

Bristol Free School

Burghill Road, Bristol, BS10 6NJ

Inspection dates		19–20 February 2013	
Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	N/A
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school has made a strong start. The governors and trustees are well on their way towards achieving their goal of providing a high quality, inclusive school to serve their community.
- Outstanding leadership has driven the school's early achievements. Such is their passion for the success of the school that governors, including the many parent representatives, are exceptionally well informed and involved in key decisions.
- External support and advice have been used to considerable effect to develop and improve all aspects of the school's work.
- The headteacher has been highly successful in developing a cohesive school community where morale is high among staff and students.
- Students are a credit to their school. They are exceptionally polite, punctual and well behaved. Many stay on after school to take part in the wide range of clubs and activities that the staff provide for them.
- Teaching is good overall. In the large majority of lessons, teachers' confident subject knowledge provides the basis for engaging activities which challenge and enthuse the students.
- Students achieve well. Standards are high for many in English, mathematics and science. In English, and across the curriculum, students' reading and writing skills are very highly developed.
- Students' progress is assessed and tracked carefully, so that action is taken swiftly to support individuals and groups vulnerable to underachievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is some variation in students' learning and progress in lessons, linked to variations in the quality of teaching.
- In some lessons, activities are not fully adapted to challenge the more-able students or to support those who find concepts more difficult to grasp.
- The marking of students' work, whilst exemplary in some subjects, is not helpful enough in all classes.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 teachers in 16 lessons. They carried out some joint observations and shorter visits to lessons and activities with members of the school's senior team. Observations of other aspects of the school's work were also made, including visits to individual and small-group sessions for students receiving additional support, tutor periods and after-school activities.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, with the Chair of the Governing Body and other representatives, and with school staff. Informal discussions also took place with staff and students.
- Questionnaire returns from 19 staff were analysed.
- Inspectors took account of 25 responses to the on-line Parent View questionnaire in carrying out the inspection. Evidence from the school's own survey of parents with 54 responses was also examined.
- 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

Andrew Lyons

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school was one of the first of its kind to be established as part of the government's free schools initiative.
- The creation of the school was led by parents in an area of north-west Bristol who formed the Parents' Voice group. An academy trust was established to administer the school through a partnership between Parents' Voice and the Russell Education Trust. The Russell Education Trust supplies the school with education consultancy, advice and training services.
- The first Year 7 students were admitted in September 2011. Currently there are students in Years 7 and 8. Year-on-year admissions have increased since opening and applications are oversubscribed for September 2013.
- The school is currently housed in temporary classrooms and former government offices while new school buildings and facilities are prepared on the same site. The school is due to move into its new buildings in September 2013.
- Most students are White British. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is similar to that found in most schools.
- The proportion of students eligible for support from the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided by the government for students known to be eligible for free school meals, for those looked after in public care, and for children of service families, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils 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 also below average.
- There are, as yet, no public examination results to allow the school's performance to be measured against floor standards.
- No students are educated in alternative provision off site.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the general quality of teaching increasingly matches that of the best in the school, particularly with respect to:
 - adapting lesson activities and tasks to meet the differing abilities of pupils in the class
 - making sure that students respond to regular and specific feedback on how to improve their work.
- Successfully implement plans already in hand to develop the school's site, accommodation, resources, leadership and staffing structures.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The attainment of students on entry to the school has changed markedly in a short time. It has moved from broadly average with mainly middle attainers in the current Year 8, to above average with a much wider spread of attainment for the current Year 7.
- Standards are generally high by Year 8 for students across the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In English, for example, by Year 8 students across the attainment range showed excellent comprehension of the text of *The Tempest*. Higher attainers used the play's themes to discuss cultural aspects of the relationships between men and women over time. In English, and across the curriculum, students reflect critically on the quality of their own writing in terms of grammatical accuracy and the extent to which points they are making are explained and evaluated.
- In science, students develop their experimental and investigative skills particularly strongly and get much enjoyment from the focus on practical work. In mathematics, many students by Year 8 are able to apply their secure understanding of concepts, for example of shape and measure, to very challenging problem-solving tasks. However, progress for lower attaining students in Year 7 has been, and remains, less even in mathematics, linked to initial difficulties in recruiting a second specialist teacher.
- In lessons, generally students learn well. They have very positive attitudes to learning and respond exceptionally well to lessons which challenge and enthuse them. There are occasions, however, where progress slows for some students when teachers keep the class moving at one pace for too long with whole-class discussions, and where tasks or questions are undemanding for some or too demanding for others.
- Students' reading and writing skills develop well across the curriculum, but as yet, students do not regularly have opportunities to develop and apply their number skills in other subjects. The mathematics leadership in the school has such a development in hand.
- The temporary nature of the school site presents some current restrictions on the quality of learning in lessons. For example, students' engagement in learning and their progress was constrained by limited space and equipment in design and technology, and by a walk to a local sports centre for physical education. Students develop their skills in the use of information and communication technology through units in all subjects, although during the inspection interruption to the temporary internet connection meant that computers were not seen widely in use.
- The school monitors and tracks the attainment and progress of students regularly and carefully. Managers have an excellent understanding of which individuals or groups of students may be falling behind their demanding targets and intervene swiftly to address this. As a consequence, by Year 8 there are no overall gaps in English or mathematics attainment of those eligible for support from the pupil premium and others and these students make excellent progress.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs also benefit from well-tailored intervention to meet their needs and make strong progress. For example, the school's support for those needing additional support with literacy and language is highly effective in raising standards and well regarded by the students themselves. Students for whom English is an additional language also make rapid gains in their confidence and understanding.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in the large majority of lessons is good. In a quarter of the lessons seen on the inspection, teaching was judged outstanding. In most cases, teachers' strong subject knowledge helps them confidently deliver well-planned lessons. Explanations, often supported by lively digital presentations using the interactive whiteboard, are clear and engaging.
- There are some exceptionally strong practices to be found in aspects of teaching in the school,

although these have not always been fully replicated across the school. For example, in English, the quality of marking and feedback to students is excellent. Marking is regular, with very specific feedback on what needs to be improved to which the student is systematically required to respond. This has an immediate impact on students' thinking about the quality of their work. This level of dialogue between the teacher and student is evident in other, but not in all, subjects, and in a small number of cases books have not been marked in detail for a few weeks.

- Similarly, there is some excellent practice to be seen in ensuring that tasks are suitably challenging for all students in the group. Teaching assistants work effectively with teachers to ensure that materials are suitably adapted for disabled students and those with special educational needs. This is evident, for example, in very well-tailored tasks to meet students' needs in geography. In a mathematics lesson for high attaining Year 8 students, students relished the challenges of working independently together to estimate quantities in increasingly complex scenarios.
- However, in some cases higher attainers do the same tasks as others and are not moved on quickly enough to more challenging work. The teacher's questioning does not always probe more able students for more detailed answers. Just occasionally work proceeds at too fast a pace for some without securing their basic understanding.
- Teachers ensure that students have an acute awareness of their targets, and students regularly review their progress against their targets in all subjects. This enables students to reflect on their progress and be mindful of skills they need to develop further.
- Homework is set regularly and often supports learning very well, although recording of work in homework planners is not in all cases consistently managed. An after-school homework club is well attended and ensures that appropriate resources and support are readily available to students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students' behaviour is exceptionally good. Students arrive promptly in lessons, ready and eager to learn. They make a very strong contribution to their own learning. Instances of off-task behaviour in lessons are rare. Students understand the school's systems of sanctions for poor behaviour, but these do not have to be used often, and completion of a 'reflection sheet' helps offending students to mend their ways. Students value the school's merit system and its consistent use in rewarding good behaviour.
- Behaviour around the school site is very calm and orderly. Students are unfailingly polite to visitors. There have been no fixed-term or permanent exclusions in the history of the school.
- Relationships between students are excellent. Students from a wide range of backgrounds mix easily together and are mutually supportive. Nearly all students and parents are of the view that children feel safe in the school, and they are confident in adults to resolve any difficulties.
- There are very few instances of bullying, and these are dealt with effectively. Students have a very well-developed understanding of different forms of bullying and how to guard against these through an Anti-Bullying Week and Anti-Bullying Charter designed and adopted by the school council.
- Students are highly committed to the life of the school. The after-school programme for sport, arts, craft and additional study is exceptionally well attended. For its size the school runs an impressive range of sports teams which has given it an immediate presence in the local community. Students willingly take on a range of leadership responsibilities within and beyond these activities.
- Students' high rates of attendance and their excellent punctuality are testament to their enjoyment of school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The school's groundbreaking development has been handled with exceptional skill and

confidence by the trustees, governors and headteacher. In a short time, they have successfully established a school with a strong reputation in the local community. The founding parents' aim of stopping the wide dispersal of pupils around and beyond the city at the end of their primary school years is being achieved, as a high percentage of Year 6 pupils from feeder primaries in the catchment now put this school as a first choice.

- Students, parents and staff have a very high regard for the work of the school. All parents responding to the questionnaires of Ofsted and the school would recommend the school to others.
- The headteacher and senior team monitor the work of the school closely. Through regular assessments of students' attainment and progress, subject to external moderation and scrutiny for accuracy, they have developed very clear sets of information to help them pinpoint the successes and areas for improvement in the school. This sharp self-evaluation enables leaders to deploy additional resources quickly to areas that require improvement.
- The school has drawn very successfully on support for leadership, management, teaching and development from the trust partner, the Russell Education Trust.
- Over a third of the teaching staff are newly or recently qualified or relatively inexperienced. The management and support for teaching have been highly effective in developing the quality of teaching over a short time, so that some of the less experienced teachers are now producing excellent lessons. The school has developed a system for the management of staff which links pay increases to performance and shared this with governors.
- Development planning has been tightly arranged over a five-year timescale to ensure that resources are effectively deployed to yield a fully-staffed school on a new purpose-built site. As the school develops, plans are in place to develop internal management capacity, for example through the appointment of subject leaders.
- The curriculum is broad and well balanced. It offers particular breadth in the learning of languages, with French, Spanish and Latin currently on offer and more planned to follow. Many opportunities are taken across subjects to explore spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. The personal, social, health and citizenship education programme is well designed and informative. A very full programme of after-school clubs further enriches students' learning and enhances their personal development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly trained and exceptionally well informed about students' progress and the quality of education. Minutes of the full governing body and committees show that governors ask challenging questions of school leaders on school performance, and that they are rigorous in ensuring that all projects and initiatives are offering value for money, including in spending of the pupil premium funds. As a consequence, the presentation of data on all aspects of performance is consistently clear and helpful, and makes a very strong contribution to effective school self-evaluation. Governors undertake 'learning walks' around the school with school leaders and consultants to find out directly how things are in the classroom. Governors are rigorous in ensuring that policies are in place and that statutory requirements are met, including those relating to the safeguarding and well-being of students and staff.

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	136822
Inspection number	400324

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

Type of school	Academy free school
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Foster
Headteacher	Richard Clutterbuck
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0117 9597200
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