others informally during breaktimes. Discussions were held with staff, including pastoral and academic senior and middle leaders. Meetings were held with a consultant who supports and advises the school regularly. Two meetings were held with governors: one with the chair of the governing body and the chair of the audit committee and the second with the chair of the governing body and four other governors.
- Inspectors took account of 156 parents' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and well over 100 parents submitted written comments. Inspectors also considered responses to online questionnaires completed by 64 members of staff and 155 completed by pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school's evaluation of its performance, its action plans for 2015/16, standards and progress information, behaviour and attendance records and a range of policies.

Inspection team

Clare Gillies, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Foster	Ofsted Inspector
Jenny Jones	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Lee	Ofsted Inspector

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