

Wallingford School

St George's Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, OX10 8HH

Inspection dates 22–23 November 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 good school

- This is a good and improving school because of the clear focus of the headteacher and other leaders on improving the quality of teaching and raising students' achievement.
- The sixth form is good. Appropriate courses, good teaching and improved checking of progress ensure that students make good progress.
- GCSE results have improved in most subjects, including English and mathematics, and are above average. Students are set challenging targets which they are supported to meet through good systems to check their progress.
- Effective action has been taken to ensure that students eligible for the pupil premium make good progress.
- The quality of teaching is good. Leaders closely check to see that teaching is helping students to make good progress. Performance management is used well to raise the quality of teaching and there are good opportunities for staff training.
- Students behave well both around the school and in lessons. The highly inclusive nature of the school helps students to value individual differences and all feel safe. Attendance has improved and is currently above the national average.
- The governing body provides a good level of challenge and support to help leaders to improve teaching and achievement in the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students do not make good progress across all GCSE subjects, including art and design, graphics and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Some lower attaining boys and some of the students who need the most extra help do not achieve as well as they could. Provision for these students could be better suited to their needs.
- In a small minority of lessons teaching is not as effective because work is not pitched at the right level for all students and marking does not give enough information for students on how to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons, some of which were joint observations with the senior leadership team. They also observed an assembly and undertook a series of briefer visits to lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with the senior leadership team, heads of departments and other school staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other members, the most recent School Improvement Partner and several groups of students.
- Inspectors looked at the work of the school, including students' books, information about students' progress, and documentation about safeguarding and other school policies.
- The inspection took into account 83 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), letters and phone calls from parents. Inspectors also considered the views of 40 staff that completed a questionnaire.

Inspection team

John Meinke, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Ian Bryant	Additional Inspector
Mireille Drayton	Additional Inspector
Patricia MacLachlan	Additional Inspector
Avtar Sherri	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and for students known to be eligible for free school meals, is below that found nationally, at just above 10%.
- Most students are of White British heritage, with the remaining few from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is very small.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school uses off-site provision at The Earth Trust, Meadowbrook College and Trax, a local provider of vocational courses.
- The school became an academy school on 1 September 2011. When its predecessor school, also called Wallingford School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory overall.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement in GCSE art and design, graphics and ICT by:
 - making sure that all teachers plan activities that challenge the most able students and support the less able
 - spreading the exemplary practice of some teachers in marking, assessment and feedback to ensure that all students and their parents are fully aware of what they need to do to improve.
- Develop the curriculum to ensure that it fully meets the needs of lower attaining boys and those students who need the most extra help, by providing more opportunities to motivate them and help them to achieve appropriate qualifications.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' attainment on entry to the school is broadly in line with national averages. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is above the national average. This represents good achievement overall.
- Students make good progress from their starting points. In 2012, GCSE results were above the national average in English, mathematics, music, religious education, resistant materials and science. The proportion of students achieving five A* to C GCSE passes including English and mathematics also improved and was above the national average. However, results are still at or below average in GCSE art, graphics and ICT.
- Some of the students with disabilities and special educational needs who require the most help and also lower attaining boys do not make as much progress as they could.
- The school makes limited use of early entry for GCSE examinations and this does not prevent students from attaining the highest grades.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress and achieve well, with a majority attaining a high grade by the end of Year 13. This is underpinned by good teaching. There are differences between subjects in student performance at AS level. The recently appointed senior leader responsible for the sixth form has taken prompt action to improve the monitoring of students' progress and, as a result, these differences are already reducing.
- Achievement in lessons is good. The school sets challenging targets for students' progress, which are carefully monitored by school leaders. Students are enthusiastic about their learning and want to do well. They will tackle even challenging tasks willingly and do their best to succeed. For example, in an outstanding Year 9 mathematics lesson, students were fully motivated by a challenging algebra activity and worked at a rapid pace.
- Students make good progress in English and mathematics and acquire skills in literacy and numeracy well. Very good support is in place for students who enter the school with skills in reading and writing which are below the expected level.
- Leaders have taken decisive action to close any identified gaps between the school and national averages for groups of students. The pupil premium is being used effectively to support eligible students and this group makes good progress. The GCSE pass rate for these students is above the national average and in line with that for other students in the school.
- The achievement of students attending off-site provision is monitored carefully by the school and these students make good progress.
- Most parents and carers who responded to the on-line questionnaire said that their child was making good progress and the inspectors agree.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good and improving. Much good and some high quality teaching was seen during the inspection. Teaching is improving because of a very clear focus by school leaders on raising its quality, supported by a training programme which is tailored to the needs of individual teachers. Most parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire said that their child was taught well and the inspectors agree.
- In the best lessons teaching is characterised by good relationships between students and teachers which lead to a calm and purposeful atmosphere for learning. Teachers have high expectations of students and they use assessment information to plan activities which challenge the most able and support the learning of lower attaining students. Questioning is used skilfully to draw out students' ideas and knowledge and check their understanding. Teachers will change tasks if they realise that students are not being sufficiently challenged or need to further consolidate their understanding.

- In a Year 13 media studies lesson, for example, teaching was outstanding because the teacher used a silent debate technique to challenge all students to contribute and develop their skills in constructing written arguments. In a Year 7 drama lesson the teacher used challenging questions to draw out students' ideas about a performance and precisely identify ways in which it could be improved.
- In many of the better lessons, teachers support students with disabilities and those with special educational needs effectively. Teachers tailor tasks to make them accessible. The support of teaching assistants is sharply focused on the students' needs while still encouraging students to learn independently.
- The marking and assessment practices of some teachers are exemplary. They provide students with detailed analyses of their strengths and areas for development. Students can talk with precision about what they need to do to improve their learning. However, this excellent practice is not consistent across the school.
- Teaching in a small minority of lessons observed during the inspection was not as effective. The activities planned by teachers did not challenge the most able or support lower attaining students sufficiently. Students sometimes had to wait for the teacher to tell them what to do next and the pace of learning was too slow.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is good

- Almost all parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire felt that students are well behaved. Discussions with students and staff indicate that standards of behaviour have improved and the good behaviour seen both in lessons and around the school during the inspection is typical. The school provides a safe environment for learning.
- The highly inclusive nature of the school encourages students to value individual differences and students get along with each other well. They are supportive of each other and work well together during lessons. Sixth form students provide good role models through acting as prefects and as peer mentors.
- Discussions with students and the school's own records indicate that incidences of bullying are rare. Students are very confident that the school works hard to resolve any instances of bullying and they talk positively about the systems that are in place for reporting it. They are aware of the different types of bullying, including cyber and homophobic bullying, and know how to take steps to prevent it and keep themselves safe.
- Exclusion rates are low and the school uses an internal unit to reduce this. There are good systems in place to monitor behaviour and leaders are taking effective action to support students who need to further improve their behaviour.
- Successful strategies, including the use of a home-school link worker, have improved attendance so that it is currently above the national average.

The leadership and management is good

- The headteacher's inclusive and developmental style of leadership provides a good role model for other school leaders. He has a clear view for raising achievement through improving the quality of teaching which is communicated clearly across the school. Successful actions have been taken by school leaders to tackle poor performance.
- Teaching is carefully monitored and school leaders, including the governing body, have an accurate view of its quality across the school. Performance management is used to support improvement by setting teachers challenging targets linked to the attainment and progress of students in their classes, with the objective of raising the quality of their teaching to outstanding. This is supported by an extensive training programme, often linked to individual teacher development plans. Only those teachers who demonstrate the highest quality of

teaching are able to move onto the upper pay scale.

- The school knows itself well and recognises that there is still more to do to move on to outstanding. Detailed plans are in place to secure further improvement. Middle leaders, including subject leaders, are proactive in taking responsibility for the quality of teaching and the progress of students in their areas. As a group they are a very effective force for further improving the school.
- Leaders track assessment information carefully to ensure that students meet the challenging targets set for them. Good and outstanding practice is increasingly being shared across the school in order to bring about improvement in subject areas where progress is not as good as it could be.
- As a converter academy the school is not subject to local authority control. However, it actively seeks external support and challenge, for example through a review undertaken by the former School Improvement Partner.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides students with good opportunities to be successful. The sixth form curriculum has been broadened to include a pathway for students entering with below average attainment which includes the opportunity to retake GCSE English and mathematics.
- There are some opportunities for students to follow vocational courses, including through the use of off-site provision. This is carefully reviewed, for example through visits by senior leaders and monitoring of assessment information, to ensure that students make good progress. However, further use could be made of this provision to improve the motivation of a small minority of students.
- The pupil premium is used effectively and students eligible for this make good progress. Extra funding is used to provide one-to-one tuition, support through a home-school link worker and to ensure equality of access to after-school clubs, school trips and other events. The impact of these strategies is carefully monitored by leaders and the governing body.
- The curriculum provides excellent opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, a rehearsal of the school play was used to explore feelings about difference. The personal, social and health education programme is well organised and prepares students well for the next stages in their education, employment or training.
- The school works hard to engage with parents. For example, there are regular forums to consult specific groups of parents and carers and gather their views.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body supports and challenges the school effectively. Governors use their range of skills to support school improvement, for example by making the most of opportunities presented by conversion to an academy. They are knowledgeable about the work of the school, including the quality of teaching, performance management and other staffing issues. They ensure that teachers and leaders are only rewarded for good performance. They check that the pupil premium funding is being used effectively to raise the achievement of these pupils. Governors ensure that financial resources are well managed and that arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.

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	137357
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	406668

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
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	1125
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Domville
Headteacher	Nigel Willis
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Telephone number	01491 837115
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