

The West Bridgford School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	136628
Local Authority	N/A
Inspection number	382223
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Brooker HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1456
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	309
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Liz Thomas
Headteacher	Rob McDonough
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
School address	Loughborough Road West Bridgford NG2 7FA
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. In total, the inspection team made 51 lesson observations of 51 different teachers, many of which were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at a range of documents including students' work, school self-evaluation, assessment and tracking data and arrangements for safeguarding. Meetings were held with nominated staff, groups of students and with representatives of the governing body and from some of the school's partners. In addition, analysis was undertaken of inspection survey responses from 403 parents and carers, 149 students and 62 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether the quality of teaching is consistently good.
- How well the best practice in the use of assessment is embedded across the school,
- To what extent sixth-form students make good progress from their starting points.

Information about the school

West Bridgford is a large and popular school, and is heavily over-subscribed. It attracts students of all ability, from a broad range of different backgrounds and from across the local area and beyond. A large majority of students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national figure, as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the number of students with a statement of special educational needs. The school is a specialist technology college and has national enhanced Healthy School status and the Eco-Schools green flag award. In April 2011, it converted to become an academy. Recently, there has been a significant turnover of staff, with around one fifth of teachers new to the school in the last two years.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Since the last inspection, The West Bridgford School has strengthened every aspect of its provision and improved all outcomes for students. It is an outstanding school. Central to the school's ambition is the ongoing drive to achieve the highest standards for each student. Levels of attainment have risen steadily year on year and are exceptionally high. Students make outstanding progress in their academic work, and their wider personal development is also excellent. They mature as responsible and articulate young adults who develop the essential attitudes, skills and self-reliance that prepare them very well for the next stage of their education and for later life. Students feel completely safe and most enjoy school. They respond to the school's high expectations and participate well in the wide range of enrichment opportunities on offer. The students' excellent behaviour and positive attitudes to learning underpin their outstanding progress and impressive achievements.

Good teaching, combined with a highly flexible curriculum and excellent support and guidance, underpins the students' outstanding learning and progress. Some teaching is inspirational, but some lessons are dull because activities do not sufficiently challenge or engage students. Despite this variability, the students' keenness and commitment to succeed, often with significant support and encouragement from home, ensures that they make consistently good progress even when teaching is less effective. Systematic tracking, alongside careful assessment, ensures that any students in danger of underachieving are identified and suitably supported.

The school's sustained improvement since the last inspection is securely founded on high ambition, challenging target-setting, rigorous monitoring and effective development planning. This has been achieved in the context of significant funding constraints. School development is informed by rigorous self-evaluation and is guided by the strong strategic leadership of the senior team, ably supported by the well-informed and effective governing body. Any weaknesses are identified so that gaps in performance can be narrowed. Recent steps to strengthen sixth-form provision, for example, have improved teaching and further raised standards at A level. The rapid and sustained increases since the last inspection demonstrate the school's outstanding capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eradicate weaknesses in teaching by replicating more widely the exemplary practice in the use of assessment so that:

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- all teachers share the same high expectations in their lesson planning
- learning activities engage and challenge all students in each lesson.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students start school with levels of attainment that are above those found nationally and achieve exceptionally high standards at the end of Key Stage 4. Almost all students achieved at least five higher grade GCSEs in 2011 and 90% did so including English and mathematics. The school’s specialist subjects, including mathematics and sciences, make a strong contribution to its very high standards. All groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve exceptionally well. This outstanding achievement owes much to their excellent attitudes to learning. In lessons, students sustain their concentration well, are highly motivated, and have the confidence to ask as well as answer questions. They particularly enjoy lessons that encourage active involvement or debate, for example when their history teacher segregated the class on the basis of students wearing poppies or when sixth form students presented different views on miracles in religious education.

Students of all ages demonstrate considerable maturity in their social interactions and their wider personal development. Their keenness to participate and determination to do well in all aspects of school life mean that their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is a notable strength. Students respond impressively when given responsibility. Their independence and self-confidence enable them to make a significant contribution to the life of the school, for example by developing a wind turbine and influencing improvements in teaching. Although critical of some aspects of school life, most students say that they enjoy school and are appreciative of the many and varied opportunities that it provides. Their exceptionally high levels of attendance reflect this positive engagement. They take responsibility for their own well-being and show considerable concern for the welfare of others, for example through their active participation in charity work. Students know how to keep fit and take action to ensure that they develop healthy lifestyles.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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Pupils’ behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

High-quality teaching promotes good or outstanding progress in a large majority of lessons. Positive relationships and high expectations create an excellent climate for learning, and students respond by working diligently and readily collaborating to produce high-quality work. When teaching is sharply focused, lively and engaging, this combination promotes outstanding progress. In the best lessons, teachers use skilful questioning to engage the whole class, tease out sophisticated ideas, to build confidence, promote independent thinking and check students’ understanding. Assessment information is effectively used in these lessons to plan ambitious outcomes and guide students’ next steps, and students are helpfully engaged through peer- and self-assessment. However, the pace of learning is sometimes constrained by superficial or unambitious planning. When teachers do not consider what or how different students will learn, progress is either too pedestrian or uneven, particularly when students spend long periods listening to teachers.

The school’s broad and balanced curriculum provides rich opportunities for high-quality learning and wider personal development. It is routinely adapted to ensure that it is customised with highly tailored programmes to meet the specific and changing needs of individuals and groups. Students engage in a high take-up across a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including many visits and overseas trips, that make a significant contribution to their personal development

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for its students. It monitors closely the performance of all individuals to maximise their participation and engagement. The impact of the school’s work and its attention to detail can be seen in the very high and increasing attendance figures and the students’ positive behaviour and engagement.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support

1

How effective are leadership and management?

Under the determined leadership of the headteacher, the school has been conspicuously successful in achieving significant and sustained improvement, notably but not exclusively in raising standards. The school exceeds its challenging targets because ambition is embedded at all levels. Senior and middle leaders drive improvement well and staff share a strong sense of purpose. Highly developed procedures for tracking performance and progress ensure that the students are given equal opportunity to succeed and any unevenness between different groups is minimal. A rigorous programme of monitoring, linked with high-quality support and training, ensures that the quality of teaching is improving steadily. This has been crucial in maintaining high-quality provision during the recent period of high staff turnover. New staff are particularly positive about their induction training and the opportunities for continuing professional development.

The school makes highly effective use of a range of different partnerships to strengthen its provision and improve the well-being and achievement of its students, including mutually productive links with local universities for teacher training. It makes a strong contribution to promoting community cohesion by developing students' wider understanding of other people's beliefs and values, and in maintaining a highly cohesive school community in which students from different backgrounds get on noticeably well. The school also works hard to secure good parental engagement and ensure that home-school communication is an efficient and effective two-way process. Survey responses reflect highly positive relationships with most groups of parents and carers, and indicate that they are kept well informed about their children's achievement, well-being and development. However, the many critical comments in the parental inspection questionnaire responses indicate that parents and carers have high expectations and are quick to articulate their concerns.

The governing body discharges its responsibilities rigorously and plays a key role in supporting and challenging the school in order to set ever-higher expectations. Its members are systematic in monitoring the school's performance and in shaping its direction and development. The school has well-established procedures for safeguarding students and adopts recommended good practice across all areas of its work so that students, staff and the governing body have a strong understanding of how to keep safe.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement

1

Taking into account:

The leadership and management of teaching and learning

2

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The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

The sixth form is very popular and highly successful. Students make excellent progress from their starting points at the end of Year 11 to achieve results that are above those found nationally, notably at AS level. Since the last inspection, the strong trajectory of improvement at A level shows the effectiveness of rigorous self-review and development planning. Sixth-form teaching is of a consistently high quality, with some that is inspirational. Teachers have very high expectations of the standard of students' work and plan activities that engage their active involvement and promote independent thinking and autonomous learning.

The outstanding care, guidance and support in the sixth form, which students describe as 'second to none', secure excellent rates of attendance, retention and progression into higher education. Students make a strongly positive contribution to the wider school community and have good opportunities for leadership, for example through peer mentoring and in organising the annual 'Bridgstock' concert.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire are happy with their child's experience at the school. However, parental responses were unusually critical for an outstanding school, and were noticeably more critical than those returned by staff or students. A significant number of parents and carers took time to write additional comments, raising a wide

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variety of issues and expressing personal views, many of which were particular to their own circumstances. The most commonly expressed concerns were linked to the variability of teaching and the quality of communication by and with senior leaders. Although there are evidently occasions when the school has not met some parents' and carers' expectations regarding communication, inspectors judge that the school's engagement with parents and carers is good and that they are well informed about their child's progress. Inspectors endorse the view that, although teaching is good overall, the quality of teaching is variable and some lessons lack pace, interest or challenge. A number of questionnaire responses, while acknowledging the school's strong academic performance and improvement, expressed the view that it is too narrowly focused on results and targets, rather than promoting wider enrichment or championing non-academic achievements. Notwithstanding these comments, inspection evidence indicates that the school achieves outstanding outcomes and that students' wider personal development is a significant strength.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The West Bridgford School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 403 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1456 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	152	38	224	56	17	4	2	0
The school keeps my child safe	188	47	202	50	9	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	159	39	222	55	17	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	152	38	216	54	24	6	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	97	24	265	66	19	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	79	20	217	54	80	20	7	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	88	22	216	54	76	19	7	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	129	32	198	49	28	7	3	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	107	27	233	58	37	9	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	137	34	212	53	29	7	7	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	54	13	197	49	71	18	19	5
The school is led and managed effectively	117	29	231	57	22	5	9	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	147	36	225	56	20	5	4	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The West Bridgford School, West Bridgford, NG2 7FA

Thank you for making such a positive contribution to our recent inspection of your outstanding school. We enjoyed speaking with you, hearing your views and seeing your work. We were particularly impressed by:

- your excellent behaviour, positive attitudes to learning and the many contributions that you make to your school and its wider community
- the school's exceptional academic results and its recent track record of improvement
- your impressive progress, both academically and in your personal development
- the school's high-quality provision, including much of the teaching, the carefully tailored curriculum and its outstandingly effective care, guidance and support.

Many of you told us how much you enjoy school and appreciate the wide range of opportunities provided. The inspection findings are overwhelmingly positive. However, you and your parents, quite rightly, have high expectations and are quick to communicate any concerns. Some of you, for example, were critical of lessons that are dull. We observed some excellent teaching and lively learning, but agree that some lesson activities lack pace and challenge. The school evidently listens and responds to your well-articulated views. Nonetheless, we have asked the school specifically to strengthen aspects of teaching and the use of assessment by replicating more widely the best practice that already exists.

You can all be proud of your efforts and many achievements. We wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker
Her Majesty's Inspector

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