

# Notley High School and Braintree Sixth Form

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	137013
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	395331
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Edward Wheatley

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1459
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	227
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Gask
<b>Headteacher</b>	Simon Thompson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 March 2009
<b>School address</b>	Notley Road Braintree CM7 1WY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01376 556300
<b>Fax number</b>	01376 550991
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@notleyhigh.com

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<b>Age group</b>	11–19
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	24–25 May 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	395331



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Edward Wheatley Additional Inspector

Patricia Symington Additional Inspector

Derek Wiles Additional Inspector

Rachel Bendefy Additional Inspector

Heather Housden Additional Inspector

Lynne Kaufman Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 53 teachers teaching 54 lessons or parts of lessons. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body and students. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at achievement information, development planning and self-evaluation records. They took into account 437 returned parental questionnaires.

## Information about the school

Notley High and Braintree Sixth Form is a larger than average-sized school. The great majority of students are of White British heritage and come from several primary schools. Very few students who attend are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well-below average. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is broadly average, and the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also broadly average. Specially resourced provision for students with special educational needs is based on the school site. This takes the form of a local authority speech, language and communication centre which serves the needs of 20 students. Students from the centre attend many of the lessons in the main school. The sixth form is relatively new, being in its third year. It takes students from other local schools and further afield. The school became an academy in August 2011. The school meets the current government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- Notley High School and Braintree Sixth Form is a good school. Students' achievement is good and sometimes excellent. The school is good rather than outstanding because occasionally teaching is not challenging enough, and marking of students' work has not improved enough since the school was last inspected.
- Students' attainment is above average by the end of Key Stage 4, and high in English and mathematics. It is rising fast, particularly in science and humanities. Students' progress is good and often outstanding. In the sixth form, achievement is good overall, but improving, and some students do very well. Students' literacy, numeracy and communication skills are good. Students in the speech, language and communication centre make good progress.
- Teaching is good, and in about one third of lessons, it is outstanding. Lessons are usually challenging, but occasionally work is not matched to students' learning needs, and sometimes students are not sure of their targets and how to achieve them. Marking is good in English, but elsewhere it is inconsistent in frequency and quality, with students sometimes not following guidance on how to improve their work. Questioning is usually good, but occasionally students are not fully engaged in following discussions.
- Students' behaviour is good, and sometimes excellent. Their attitudes to learning are good and frequently outstanding. There is a small amount of low-level disruption, but this is decreasing with new, effective approaches to managing students' behaviour. Students are well cared for and the school ensures they are safe. Students report that bullying of any kind is extremely rare.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's weaknesses, and have made key appointments to deal with them. They have acted fast to eliminate ineffective teaching and to improve attainment. Leaders manage teachers' performance

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well, and provide good quality professional development to support them.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure all teaching reflects the best seen by ensuring:
  - work is always matched to students' learning needs and provides sufficient challenge
  - all students know their targets, and how to achieve them
  - marking is regular and that students follow the advice provided
  - questioning and discussion engages all students in expressing their own ideas and understanding, and encourages independent learning.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Achievement is improving and variations in attainment between subjects over recent years have reduced significantly, due to changes in staffing and leadership. High levels of attainment have been sustained in English, and mathematics has rapidly caught up. Improvement has been slower in science, and history and geography but attainment is now above average and rising fast. Students read and write well. They use a wide range of writing styles and vocabulary, and include sophisticated sentence structures in their work. The quality of handwriting varies, but it is getting better as the school is treating it as a priority for improvement. Students' numeracy skills are good and are reinforced well in most subjects. Students have good computer skills which they use effectively in all subjects. For example, in a Year 9 religious education lesson, students used the internet to research different kinds of genocide, to explain the differences and to compare them with current and historical examples.

Students of all abilities and backgrounds make good, and sometimes excellent, progress from average starting points. Progress is especially good when students work independently and when they use their own ideas and imagination. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson about war poetry, students analysed the structure and meanings of a poem, interpreted the writer's feelings imaginatively and after sophisticated discussion, produced exceptionally detailed written reports of their own. All students made outstanding progress and were enthusiastic about their own success. However, in other lessons, students occasionally do not engage as fully in discussion as they should and, briefly, their progress slows. Disabled students and those with special educational needs, including those students from the speech, language and communication centre, make good and at times outstanding progress. This is because they frequently work independently and adults provide sensitive support closely tailored to students' particular learning needs.

In the sixth form, students' attainment is broadly average. Significant differences between subjects have narrowed as this new sixth form becomes established.

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Students' progress is generally good overall. It is good in the International Baccalaureate courses, and improving elsewhere. Progress temporarily slows when students do not fully engage in discussion.

Parents and carers are mostly pleased with how well their children learn and make progress, and inspection findings largely endorse their views.

### **Quality of teaching**

Over time teaching is good. During the inspection about one third was outstanding, reflecting the school's evaluation, and with a small proportion that was satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations, plan lessons thoroughly and ensure learning outcomes are explicit and clearly linked to National Curriculum levels, or public examination grades. In these lessons, there is a relentless focus on achieving high levels and a regular check that students understand what is expected of them, and that they know how to improve. Students are encouraged to discuss and share their ideas and to develop independent learning skills. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson, students were challenged to explain their understanding of regular two-dimensional shapes. The most-able students accurately explained the geometrical properties to weaker students in the class. The teacher also provided challenging questions for the most-able to answer. The pace of learning was fast, students' understanding developed well, and all students were highly motivated and engaged in learning. The teaching of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good, with support well focused on their specific needs and that encourages students to work independently. The quality of support for students from the speech, language and communication centre is good. Where these students are included in main school lessons, the collaboration between teachers and support staff is extremely good, so that support is accurately focused on the key terminology and main ideas to help students learn well. Teaching in the sixth form is good. It is challenging, clearly focused on examination course expectations and, in the best instances, engages students in discussing and explaining their knowledge to help them express themselves accurately.

In a small proportion of lessons, work is not so challenging and students of different abilities are not consistently challenged. Occasionally, teachers do not provide the opportunities for students to develop their own understanding through discussion and independent learning. There are instances of this throughout the school and sixth form. The quality of questions is often good and in most lessons, this leads to good learning through discussion, but this is not consistent. Marking is frequently detailed and with good advice on how students should improve their work, and in these lessons students are usually very clear about their targets and how to reach them. In other lessons, this is not always the case and here marking is sometimes infrequent and too brief, and when advice is given it is not always followed by students. Teachers promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively, with frequent reference to responsibilities for the environment, relationships and consideration for other people.

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Parents and carers are generally pleased with the quality of teaching and feel that their children's learning needs are met. Students' views of teaching are positive.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students enjoy school and their attendance is above average. Throughout the school and sixth form the great majority behave well, sometimes outstandingly so and have very positive attitudes to learning. A minority of parents and carers feel that there is some behaviour that disrupts learning, and this view is supported by a small proportion of students and staff. Inspectors saw some low-level disruption that was limited to a few students in lessons where it occurred. Usually, teachers deal with this well and new procedures are having a positive impact in helping prevent misbehaviour. Students say the new procedures are easy to understand and are working increasingly well. A minority of parents and carers also expressed some concerns about bullying, but inspectors found no evidence to support this view. Students have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying, racism and homophobic bullying. They say they are taught how to stay safe when using the internet, and that any form of bullying is very rare and dealt with rapidly and effectively.

Students get on well together. The school has very good procedures to care for students, and to provide support for those students and their families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher and senior leaders provide very clear direction for improvement and all leaders have an accurate view of the areas the school must focus on in order to continue the rise in levels of attainment. The school has focused on specific subjects where attainment has been too low and made a series of key staff appointments at senior and middle levels to help drive improvements. It has been successful in this and although the planned improvements are not yet fully realised, there has been rapid progress in performance, especially in the sciences and humanities. Inadequate teaching has been largely eliminated, and much has improved from satisfactory to good, and from good to outstanding, through well-planned professional development and performance management. However, although leaders have initiated some improvements in marking, which was an area for improvement at the previous inspection, these have not moved fast enough.

The quality of guidance to students starting sixth form courses is good, and it has improved rapidly since the sixth form was opened. The school's curriculum is managed well and is improving to meet the career and academic aspirations of all students. It provides an increasingly wide range of academic and work-related courses, supported by trips, visits and extra-curricular sports and other activities. Provision for students in the speech, language and communication centre is good.

The governing body has played a major role in helping to make key senior

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appointments. Through some reorganisation of how its committees work, it is also more closely focused on supporting the drive to raise levels of attainment than it was previously. Its members are well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses and hold it to account. The school promotes equal opportunities effectively, there is little difference in the achievement of different groups of students and this is narrowing. The school has effective procedures to deal with all forms of discrimination robustly. As a result of improvements in students' performance, and the actions taken to sustain these, the school is showing a strong capacity to improve further.

Parents and carers are supportive. One wrote that their 'children had a received a good quality start to their education'. Most are pleased with the level of communication with the school, and attendance at parent and carer consultations is high. The school is working hard to establish further links to involve parents in students' learning. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements. They are rigorous and students are encouraged to report unexpected or worrying incidents. The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and supported well by the curriculum, for example, citizenship, religious education, personal, social and health education, and by class and year assemblies.



## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



28 May 2012

Dear Students

**Inspection of Notley High School and Braintree Sixth Form, Braintree CM7 1WY**

Thank you for making us welcome when we inspected your school and sharing your views with us. We found that you are at a good school. Your progress is good and often outstanding.

The following things are particular strengths of the school. Teaching is often excellent. Most lessons are interesting, challenging and well matched to your needs. You enjoy learning, and many curriculum activities encourage your enthusiasm for learning. The staff and governing body know what is needed to make the school improve further, and they are acting quickly to make improvements happen. Your behaviour is good and often excellent. Your attendance levels are above average. You feel safe, and you know how to stay safe. You know about the different forms of bullying and are confident that if bullying happened, it would be sorted out rapidly. The school takes good care of you.

In order for your school to continue to improve, we have asked your teachers to make sure that:

- teaching is always challenging and matched to your learning needs
- you know your targets and what you need to do to achieve them
- marking is regular, and that you follow the guidance teachers give you
- you engage fully in questioning and discussion sessions to encourage your independent learning.

You can help by making sure you know your targets and how to reach them, by following advice teachers give when they mark your work, making sure you join in discussions in lessons whenever you can, and if you think work is too easy, ask for something more challenging.

Yours sincerely

Edward Wheatley  
Lead inspector

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