

Oldfield School

Kelston Road, Bath, BA1 9AB

Inspection dates

12–13 September 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Students thrive in an environment that is highly conducive to excellent learning.
- Although students join the school with broadly average attainment, their GCSE results are high. From Year 7 to Year 11, students make excellent progress.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations, and manage their classes very well to ensure that students are fully engaged in learning.
- Much high quality learning extends beyond the classroom, through regular homework, internet-based learning packages and additional study sessions at lunchtimes.
- Students' work is regularly and helpfully assessed and their progress rigorously monitored. Any underachievement is swiftly identified and addressed.
- Parents and students have a high regard for the school. They value the many opportunities for students to take on responsibilities and join clubs which promote their cultural, artistic or sporting interests.
- Students' behaviour in and outside of lessons is impeccable. Students are polite, courteous, helpful and constructive.
- The headteacher sets very high standards for the school. Systems for checking, maintaining and improving the quality of provision are exceptionally well developed. All staff, including support staff, are held responsible for the progress of the students they teach.
- The governing body has an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and the challenges it faces, and plays a full part in planning new developments.
- The sixth form is good. Sixth form students enjoy being part of the school. Their attainment is above average overall and most are successful in getting places with the universities, colleges or employers of their choice.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 teachers teaching 32 lessons, around a fifth of which were joint observations with members of the senior team.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, with the Chair of the Governing Body and with school staff, including senior and middle leaders. Informal discussions also took place with staff and students.
- Questionnaire returns from 50 staff were analysed.
- Inspectors took account of 29 responses to the on-line Parent View questionnaire in planning the inspection, along with written comments from, and informal discussion with, a small number of parents. Evidence from the school’s own surveys of parents and carers was also considered.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school’s self-evaluation and development plans, its safeguarding policies, and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

Ian Hodgkinson, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Louise Sharples	Additional inspector
Kevin Wright	Additional inspector
Helen Matthews	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Oldfield is smaller than the average secondary school, and has a very small sixth form. The school attracts students from a wide geographical area beyond Bath, including Bristol and its environs. Not all students therefore choose to stay on into the sixth form, with some choosing other providers which may be closer to their home or offer a different nature of provision.
- Previously a girls' school, it converted to a co-educational academy in February 2011. The predecessor school had been judged outstanding in its last inspection in 2007. As an academy, its first mixed intake of boys and girls arrived in Year 7 in September 2012, in the week before this inspection. The sixth form also has a very small number of boys.
- The large majority of students are White British, with around a quarter from a variety of minority ethnic heritages. The proportion speaking English as an additional language is higher than that found in most schools.
- The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs or supported at school action plus is below average. The proportion supported at school action is broadly average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (extra money provided to schools by the government) is low.
- The school was designated a High Performing Specialist School in 2004 and operates specialisms in English and the arts, science and sport. Since the previous inspection it has become a National Support School whose role is to help other schools to improve. The headteacher is a National Leader of Education, providing advice and support to other schools.
- The school exceeds the government's floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable students to make consistently rapid progress across all subjects in the sixth form by:
 - ensuring that leaders and teachers make sharper use of national comparative data on students' progress to monitor and improve sixth form performance
 - increasing the opportunities for students to develop and articulate their ideas independently during lessons.
- Raise the quality of teaching in more lessons from 'good' to 'outstanding' by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently adapt tasks to match the full range of abilities in their classes
 - developing further opportunities for teachers to see and share outstanding practice.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students' attainment on joining the school in Year 7 has been broadly average over time, albeit with a generally higher percentage joining from more able groups than is found in schools nationally.
- Standards are well above average by the end of Year 11. Students make excellent progress from Year 7 through to Year 11 across all subjects. In both English and mathematics, the proportions making, or exceeding, expected rates of progress are high.
- Higher attainers make particularly outstanding progress. Students in other groups also make strong progress, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs. The school rigorously tracks the progress of individuals and effectively tailors support to meet their needs. Funding from the pupil premium has been successfully used to provide bespoke one-to-one tuition to accelerate the progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and others with specific needs. Looked after children and students who speak English as an additional language make excellent progress.
- In the school's very small sixth form, pass rates and retention rates are high, and students successfully achieve places in the next stage of their education, employment or training, including Oxford and Cambridge universities. Students consistently learn well in lessons. There is some variation between subjects in rates of progress at A level, although students make excellent progress in some subjects such as art, photography and English.
- Across the school, students' literacy and numeracy skills are mostly very well developed. Expectations for the quality of writing are high across the curriculum, and students learn to write very effectively for different purposes. Students showed much confidence and resilience in applying their knowledge of number through well-organised approaches to problem solving in lessons observed in mathematics in Year 11.
- The school's development plan has rightly identified the improvement of students' oracy as a priority for the coming year. Some students are reticent to contribute to large-group discussions and can be rather passive in class. In the sixth form, where classes are often small, this occasionally leads to over direction by the teacher and limits opportunities for creative and independent input from students.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The school's own records of monitoring of teaching indicate that it is rare to see a lesson which is any less than good in this school. This was confirmed on the inspection, where lessons demonstrated an exceptional degree of consistently effective practice.
- Teachers' expectations are very high, and are a very potent force when coupled with the great pride students take in their work. Students work hard and engage fully in lessons. They respond eagerly to challenges set by their teachers, and work very constructively with each other to complete tasks or solve problems.
- The pace of learning is often sustained at a high level through lessons, and learning is extended well beyond the classroom. Good-quality homework is regularly set and assiduously completed. Students can get additional study support in many subjects out of class at lunchtime or after school. Students are now encouraged to read more widely for pleasure through reading schemes in Key Stage 3, and to practise their number skills through on-line numeracy packages.
- Teachers mark students' work regularly and helpfully, so that students are clear about how well they are doing and what they need to improve. Teachers deploy many strategies to check students' learning as a lesson proceeds, so that they identify misconceptions and address them quickly.
- Assessment information is rigorously checked and monitored by teachers and school leaders

to identify students who are underachieving, and detailed interventions are put in place to accelerate their progress. However, assessment information is not always used well by teachers to fine-tune tasks to match the different abilities of students in their classes.

- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs receive support of a high quality, including from teaching assistants who are accountable for the progress of the students directly in their care. Provision is well tailored to meet specific needs, such as through one-to-one support with English and mathematics at Key Stage 3 or through the excellent development of independent study skills seen in the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness course in Key Stage 4.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The school offers an excellent climate for learning. The site and its well-tended grounds are calm and orderly. An ethos of mutual respect and tolerance prevails among the student community.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted strongly throughout the curriculum and extra-curricular provision, including through the 'beliefs and values' and personal, social and health education programmes. Students learn to recognise bullying in most of its forms and how to take action against it. They demonstrate a very good understanding of how to conduct themselves safely in lessons and other activities.
- Parents and carers overwhelmingly feel that students behave well and that their children are safe at school. These views were echoed by students in both formal and informal discussions with inspectors. Students told inspectors that bullying was rare, but that there were many places to which they could turn if they were bullied or felt unsafe, and that they were confident that staff would resolve any issues. Students take specific responsibilities as guardians or 'bully monitors' to offer advice and support.
- Students' conduct in lessons and around the school is excellent, and their attitudes to learning are exceptionally positive. Where inspectors judged behaviour any less than outstanding in lessons it was because some students were too passive and needed to be more actively involved in the lesson.
- The school has taken positive action to improve attendance from broadly average to above average in the last academic year. It has also been successful in closing a gap with the national average for the attendance of students known to be eligible for free school meals. A firmer line is now being taken to discourage families from taking term-time holidays.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher has been very successful in developing a system of leadership and management which has sustained the performance of the school at a high level. As a converter academy, the school makes its own arrangements for external support, which has been effective.
- Much responsibility for the organisation and delivery of the curriculum is devolved to departments and faculties, which have considerable autonomy in making decisions about allocation of resources for the development and improvement of standards.
- Heads of departments and faculties also have a prime responsibility for evaluating the quality of provision in their subjects and identifying priorities for improvement. Expectations are very high in this regard. As one head of faculty said, 'If you run it, you evaluate it!' All activities are rigorously checked against quality standards and evaluated in terms of the learning and progress that result for students.
- Key areas for improvement identified through these evaluation activities feed through into faculty or departmental development plans, which also incorporate whole-school priorities

for the coming year. These form the basis of the whole-school development plan. Students' views, and those of parents and carers, are regularly used to inform evaluation and planning. The system has great coherence, ensuring that whole-school priorities are consistently addressed across the school and that specific departmental issues receive full attention.

- Surrounding the autonomy of departments is the very thorough ongoing monitoring of performance by the headteacher and senior leaders. Not all staff are comfortable with this high level of scrutiny. Whole-school monitoring does, however, ensure a high degree of consistency of quality across the school, and thereby secures much equality of opportunity for students, especially in Years 7 to 11.
- In the sixth form, while the monitoring of the performance of individual students is very thorough, staff and school leaders do not make enough use of national benchmark data on student progress to compare subject performance with that of other schools. There is, therefore, more variation in performance by subject in the sixth form than in the main school.
- Management of the performance of staff and leaders at all levels is robust and accorded a high priority. It is well focused on the success of staff in achieving high-quality outcomes for students, in implementing school development priorities and in realising targets for professional development. The majority of staff have favourable views of their professional development opportunities; some would welcome more opportunities to observe colleagues who teach consistently outstanding lessons, as a means of improving their own practice.
- The curriculum is very well designed to support students' outstanding progress and excellent personal development. It secures strong basic skills for all in Key Stage 3 and offers a personalised approach at Key Stage 4 well suited to students' aptitudes and interests. The specialist subjects of English and science offer a particularly broad range of options. The sixth form too, for its size, offers a good range of academic courses to ensure continuity of study for those wishing to stay on. A rich extra-curricular programme is very well regarded by students and their parents and carers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - is led with much authority by a Chair who has a very well-developed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development
 - is closely involved in formulating and monitoring action plans to improve performance in specific areas, including by linking with subjects
 - ensures that resources are allocated effectively to develop a high-quality curriculum and learning environment
 - has ensured stability and secured the school's future as an academy following a period of considerable uncertainty
 - ensures that safeguarding requirements are met.

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 pupil's 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 pupil's 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	136483
Inspection number	395514

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	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	772
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	79
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Julie Cope
Headteacher	Mrs Kim Sparling
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2007
Telephone number	01225 423582
Fax number	01225 464986
Email address	headteacher@oldfieldschool.com

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