

# Longdean School

Rumballs Road, Bennetts End, Hemel Hempstead, HP3 8JB

**Inspection dates** 24–25 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 a good school.

- From their below average starting points, students make good progress and achieve well in English and mathematics. Students' attainment in these key subjects is broadly average and improving steadily.
- Teaching is good in most subjects because teachers pay careful attention to planning interesting lessons which get students learning actively. There are examples of outstanding teaching in the majority of subjects.
- The sixth form is good. Students achieve well in the sixth form because teaching is consistently good and the wide range of courses offered meet students' needs and interests well.
- Students' behaviour and safety are good because the school's house system very effectively supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students' behaviour is excellent in the sixth form.
- Students supported by the pupil premium make strong progress because of the effective programmes that boost their learning.
- School leaders have raised expectations for both staff and students, have improved teaching and achievement and are well placed to continue to drive the school forward.
- Governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and hold school leaders to account well, particularly for the quality of teaching and use of the pupil premium funding.
- A very large majority of parents responding to the Parent View questionnaire express satisfaction with the quality of education provided by the school.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students' achievement in science requires improvement because there is not enough good teaching in the department.
- Teaching does not always stretch the more-able students. As a result, there are not enough students achieving A\* to B grades at
- Students are not always aware of the next steps they need to take to reach and exceed their targets. This limits the progress they make over time.
- Marking is not yet consistently good across all subjects.

GCSE and A-Level.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 part lessons, taught by 40 different teachers. Four lessons were observed jointly with advanced skills teachers and members of the school's senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students, members of the governing body, groups of staff, and a telephone discussion was held with a school improvement partner. A meeting was also held with the Head of the local pupil referral unit.
- Inspectors took account of 78 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) when planning the inspection. The school's own surveys of parents' and students' views were also taken into account.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including examples of students' work, the school's own information on students' attainment and progress, records of attendance and behaviour, and information about safeguarding, school planning and performance management.

## Inspection team

Nasim Butt, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Susan Cox	Additional Inspector
Janet Allcorn	Additional Inspector
Jackie Easter	Additional Inspector
Mary Hinds	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school and converted into an academy in August 2011. When its predecessor school, also called Longdean, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for 23 students with speech and language or communication difficulties, although for much of the time these students attend mainstream lessons.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is similar to that found nationally.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is slightly above average.
- Most students are of White British heritage. Other students come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds with a small minority of Pakistani heritage students as the largest group.
- A broadly average proportion of the students are eligible for the pupil premium which provides additional funding for students in the care of the local authority, for students known to be eligible for free school meals and for those whose parents are in the armed services. There are no students whose parents are in the armed services currently attending the school.
- The school uses alternative provision for a small number of students in both the Longdean Inclusion Centre and the local Pupil Referral Unit (DESC).
- The school met the government's current floor standards in 2012, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school is part of a post-16 consortium that operates across the Dacorum area.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding, in order to further raise students' attainment by:
  - ensuring that all teachers provide work that stretches the more-able students and moves their learning forward as soon as they are ready for more challenge
  - making sure that students are more aware of the next steps they need to take to reach and exceed their targets
  - marking students' work clearly and to a consistently high standard so they know what is needed to improve their work.
- Raise attainment and accelerate students' progress in science by:
  - making sure that all students are challenged by the activities in science lessons
  - providing students with more opportunities to apply their scientific skills to solve real life problems.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- After a dip in 2012 of the proportion of students making expected progress in English, achievement has improved and is now good.
- Students enter the school with skills in reading, writing and mathematics which are below average. From these starting points, by the end of Year 11 most students make better than expected progress and achieve well in English and mathematics because of the good teaching they receive.
- Achievement is not yet outstanding because, although attainment is broadly average, the proportion of more-able students in Year 11 and in the sixth form achieving grades A\* to B at GCSE and A-Level, is below average.
- Students' achievement varies a little between subjects, particularly where teaching is not as strong. For instance, students do not make as much progress as they could in science in the main school. Students make better progress in science subjects in the sixth form but their achievement in science requires improvement in the main school.
- Students' attainment in mathematics is improving at a faster rate than it is in English, partly reflecting the school's specialist status. School leaders have now rightly turned their attention to boosting students' literacy skills, particularly reading and writing, and there are early indications across the curriculum of the success of this approach.
- Students supported by 'Year 7 catch-up' funding are making good progress in improving their literacy and numeracy because of the extra support they receive.
- Additional funding to support pupil premium students is used well and appropriately targeted. As a result, these students make good progress. In English and mathematics, their attainment matches that of other students so the gaps in their achievement have been closed. Overall, these students make significantly better progress than other similar students nationally.
- Early-entry GCSE examinations in mathematics are taken by students at several points from Year 9 onwards. As a result, students' attainment has improved because their confidence has been boosted by early successes. Some students are also taking GCSE qualifications in statistics.
- Students taking GCSE options in Years 9 and 10 as part of the curriculum achieve well in these subjects.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar good progress to other students in the school and achieve in line with similar students nationally. This includes the students in the resource base who have speech and language or communication difficulties.
- Post-16 provision in the consortium is good. Students' good achievement in the sixth form means they are well prepared for the next stage of their education or for the world of work.
- A small number of students study off site in a local pupil referral unit. They make good progress because the individual attention they receive and the courses they study meet these students' needs and interests well. The school carefully tracks their attendance and progress.

- There is no difference in the achievement of the different groups of students in the school, such as those from the different minority ethnic backgrounds.

### **The quality of teaching** is good

- Teachers create a positive learning environment which fosters good relationships and excellent attitudes to learning. They have good subject knowledge and are well trained to support students' learning and progress.
- In the sixth form, teachers provide students with frequent opportunities to deepen their learning through focused discussion and debate. For example, high-quality paired discussion amongst Year 12 psychology students enabled them to make significant improvements to the depth of responses to examination questions.
- Teachers plan well and build effectively upon what students already know. As a result, students are able to make the links between what they are currently learning and what they have done previously. The impact of this is to make learning more purposeful and to consolidate new learning.
- Most work is set at the right level. Where teaching is outstanding, teachers inspire students to learn and tasks are set to stretch their thinking and reasoning skills. In one excellent Year 10 information and communication technology lesson, students critically assessed one another's multimedia presentations skilfully using a set of demanding criteria. Everyone was challenged to add something extra. All students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, made outstanding progress because of skilful prompting and the way the criteria were made accessible to them.
- However, in the few less effective lessons, teachers do not pitch the work accurately enough to meet all students' needs and this limits the progress they can make. This affects the more-able students in particular who sometimes spend too long working on tasks that are too easy for them.
- English assessments are accurately graded because they are rigorously moderated and students get good written feedback in a range of subjects including English and mathematics.
- However, students' work is not always marked to a consistently high standard resulting in lack of clarity about their next steps for improvement. In addition, there are occasionally missed opportunities for students to reflect on their targets, to correct mistakes or to attempt further challenges so as to consolidate what they have learned.
- In some science lessons, teachers do not always provide activities that challenge all students or encourage them to solve real life scientific problems. This holds back progress for some.

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

- Students behave well in lessons; they have good attitudes to learning and apply themselves diligently to the tasks that are set. They work very well with partners and in small groups. Sixth form students were seen engaging in lively discussions with their partners which helped them

think through the problems they were working on.

- Students are particularly good at self-management and checking their own behaviour. As a result, almost all understand how their behaviour affects others. As a consequence, students really enjoy working together and show respect for one another's views and opinions.
- The five minutes' transition time built into the school day to enable students to move to their lessons on a very large site is used well by the students. As a result, punctuality to every lesson is good.
- Students have a secure understanding of different types of bullying, including homophobic and cyber-bullying, and how to minimise risks. Students say that the school's promotion of anti-bullying through the curriculum has helped them further to understand how to avoid unsafe situations.
- Students have confidence that their teachers will deal quickly and successfully with any unacceptable behaviour that may occur. However, a few students say that there is inconsistency in the way some teachers deal with these tricky situations.
- Good progress has been made in working with parents to improve students' attendance which is now average. The very large majority of parents who have responded to the Parent View questionnaire report that the school deals effectively with incidents of bad behaviour.
- Adults supporting students with speech and language or communication difficulties manage students well. School records show that there have been improvements in students' communication skills because of staff working closely with these students and their families.
- The small number of students in the school's inclusion centre and local pupil referral unit are well looked after and supported. As a result, there have been clear improvements in their behaviour and attitudes to work.

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

- The headteacher, ably supported by his leadership team, and together with the governing body, are successful in communicating their high expectations and strong ambition for the school to the staff and students. Policies and procedures are understood well, resulting in smooth day-to-day management. Staff, parents and carers agree that the school is led and managed well.
- School leaders' assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate and school improvement plans are specific about what action will be taken to improve students' attainment. There are strong links between the key priorities of the school and the action plans of individual departments, for example in raising standards in literacy.
- Training time is well planned and supports staff to develop new skills and improve their practice. For example, focused coaching using the school's advanced skills teachers has improved teaching, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Middle leaders, known as 'Directors of Learning' have, in the main, been effective in monitoring students' academic performance. As a result, clear improvements can be seen in students' achievement across most subjects.

- The pupil premium funding is spent well, for example on focused one-to-one and small group tuition, and has resulted in this group of students making consistently good progress over time. In addition, effective leadership of the resource base has ensured that these students have the resources they need to help them to overcome potential barriers to learning. As a result, they too make good progress.
- Teaching is monitored closely and school leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching is accurate. However, a few subject leaders do not always take into account the progress seen in students' books when making judgements about the quality of teaching.
- School leaders have addressed weak leadership in science resulting in better teaching and some early signs of improved attainment. However, the full impact of the changes introduced is yet to be seen.
- Being part of the consortium provides sixth form students with greater choice and allows them access to a wide range of courses, both academic and applied. Take up in the sixth form of the school's specialist subjects, mathematics and computing, is high reflecting consistently good teaching and a track record of good results in these key areas.
- The house system is well led and embedded, effectively promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through collaborative work, healthy competition and challenge.
- The school's systems for managing staff performance are robust. All teachers, including those newly qualified, value the good quality training they receive. Intensive professional development and training which are carefully matched to staff's individual needs have ensured that the quality of teaching is mostly good and that a growing number of lessons are outstanding.
- Good use is made of external consultants to confirm the school's own assessment of its performance. For example, a school improvement partner is deployed effectively to check that the school has an accurate view of the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is effective in its ability to challenge and support the school. Its members know what the school is doing well and where it could do better because they are fully involved in the school's self-evaluation activities. They have a secure understanding of information on students' progress, and use it to make comparisons with national expectations. For example, they are aware that students' achievement in science has needed attention and worked closely with the headteacher to remedy the situation. Governors check the use of the additional funding through the pupil premium, to narrow the gap in attainment, and this has had a strong impact on this group's achievement in 2012. Governors pay close attention to the school's evaluation of teaching and its management of staff performance in relation to pay progression. In addition, they ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and that equal opportunity is promoted well.



## 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>	137110
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	412850

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>	Non-maintained
<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>	1153
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	146
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Paul Fallon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Graham Cunningham
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	N/A
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