

# Fitzharrys School

Northcourt Road, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 1NP

## Inspection dates

24–25 October 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- The achievement of many students is inadequate, especially in mathematics.
- The sixth form requires improvement because students do not make sufficient progress during their first year.
- The quality of teaching is improving and is not inadequate overall, but it is not yet good enough in some subjects, such as mathematics, to improve students' achievement more rapidly.
- The behaviour of a few students in a few lessons slows the pace of progress that learners make.
- The headteacher and senior leaders provide clear leadership and direction, but some middle leaders do not monitor student progress and the quality of teaching well enough.
- The governing body's challenges to the school about achievement and the quality of teaching have not yet had a successful impact on results.

### The school has the following strengths

- The school's specialist subjects, especially science, enable students to achieve well.
- The headteacher and senior leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and are clear about how the school can improve.
- Most students have positive attitudes to learning and are fully involved in the life of the school.
- The school's provision for developing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is good.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with half a day's notice.
- Forty three lessons were observed, taught by 38 different teachers.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body, members of staff, and a telephone discussion was held with a member of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, monitoring records and analysis of students' progress and performance and some samples of students' work during lesson observations.
- There were 39 responses to Parent View.
- Forty three staff questionnaires were returned, the views expressed were taken into account by inspectors.

## Inspection team

Peter Limm, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jamie Clarke

Additional Inspector

Ann Short

Additional Inspector

Jill Arnold

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.*

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The number on roll has declined slightly in recent years.
- Most students are of White British heritage and very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The percentage of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is extra funding provided for students who are at risk of not doing as well as their peers, is well below the national average.
- The proportion of students supported by school action is below average as is the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs..
- There is a unit on site for students who need extra support to improve their communication skills, including some students on the autistic spectrum. This is run by the local authority and was not inspected on this occasion.
- The school meets current government floor standard, which sets the minimum standards for attainment and progress.
- Sixth form provision is provided in conjunction with two other local schools and a nearby post-16 college.
- The school has been a designated technology college since September 2004.
- A new headteacher was appointed in January 2011.

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

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding lessons so that by the summer of 2013, all teachers throughout the school are consistently:
  - using questioning more effectively to challenge and engage students and encourage them to develop their reasoning and extend their thinking
  - making sure that work in lessons stretches, enthuses and absorbs students
  - helping students to rely less on adults and encouraging them more often to work out their own answers to questions and problems.
- Increase the rate of progress made by students throughout the school, and particularly in mathematics, by ensuring there is greater emphasis on:
  - probing the progress made by boys and ensuring that they are fully engaged on tasks that are at the right level of difficulty for them
  - checking more regularly in lessons that students understand the skills and concepts being taught and encourage students to give fuller answers in discussions.
- Broaden and embed the effectiveness of leadership and management beyond the senior leadership team by:
  - ensuring that lesson observations by middle leaders place a consistent emphasis on speeding

up the pace of students' learning and checking to see how well students understand their work

- strengthening the effectiveness and rigour of the tracking of student progress in the sixth form, especially for students in their first year
- using good teachers and effective middle leaders as role models for spreading good practice
- undertaking a review of governance in order to enhance the capability of the whole governing body to hold the school to account for examination performance and the quality of teaching.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- While science results are significantly above the national average, those for mathematics remain significantly below. Results for English had been improving and were broadly average in 2010 and 2011, but dipped well below average in 2012.
- Similarly, the proportion of students who attain five passes at grades A\* to C at GCSE, although below average, had been slowly rising until 2012, when they fell well below average. The proportion of students attaining five A\* to C passes including English and mathematics, remains below the national average.
- The proportion of students making the expected three levels of progress during 2010 and 2011, although significantly above average in science, was well below average for mathematics and the achievement of boys in this subject is inadequate. In English there had been an improving trend in the progress that students make so that achievement was broadly average in 2011, but this was not sustained in the 2012 GCSE results.
- School data for 2011 and 2012 show that students with statements of special educational needs and those requiring special support, make good progress in achieving their challenging targets.
- Average point scores for students who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding indicate that not enough make sufficient progress to close the gap with their peers, despite the well-planned activities the school has provided for them. Two key appointments to help tackle this underachievement have not had time to make a positive impact on results, although lesson observations indicated that disadvantaged students were making better progress this term.
- Students make good progress during Key Stage 3 and this is beginning to have an effect on improved results and achievement in Year 10.
- Students make good progress in developing their literacy skills following the school's well-planned programme for teaching literacy across the curriculum. Students' numeracy skills are not developed well enough across the school.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement because, although results at A level are broadly average, those at the end of the first year of sixth form study are below.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- There are many lessons that are good and some which are outstanding, but overall teaching requires improvement because the best practice is not consistently demonstrated in all lessons, especially in mathematics.
- In lessons that require improvement and the few that are inadequate, teachers' knowledge of students' abilities is not used well enough to set work at the right level to enable them to make good progress.
- Other examples of where teaching is not yet good include some lessons where the teacher's instructions and explanations take too long. Students in these lessons often have too little time to think for themselves or complete their work thoroughly, slowing their progress.
- A few teachers do not check students' understanding regularly enough during lessons, so they often do not notice which students are making insufficient progress or where they are chatting about other things.
- However, following the introduction of more thorough checks on teaching quality, there are now more good and better lessons than at the time of the previous inspection. The school has benefited from good local authority training to help teachers overcome the weaknesses found in some lessons. As a consequence, more good teaching ensures that students are creatively engaged through challenging questioning, use of topical subjects for discussion and relevant practical activities. This was demonstrated extremely well in a biology lesson which fully

engaged students in thinking about the ethics of stem cell research.

- Teaching in the sixth form requires improvement because, although there are examples of good and outstanding teaching, students make slow progress during their first year and are not stretched fully enough.
- The teaching of literacy skills in different subjects is widespread throughout the curriculum. This is helping students to improve their spelling and oral contributions to lessons.
- There are many good opportunities in lessons and other learning sessions for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and understanding to be developed well.
- Almost all of parents who contributed to Parent View indicated they thought teaching to be good. Evidence collected during the inspection confirmed that the quality of teaching is improving, but is not yet good overall.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are improving quickly as a result of new behaviour management policies and procedures. Students commented that there is far less disruption than in the past. They said that the headteacher had improved behaviour a lot since his appointment. Despite this improvement, inspectors observed some lessons where low level disruption still occurred.
- Students' behaviour around the school is calm and orderly. Students show respect for adults and other students. They are polite and help visitors to find their way around school.
- School surveys show that almost all students feel safe in school and incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. Students understand the different forms of bullying that could happen.
- Attendance is broadly average and beginning to improve as a result of more effective procedures by the school to follow up absences.
- Students said that there were a lot of opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and to have responsible roles, such as being a student associate member of the governing body.
- Nearly all parents who completed Parent View were positive about behaviour.

### **The leadership and management**

### **requires improvement**

- Leadership and management are not yet good because, although there have been improvements, some middle leaders do not yet check and evaluate teaching and students' progress with sufficient rigour. Despite this, middle leaders are engaging positively in programmes for training and professional development. These programmes are closely linked to performance management targets.
- A new appraisal scheme is helping to ensure that teachers do not move up the pay levels without effectively demonstrating a positive impact on raising students' achievement. This has not been the case in recent years.
- Leadership of the sixth form has not used assessment, monitoring and tracking of students' progress well enough to ensure that students make sufficient progress in their first year.
- The headteacher and his senior team have a clear and accurate understanding of what the school does well and where it needs to improve. They are demonstrating the capacity to improve the school and are beginning to deal effectively with previous underachievement and weak teaching. A new head of mathematics has been appointed but plans for improving achievement in the subject have not had time to have an impact on results. The headteacher's determined focus on driving improvement has won the support of staff and governors.
- The local authority has provided good training to enable teachers to improve their teaching, but its support for mathematics has not led to the required improvement in achievement.

- It is still too early to see the full impact of the school's improvement. Nevertheless, more robust checking, training and individual objectives for teachers have resulted in a higher proportion of lessons being judged good or better than a year ago. There is a sense of common purpose across the school. A significant financial deficit has been reduced and redundancies managed well.
  - The curriculum fully meets students' needs. The school has good links with two local schools and the nearby college to ensure 16-19 courses provide students with a wide range of study options. The school does not have a policy for entering students early for GCSE examinations and this enables more able students to have more time to achieve their expected grades.
  - The school's arrangements for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of students meet current government requirements including those for child protection. The quality of care, guidance and support is good.
  - The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good, being well planned and managed so that all four aspects are tackled effectively every day for every year group, including the sixth form.
  - **The governance of the school**
    - Governance requires improvement. Although the governing body has improved its knowledge and skills since the previous inspection, ensured the school meets statutory requirements relating to safeguarding and equalities, and challenged it robustly over finances, it has not had the required impact to speed improvements in the pace of student progress and the quality of teaching in some subjects.
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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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	123257
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	402148

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	664
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	121
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lynn Fathers
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jonathan Dennett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13–14 January 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	012355 20698
<b>Fax number</b>	01235 534590
<b>Email address</b>	office.4127@fitzharrys.oxon.sch.uk

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