

Matthew Arnold School

Arnolds Way, Oxford, OX2 9JE

Inspection dates 19–20 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Students' achievement is good. Students make good progress and reach standards that are well above national averages.
- Leadership and management are good. The school is led very well by the headteacher who, along with senior leaders and a highly effective governing body, has worked well to improve the quality of teaching and students' achievement since the last inspection.
- Behaviour across the school is good. Staff and students treat each other with respect. Students feel safe and are proud of their school.
- Teaching is good, with examples of outstanding practice particularly in the sixth form. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and, where teaching is best, students develop very good understanding and learn particularly well.
- Most students work well independently and are ambitious in their learning.
- The sixth form is good. High academic standards are gained by many students in the sixth form and many go on to gain places at university.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is some variation between students' achievements in subjects.
- Although gaps in achievement are closing, some groups of students do not make quite as much progress as others.
- There is not enough outstanding teaching to make sure that all students make rapid progress. Students are not given enough chances to discuss and check their understanding of their own progress, or how they can improve their learning. Occasionally, feedback from teachers does not explain how students can make better progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 37 lessons. They also made several shorter visits to lessons to focus on aspects of the school's work.
- A range of documents from the school and examples of students' work were analysed, including analysis of examinations results over recent years and also information about the achievement of students currently in the school.
- Inspectors took account of 73 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as well letters received from parents. They also analysed questionnaires returned by 42 members of staff.
- They held discussions with members of the governing body, staff, groups of students and a representative of the local authority.

Inspection team

Chris King, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kevin Morris

Additional Inspector

Sulina Piesse

Additional Inspector

Angela Podmore

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Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than the average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups, including those for whom English is an additional language, is below average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding given to schools by the government to support particular students, including looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below that found nationally.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is broadly average.
- The school works with a local college to provide alternative courses for a small number of students.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and eliminate the variation in students' achievement in different subjects by making sure:
 - marking and feedback always explain exactly what students need to do to improve
 - tasks set are always at the right level of difficulty for individual students
 - students are given more opportunities to discuss and check their understanding of their own progress.
- Ensure that all groups of students make equally good progress by:
 - closely monitoring the impact of support put in place for particular groups of students
 - making better use of the school's extensive internal data to take quicker action to help those students who are falling behind and need to catch up.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' attainment on entry is slightly above national averages. By the time students leave school at the end of Year 11, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C GCSE, including English and mathematics, is well above national averages.
- The school experienced a dip in examination results in 2012, but attainment remained significantly above average. The school has responded quickly to this dip and is taking steps to make sure that achievement is on an upward trend.
- The proportion of students, including the below average proportion of those of ethnic minority heritage, making and exceeding the expected progress across Key Stages 3 and 4, in English and mathematics, is consistently above national averages.
- The school is working well to narrow the gap in attainment between those students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium and that of other students. The senior leadership team is now making good use of additional pupil premium funding to target increased support for these students. Average point scores for some of these students are less than their peers, but gaps are closing rapidly.
- The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs is also improving. However, the school recognises that there is scope to ensure that school data on students' progress are used to identify where students may be falling behind, so that support for these students is targeted as quickly as possible. The school is still developing its systems for checking on impact of this support.
- A small group of students accesses vocational courses, that the school is unable to provide, at the local college. Taking into account their starting points, students on these courses make good progress.
- Attainment in the majority of subjects at GCSE in grades A* to C is higher than the national averages. Students do particularly well in both science and mathematics. However, they do less well in humanities..
- Outcomes for sixth form students are high. Many students gain excellent grades and move on to prestigious university destinations in a range of subjects.
- The school has developed its literacy focus widely and the school is implementing a range of initiatives to improve further students' reading, writing and communication skills. For example, there is designated reading time and a good range of resources available for students to use.
- Parents and carers are pleased with the progress made by their children.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good overall, with some outstanding teaching. This view was supported by both students and parents.
- Teachers have positive relationships with students. Subject knowledge is a particular strength of teaching and in the best lessons teachers used this effectively to develop challenging learning experiences for students. This was particularly notable in sixth form lessons, where students benefitted and made rapid progress.
- Where teaching is best, work is well matched to students' ability levels. Students are given accurate and detailed feedback, both in marking and orally in lessons. Teachers create opportunities for students to develop their own knowledge of how they learn and give them the skills and confidence to talk about aspects of their learning that they needed to improve.
- In a mathematics lesson observed during the inspection, the teacher made very effective use of resources and excellent questioning. The lesson was planned so that students were able to understand and develop the skills needed to improve their own learning. As a result, they made rapid progress.

- The quality of this feedback to students is variable. Occasionally, marking does not make clear to students how they can improve their work. The school is aware of this and taking steps to address inconsistency, for example through reviewing the marking policy to make sure that all students consistently receive high quality feedback.
- Where teaching is not as strong, work is not matched closely enough to students' ability levels and resources not tailored well enough for students. As a result, some activities are too easy or too hard and progress slows as a result.
- The school's focus on literacy has been well thought out and has a positive impact on learning in most subject areas. Senior leaders are aware that there is scope to extend this work so that there is an even more consistent approach across the whole school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour, both in lessons and around school, is good. Students have positive relationships with teachers, are proud of their school and are happy with the support they receive. Students show respect to each other. They are courteous and work well in groups in lessons. Students are punctual to lessons. This is the case for all students, including those that attend off-site provision.
- Overall, students have good attitudes to learning. However, not all have the skills needed to develop more independence in learning, particularly in discussing and checking their own progress. Where teaching is less engaging, students can lose focus and do not make as much progress as they should.
- Students feel safe at school. They understand issues related to their safety, including how to keep safe when using new technologies. Students are aware of different types of bullying and feel confident to report any problems to teachers. They also feel confident that any issues will be resolved.
- Attendance is good and effective procedures are in place for ensuring this. The school is aware of slight variations in the attendance of groups, but its work with individuals has been effective in ensuring good levels of attendance.
- The school has a range of effective policies and procedures regarding behaviour and bullying. The school has reviewed its policies in some areas to address to further strength their effectiveness.
- Sixth form students are positive role models within the school and make a good contribution to the school's ethos, supporting teachers in modelling excellent behaviour and conduct.
- Parents spoke highly of the school's systems for managing behaviour and dealing with bullying. Responses to Parent View indicate that parents and carers believe their children enjoy school and are safe, and that this has been the case over time.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is well respected by staff, parents, carers and governors. She communicates her vision of the school very clearly within the local community. With good support from senior leaders and subject leaders, she plays an influential role in ensuring good outcomes for students. Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively in school.
- Positive relationships with parents, carers, local schools and colleges and external agencies have been created to ensure that students benefit from good quality provision and opportunity.
- The range of subject courses is well matched to needs and interests of most students. When students do take examinations early, such as in ICT, they are not disadvantaged by this.
- Teachers' performance is managed well and is linked closely to the school's priorities for development. Targets set for teachers are challenging and they are held to account for the progress of their students.

- The school's systems for checking on the quality of its work are effective and the school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Senior leaders are aware of the need to focus more closely on the quality and impact of support offered to particular groups of students so that potential underachievement can be identified and dealt with promptly.
- The local authority provides light touch support to this school because of its good performance. It makes use of the school's leaders to support the development of other schools and to share best practice within the county.
- The school is using the pupil premium to fund trips for eligible students, as well as additional tuition where required. As a result, gaps are closing between the performance of these students and their peers. The school promotes equality of opportunity, fosters good relations and tackles discrimination effectively.
- As a result of effective training programmes, in particular the use of the best practitioners as coaches, the profile and quality of teaching have improved over time.
- The school's promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, through assemblies and lessons, is good.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Governance of the school is very strong, with some outstanding aspects. Governors have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas to improve. They know where teaching is strong or needs improvement, and understand the school's performance data, including how the school compares to similar schools and national expectations. In particular, the governing body is aware of the need to show how pupil premium funding is used to provide additional teaching support in order to raise the achievement of those students. Governors are also aware of the link between the school's checks on the quality of its work and the performance management of staff. The governing body is well informed by the senior leadership team but also makes its own judgements based on first hand experiences. Governors are proud of the school and its success but are always looking to improve still further. They challenge the headteacher and senior team effectively and work to shape the strategic vision of the school. Governors are fully involved in the school's evaluation of its work and contribute to the school's future direction, whilst having a rounded view of the community that they serve. This was noted recently in the governors' approach to the consultation on academy status.

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	123258
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	403522

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,100
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maureen Ford
Headteacher	Katherine Ryan
Date of previous school inspection	13 February 2008
Telephone number	01865 862232
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