

Etonbury Academy

Stotfold Road, Arlesey, SG15 6XS

Inspection dates

11–12 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Good teaching ensures that students make good progress over the four years they spend in the school. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Attainment in English and mathematics is now above average at the end of both key stages.
- Most teaching builds well on students' previous learning, so they are motivated to do well.
- Students enjoy school and behave well in lessons and around the school. They say that they feel safe and bullying is rare.
- Senior leaders and governors are ambitious, and their initiatives to improve the school have been successful.
- Effective checks by leaders on the quality of teaching have ensured that most teaching is now good or better.
- Standards are continuing to rise and the school has a good capacity for further improvement.
- A vibrant atmosphere and strong sense of community permeates through the school.
- Parents, staff and students all take great pride in its work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always use the information they collect about students' individual progress to plan lesson activities at just the right level.
- In particular, planning in some lessons does not cater well enough for the learning needs of the more-able students.
- Staff in charge of subject areas do not monitor the quality of marking and feedback in students' books sharply enough to ensure that it is consistently helpful.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 27 lessons, of which three were observed jointly with members of the senior team including the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with two groups of students, two members of the governing body and school staff, including senior leaders.
- Inspectors took account of the 25 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and 21 questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at monitoring information, improvement plans, analysis and tracking of students' progress, and records of classroom observations. They also sampled students' work and talked to them about their learning.

Inspection team

Nasim Butt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lisa Fraser

Additional Inspector

Patricia Barford

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is small compared to the average-sized secondary school.
- Etonbury converted to academy status in November 2011. The predecessor school, Etonbury Middle School, was judged as satisfactory in its last inspection in September 2010.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for additional funding through the 'pupil premium' is much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through 'school action' is above average, but the proportion supported through 'school action plus' or a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The very large majority of students are of White British heritage and very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The school works closely in partnership with the Robert Bloomfield and Samuel Whitbread Academies, and all three schools are members of the Bedfordshire East Multi Academy Trust (BEMAT).
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding by ensuring that:
 - teachers always set high expectations for learning in lessons, and challenging targets for students to achieve
 - assessment information is used consistently well to accurately match learning activities to the needs of all students, and particularly the more-able students
 - all students know precisely what they need to do to improve their work and how to reach the next level.
- Further develop the role of middle leaders by equipping them with the skills to rigorously monitor the quality of marking and feedback in students' books, so that it is consistently good or better in all year groups and in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- At the end of Year 6 in 2012, pupils' attainment was above average in reading and writing and broadly average in mathematics. The development of an applied, problem-solving approach to teaching mathematics has improved pupils' conceptual understanding, and as a result the current Year 6 are on track to attain above average standards in 2013.
- By the time students leave the school in Year 8 their attainment is securely above average in English and mathematics. The vast majority make the progress expected nationally in both subjects, with a significant proportion doing better.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to other students. This is because of effective targeted support both in and out of lessons, coupled with the close monitoring of its impact. Sensitive guidance from teachers and other adults means that all groups of students participate fully in lessons.
- Similarly, students supported by the pupil premium achieve as well as other students. As a result, the gap in attainment between these students and all students nationally is closing fast.
- Students know how to improve their reading because they are taught well in English lessons. Regular reading at school and at home consolidates their understanding of reading strategies, which they confidently applying across different subject areas.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is stimulating and enjoyable for students. This is the result of thoughtful planning that focuses on how best to enhance students' understanding, using strategies to maximise participation and sustain interest. As a result most students make good progress.
- The varied techniques teachers use when questioning students reflect their good understanding of how different students learn. Teaching assistants are well briefed and follow the examples set by the class teachers in their support. For example, less-able pupils in a Year 6 lesson observed improved the quality of their writing because of the good modelling and skilful prompting in the use of connectives by the adults working with them.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers explain clearly and make sure as many students as possible are answering questions in order to gauge their understanding, especially in practical lessons. For example, Year 7 boys in physical education deepened their understanding of the rationale for certain moves in rugby as a result of the teacher's skilful probing, based on his thorough knowledge of individual students.
- Year 8 students really enjoy their option subjects, which include philosophy and needlework, because of the imaginative way these specialist areas of the curriculum are taught. As a result, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively.
- In the rare lessons where teaching requires improvement it is usually because some teachers are not using assessment information well enough to plan activities that are matched to the students' differing ability levels, especially for the more-able students, or monitoring students' progress during the lesson. In addition, assessment is not always used effectively to set challenging targets for all students.
- Work is marked regularly and most students have their current attainment and end-of-year targets in their books. Teachers' comments often tell students how well they are doing and how they can improve, but not always precisely enough. Students do not have enough guidance

about what they can do to reach the next level and this puts a cap on their progress.

- Literacy is taught well across most subjects, for example in science, where Year 7 students sequenced their ideas about the states of matter into paragraphs using criteria they are familiar with in English.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are proud of their school, behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Disruption in lessons is rare. In the main, students respond well to good management of their behaviour.
- Permanent exclusions are rare, and the number of fixed-term exclusions has been going down fast and is below average. This is one indication among many that behaviour over time has improved.
- Students' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. They develop good relationships with others and are polite and courteous to staff and visitors.
- Although students have a secure understanding of the various types of prejudice-based bullying, some explained to inspectors that they wanted more input from the school to further deepen their understanding. Nevertheless, students say that bullying is rare and when it does occur it is dealt with quickly and effectively by staff.
- Students are acutely aware of how to stay safe and adopt safe practices, for example when handling equipment in practical subjects. They play team games safely and abide by the rules. Older students move safely along corridors between lessons and show consideration for younger students in the playground.
- Attendance is broadly average and continues to rise while persistent absence is going down. These improvements are the result of the good work done with targeted families, who now have a better understanding of the strong link between attendance and their child's achievement. Almost all students are punctual to lessons and come to school on time.
- The large majority of parents who completed Parent View questionnaires agree that behaviour and safety are good, and that on the rare occasions when bullying occurs it is dealt with effectively.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior team provide very strong leadership in driving the school forward by continually improving the quality of teaching, and developing the curriculum and the use of assessment.
- All leaders, including middle leaders, work together effectively as a team. However, middle leaders do not monitor the quality of marking and feedback in students' books in all year groups and across all subjects with sufficient rigour. As a result, marking and teachers' feedback are not linked sharply enough to subject-specific targets to help students reach the next level of attainment.
- Leaders have ensured that teachers set high aspirations for their students, through effective management of performance that is closely linked to salary progression. All teachers are observed regularly in lessons, and the targets set to improve the quality of teaching reflect the whole-school priorities for development as well as the targets set for the headteacher by

governors.

- These strong features, coupled with good improvement planning, accurate self-evaluation and good training and support for staff, have effectively eliminated weak teaching and led to a marked rise in attainment at the end of Year 6 and Year 8.
 - The very strong partnership arrangement with the Robert Bloomfield and Samuel Whitbread academies has had a demonstrable impact in improving the quality of teaching through training programmes supported by personalised coaching. The impact of this has been improved levels of attainment and stronger progress across all year groups.
 - The pupil premium funding has been used well by leaders to raise standards. For example, an intervention coordinator was appointed last year to work with targeted students to boost their attainment in mathematics, with good impact. The impact on pupils' achievement of smaller class sizes and additional teaching assistants in Key Stage 2 is not yet known.
 - The innovative 'options' curriculum for Year 8 students, and to some extent Year 7, has already encouraged their greater enthusiasm for learning and prepared them well for the next stage of their education.
 - The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, particularly through religious education, personal, social, health and citizenship education. The 'values-based' education is underpinned by monthly themes, and the way the school adheres to a strong set of values ensures that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and is tackled effectively.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - ensures that all statutory requirements are met, including those relating to safeguarding
 - has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development for the school
 - has been instrumental in setting the right strategic direction for the school after a period of decline
 - is very supportive of the school, yet challenges and holds the headteacher to account for school improvement
 - ensures finances are appropriately deployed to support students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.
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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	137632
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	406678

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	411
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Street
Headteacher	Albert Mistrano
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01462 730391
Fax number	01462 730626
Email address	office@etonbury.cbeds.co.uk

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