

# Ratton School

Park Avenue, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN21 2XR

**Inspection dates** 18–19 April 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b> <b>2</b>
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

- Students make good progress from their starting points and in every year group their achievement is rising.
- This is a well-led school. School leaders and members of the governing body have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. Together with staff, they are ambitious for students' achievement and have brought about improvements in teaching and raised standards.
- Teaching is typically good or better and improving.
- The range of subjects and topics is broad and flexible and takes account of students' needs and interests. There are wide-ranging opportunities for students to deepen their experiences through the performing arts, clubs and extra classes, which are very popular.
- The core values of the school underpin the caring relationships between staff and students and mean that students behave well and feel safe.
- Attendance has improved, especially in reducing persistent absence.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding. Work is not consistently set at the right level for students supported at school action plus because their individual learning plans are not tailored closely enough to their needs.
- Marking does not always give students sufficient guidance on how work can be improved or give sufficient time for students to respond to any comments made.
- Students have limited access to the latest computer technology to aid their learning in all lessons.
- Staff do not always insist that students present their work to the highest standards.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 37 lessons or parts of lessons, of which nine were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons to see how teaching meets the needs of students with special educational needs. They listened to Year 7 students read and looked at the work in students' books across the school.
- Inspectors met with three groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, and senior and middle leaders. The school is state maintained and independently run and has no sponsors. Inspectors therefore did not meet with any external representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 52 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the views of parents who responded to the school's own survey. Inspectors analysed 54 questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including records relating to students' current progress, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding, self-evaluation, planning and monitoring documents.

## Inspection team

Sheila Browning, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Glenn Mayoh  
Roger Garrett

Additional Inspector  
Additional Inspector

Sandra Teacher  
Madeleine Gerard

Additional Inspector  
Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Ratton School converted to become an academy school on 1 August 2012. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good. Ratton has five business partners.
- The school has a subject specialism in the performing arts.
- It is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Most students are of White British heritage and almost all speak English as their first language.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional government funding for pupils in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and children from service families, is similar to that found nationally.
- There have been some significant staff changes in the English department since September 2012.
- Some students follow parts of their courses at other educational providers or access individual work placements. Additional provision is provided at Bede's School, Eastbourne College and Moira House. A small number of students follow vocational courses at Sussex Downs College.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and the progress of all students, so that both are outstanding, by making sure that:
  - the individual learning plans of students supported at school action plus are reviewed so that they are more precise and are sharply focused on their individual learning needs
  - marking regularly points to next steps for how students can improve their work and teachers make sure that they have time to respond to any feedback made
  - teachers only accept well-presented and high quality work from students.
- Extend students' access to the latest computer technology available to further aid their learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards are rising in all subjects, significantly so in English, and high performance in mathematics and sciences is maintained. The school's latest analysis of students' current performance indicates that they are set to exceed the school's 2013 target and are on course to attain at least the national average, with many exceeding it.
- Students achieve well. Their progress has improved sharply since September. The standards seen in lessons and students' work confirm this.
- The school's policy on early entry for GCSE mathematics does not limit the potential of more-able students. Students make rapid progress, increase their confidence and are encouraged to aim higher and to take statistics.
- The great majority of students in Years 10 and 11 joined Ratton with starting points much lower than expected for their age. In other year groups, students' starting points are broadly average.
- The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A\*-C including English and mathematics in 2012 was lower than nationally, due to a drop in performance in English. At that time, there were staffing difficulties in English. Progress has picked up considerably this year. In languages, performing arts (dance and drama) and statistics, performance was well above average. In art and design, computer studies, ethics and history, performance was above average when the new school was formed.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs typically achieve as well as their peers nationally, with the exception of the small number of students requiring support at school action plus. Progress information and work show that this group underperforms because learning tasks and plans are not well focused to meet their needs.
- In Year 11, the gap between those students eligible for pupil-premium funding and other students has narrowed. They are now almost one term behind in English and achieve similarly to others in mathematics. In other year groups, and especially in Year 10, the gaps in attainment between different groups of students are closing fast.
- In mathematics, a focus on developing problem-solving skills in other subjects has brought about improvements, and the whole-school focus on 'independent learning' is improving progression in Years 7 to 9.
- The few students who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Students attending alternative provision achieve well, and their attendance, behaviour and safety and self-esteem show improvement.
- Students express their ideas clearly, enjoy discussing their opinions and read accurately, but are not always expected to take pride in their writing or to present their work to high standards.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good or better. This is because of leaders' high expectations, robust checks and a comprehensive coaching programme that promotes staff development.
- Good relationships, mutual respect and a shared goal for students to achieve academically, creatively and personally underpin the school's core values. This also promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Teachers have detailed information about most students' past progress, learning needs and what they are capable of achieving. Lessons feature clear learning objectives shared with students, but at times these are too general for the different levels of ability in the class. Students supported at school action plus, who find learning more difficult, are not always helped to achieve their best because their individual learning plans are too vague or insufficiently matched to their needs.
- The most effective teaching makes sure that work meets the needs of all students. In these

lessons, interesting activities motivate students to deepen their learning. Extension tasks, probing questions and opportunities to share learning between students stretch the most able in their thinking.

- Students are encouraged to enjoy reading through twice weekly 'drop everything and read' sessions. Those who need additional help are supported through extra programmes to speed up their skills in reading and writing.
- Marking is generally frequent and helpful but some does not pinpoint the next steps to guide students' learning further. Teachers do not always check that students respond to comments made. On occasion, work of insufficient quality and quantity is accepted.
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of how students achieve is secure. At its best, learning is fun, exciting and innovative. Students are encouraged to take the initiative, work together and independently and to aim for the highest grades. Students know their targets and are supported by tutors who set short-term improvement goals to help them to achieve their potential.
- The school's specialist status in the performing arts is used effectively to share best practice and to improve teaching and learning across the school. 'Good to outstanding' programmes also provide opportunities for staff to identify and share best practice.
- In lessons, teachers often use technology to enhance explanations or teaching points, but opportunities for students to use the latest computer technology themselves are limited.

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

- Students have very positive attitudes to learning and their typically good behaviour supports learning well. This culture is reinforced by displays celebrating students' achievement and by posters encouraging good behaviour and attitudes. When teaching is not matched closely to students' needs, their behaviour is not as good.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity and does not tolerate any discrimination. Students say they feel safe and trust adults to sort out problems should they occur. They understand the different forms of bullying that can occur, including cyber bullying. Students initiated an anti-homophobic bullying campaign culminating in a production, 'The Beautiful Thing', to raise awareness of the similarities and differences between students' beliefs and backgrounds.
- Students like being a member of the five different learning communities and small tutor groups. They are competitive and participate in school and in the local and wider communities. Students value the good care, support and guidance provided and contribute to it as mentors and buddies to others.
- Attendance is improving, and persistent absenteeism is reducing, particularly among students supported at school action plus, because of the intense work undertaken, including incentives to reward good attendance.
- Students have a voice to guide school development through the school parliament and have many opportunities to take on responsibilities. Those most vulnerable appreciate the use of 'The Turnaround Centre', a calm refuge. This, and a more flexible range of subjects and topics catering for their specific social needs, has reduced exclusions.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher has carried out demanding systems for checking teaching quality, learning and behaviour. Teachers not performing well enough have been identified and supported. The school knows exactly where any weaknesses exist and can show where training and support have been provided and, in a few instances, decisive action taken where improvements were limited. Robust systems to manage staff performance hold teachers accountable for students' progress.
- The school's plans for improvement underpin leaders' drive to increase students' achievement and raise standards. The school's developing literacy strategy and actions taken to secure

improvements in English have successfully boosted students' progress.

- The headteacher is well supported by an established leadership team. Leaders work together well, sharing ideas and expertise to bring about rapid improvement.
  - The school's performing arts specialism makes a strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, their enjoyment of learning, arts culture and personal development. The range of courses includes academic and work-related programmes. Community projects and opportunities to learn Latin, Mandarin and ceramics are made possible through the school's business and educational partnerships. Extra-curricular opportunities include a fair-trading group, numerous sports and performing arts clubs, visitors, and visits abroad, which enrich students' learning. Every student has a careers interview funded through the business partnership to check they are on the right course and to support them with future career or education plans.
  - The school has asked professionals from outside school to come in and check the progress the school is making and this work is effective.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - Governors have strategically managed the school through the Trust and conversion to academy status. They set demanding targets and rigorously monitor school performance. Governors challenged the underperformance in three subjects last year and acted swiftly to stabilise staffing and to make sure effective actions were taken to improve them. Consequently, performance has improved significantly. Governors have considerable expertise and knowledge about teaching quality and teachers' pay, which is related to performance. They make sure resources are used to help students progress and check pupil-premium funding to see that it is being spent wisely. They undertake regular training to gain more insight into performance information. Governors seek students' and parents' views through surveys and working parties. Safeguarding arrangements, including checks on staff appointments, meet statutory requirements.
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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>	138474
<b>Local authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	412806

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1214
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Lindsey
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Linsell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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