

Upper Wharfedale School

Wharfeside Avenue, Threshfield, Skipton, North Yorkshire, BD23 5BS

Inspection dates 8–9 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- From their broadly average starting points, students in Key Stages 3 and 4 make good progress. By Year 11, standards in GCSE examinations are typically above average.
- Good and sometimes outstanding teaching means that students make good progress. The teaching of mathematics is very strong. Interesting tasks and activities enthuse and challenge students of varying abilities. The teaching of English is improving.
- The behaviour of students is good. They show respect for each other and adults and take pride in their work.
- Students, parents and staff agree that students are kept safe. Students enjoy school. Attendance is above average and fixed-term exclusions are low.
- The headteacher and associate headteacher know the staff and students extremely well. They, along with governors and senior leaders, have taken decisive action to improve teaching.
- Senior and middle leaders ensure that the pupil premium is used to good effect. Disadvantaged students make equally good progress as others in the school.
- Governors hold the headteacher and leadership team effectively to account. They are clear about the school's immediate and longer-term priorities.
- The school plays a central role within its community. Partnerships with other local schools help the school to improve further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching does not always secure the best progress because tasks do not always provide the right level of challenge for students' varying abilities, particularly in English.
- Information from assessing students' literacy skills is not always used quickly enough to pinpoint where students have not reached their targets.
- Not all teachers apply the school's new marking policy in full. Not all students know what they need to do to improve, especially their writing skills.
- Some subject leaders do not yet make the best use of information about students' progress when setting priorities for their subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 28 parts of lessons taught by 18 teachers. Five lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher and senior leaders.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, associate headteacher and other senior leaders about teaching, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding and about assessment and students' progress.
- They also talked to students in lessons, informally and to three groups of students, to school governors and the local authority School Improvement Partner.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of written work, data from assessments and school records to review improvements in students' progress, behaviour, teaching, the curriculum and safeguarding requirements. They also examined the school's own evaluation of its work and its plans for further improvement.
- The responses of 16 staff to the inspection questionnaire were considered, along with the 69 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also considered emails and telephone calls from two parents.

Inspection team

Timothy Gartside, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Irene Lavelle	Additional Inspector
Paul Edmonson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Upper Wharfedale School is a much smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students eligible for support from the pupil premium funding is well below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school does not enter any students early for GCSE examinations.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations of students' attainment and progress.
- The school has a partnership with Kettlewell Primary school which involves shared teaching and management arrangements. Due to the extra responsibilities this entails, the deputy headteacher of Upper Wharfedale School has recently been appointed as associate headteacher. A proposal to federate the two schools from January 2015 is under consultation.
- The school has Enhanced Mainstream School Status and provides specialist support and guidance, when required, to other schools in the local area on specific learning difficulties.
- Specialist support in the teaching of English is provided to the school by a Local Leader of Education from South Craven School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching in English in order to accelerate students' progress in this subject across the school so that it is as good as it is in mathematics by making sure that:
 - teachers always provide the right the level of challenge for students of all abilities
 - all teachers assess students' literacy skills regularly and accurately and this information is used to quickly pinpoint where students have not reached their targets and subsequently take action to speed up their progress
 - all teachers apply the school's new marking policy so that all students know what they need to do so improve, especially regarding their writing skills.
- Provide support and training so that subject leaders make the most effective use of information about students' progress when setting priorities for their subjects and so that action plans for driving improvement are more precise.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders at all levels are ambitious for the school's development. They set high expectations for staff and students and ensure that the school plays a central role within its community.
- The headteacher and the associate headteacher know staff and all their students very well. They are very honest and accurate in their judgements about the school's strengths and current priorities. As a result, the school's own evaluation of its performance and plans for improvement are detailed, ambitious yet realistic. They know what needs to be done in order to improve students' achievement even further. The dip in the proportion of students achieving five A* to C grades in GCSE examinations in 2013 has already been successfully reversed.
- The leadership of teaching is good. Senior leaders, along with governors, have taken decisive action to improve teaching, especially in English. Leaders are accurate in their view of the quality of teaching. Teachers are set ambitious and realistic targets to improve their teaching so that their students achieve the highest standards. Teachers, along with their managers, regularly review students' progress. Leaders know, however, that despite improvement, achievement in English is still not as strong as in mathematics. Leaders are yet to ensure that all teachers adhere to the new marking policy.
- Action plans for subjects are not yet consistently precise because some subject leaders do not make the best use of information about students' progress when setting priorities for their subjects.
- Senior and middle leaders ensure that any additional government funding is used to good effect. Disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium make equally good progress as others in the school. They often do better than non-disadvantaged students nationally. Funding received to help those students who enter Year 7 with lower than expected levels of attainment in literacy, particularly reading, enables them to make good progress and catch up with their peers. Leaders ensure that teaching assistants provide effective support for learning.
- The curriculum prepares the students well for the future. It is broad and balanced and increasingly emphasises academic and technical subjects. Computer science has been introduced recently in favour of BTEC information and communication technology and ancient history is a popular option at GCSE. The school's commitment to offering a wide range of activities means that students experience success and their achievements are recognised. All have equal opportunity to benefit from all the school does.
- An extensive programme of careers education and guidance prepares students well for the next phase of their education. The vast majority progress either to the local college of further education or to sixth forms in nearby grammar schools.
- Leaders effectively promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Every day, assemblies or form periods are used to reflect upon an appropriate issue, such as fair trade. Students' awareness of British values, along with that of other cultures worldwide, is well supported. There are many opportunities to visit local places of worship. Students show great support for charitable activities.
- The local authority provides effective light-touch support. Regular meetings with the School Improvement Partner assist school leaders in evaluating its performance within the local, regional and national context. Specialist support by a Local Leader of Education has impacted very positively on improving teaching and students' achievement in English.
- Parents' views are very positive. They appreciate the school's work to ensure the happiness, good behaviour and good progress of their children. The vast majority would recommend the school to others.
- Safeguarding procedures meet current requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a good strategic overview of the school's work. They ensure that their skills continually improve through regular training. By working in partnership with governors at a local primary school, they help to ensure that all the young people in the local area benefit from a good education.
 - Governors hold the headteacher and leadership team effectively to account. They demonstrate a clear grasp of the immediate and longer-term school priorities. Governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, visit the school regularly, discussing issues, including how well the school performs in comparison with others, with the headteacher and staff. Through these meetings, and by visiting classrooms, they have a good understanding of the quality of teaching. They support the headteacher to tackle any weaknesses in teaching and ensure that good teaching is rewarded.
 - Governors monitor the progress of disadvantaged students. They know how the pupil premium is spent and know that it is used to good effect. They are rightly proud of the effective way in which the funding

has been used.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students arrive promptly to lessons and ready to work. In lessons, they generally concentrate well and show plenty of enthusiasm. These positive attitudes contribute to their good progress. Occasionally, a few students do not participate as enthusiastically in lessons and lose concentration and this slows their progress.
- Students behave well beyond lessons. They follow instructions as they move around the school's narrow corridors, always keeping to the left. They show respect to teachers and other adults and dress smartly.
- The school is a harmonious learning community. Students enjoy the spacious outside recreation areas at break and lunchtime and any litter is dealt with immediately. Students appreciate the additional support they receive from teachers with their work and the many extra-curricular opportunities on offer, including sport, music and drama.
- There has been only one permanent exclusion in the past three years and fixed-term exclusions are low and have declined over time.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. All necessary arrangements for the safeguarding of students are in place and monitored closely by senior leaders and governors.
- Students report that they feel safe and the views of parents and staff concur with this view.
- Standards of supervision before and after school, when the many school buses arrive and depart, are good.
- Incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with effectively. Students show a good understanding of the way in which individuals can be exploited or bullied and of issues such as homophobia and racism due to a comprehensive programme of personal and social education.
- Attendance is above average and is continuing to improve due to the effective systems in place to follow up any unexplained absences.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching means that students across the school make good progress. Students' work in their exercise books shows that teaching over time has a good impact on their progress. Teachers give a high priority to ensuring that students' written work is presented well. Students take pride in their exercise books.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully to provide a variety of interesting tasks and activities, which enthuse and challenge students of varying abilities, including the most able who work at a brisk pace. Students in the lower mathematics sets are given work that is pitched just at the right level. Students are given very clear explanations from teachers. This, along with very structured questions, ensures that all students gain a deeper understanding of their mathematical concepts. As a result, students make good and sometimes outstanding progress.
- The teaching of literacy has improved and, as a result, more students are now making good progress. Teachers usually take every opportunity to highlight key words, to introduce and explain new vocabulary which might be less familiar, and to encourage students to read aloud. Students' improved achievement in reading and writing is helping to ensure that they have the literacy skills needed to be able to learn successfully in other curriculum subjects.
- In English, observations in classrooms and work in students' exercise books show that, in the main, teachers get the level of challenge right; but not always. For some, this means that work is too easy, while for others work can be too hard. Although most teachers assess students' literacy skills regularly and accurately, occasionally, this is not the case and, as a result, do not always take action to speed up students' progress when they fail to achieve their targets.
- A new policy is in place for marking students' work, and much marking is of good quality. However, not all teachers are yet following the policy in full. Where it is well embedded, students reflect on how they can improve their work and so make faster progress. Not all students know what they need to do to improve, particularly their writing skills.

- Information about the achievement of disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs is used comprehensively to ensure work is planned that meets their needs and these students achieve well. Teaching assistants provide effective support.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students join the school in Year 7 with standards of attainment in English and mathematics that are similar to the national average. From their individual starting points, students in Key Stage 3 and 4 make good progress. By the time they leave Year 11, the standards they reach in GCSE examinations are typically above average.
- In 2013, the proportion of students achieving five A* to C GCSE grades in examinations fell and were broadly average. This, in the main, reflected the slower progress of students in English. Too few students made good progress in English. In mathematics, however, the proportion of students making the expected rate of progress and the proportion doing better than this was much higher than nationally.
- Leaders actions aimed at improving achievement in English is paying dividends. Any students who may be falling behind are identified early and benefit from additional help in order to improve their literacy skills and to catch up. Students' progress is now accelerating in English. Unvalidated GCSE results in 2014, along with observations of lessons and scrutiny of students work confirm that progress in English has accelerated and is now good across the school. However, achievement in mathematics is still stronger.
- The most able students are usually suitably challenged and overall their progress is good. At times, work is not always hard enough and these students do not make enough progress, especially in English. However, the rise in the number of students reaching the highest grades in examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2014, is testimony to their overall good achievement.
- In the 2013 GCSE results in English, the attainment of disadvantaged students was about half of a GCSE grade ahead of the non-disadvantaged in school and the same as non-disadvantaged students nationally. In mathematics, the attainment of disadvantaged students was also about half of a GCSE grade ahead of non-disadvantaged in school and nationally. The progress of disadvantaged students from their different starting points in English and mathematics is good. The pupil premium funding is used to good effect so that disadvantaged students achieve at least as well as non-disadvantaged students.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve well. From their different starting points, they make faster progress than similar students nationally. Tasks are usually pitched at an appropriate level and students are well supported by teaching assistants.

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	121690
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	448841

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	284
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Valerie Berry
Headteacher	Andrew Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2009
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