

The Boswells School

Burnham Road, Chelmsford, CM1 6LY

Inspection dates

24–25 April 2013

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 a good school.

- Students make good progress and reach above-average standards in all subjects, but particularly in mathematics and the performing arts.
- The sixth form is good and improving. Students achieve well in response to effective teaching.
- Teaching is typically good. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace. As a result, students are well motivated and make good progress in lessons.
- The behaviour of students is good. They feel safe and well cared for. The individual help and guidance provided for those who have the greatest learning difficulties means that they sometimes make exceptional progress.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, make a consistently positive impact on improving the school, including the quality of teaching and students' achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always plan lesson activities at the right level of difficulty to fully stretch students of all abilities.
- Students in the sixth form make slower progress in their second year than in their first year.
- Teaching in English is still too varied to promote outstanding progress all the time.
- Leaders are not yet rigorous enough in their plans or actions to ensure that more teaching and progress are outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 55 lessons. Six of these were seen together with senior leaders.
- The inspectors examined students' workbooks, records of attendance and behaviour, information about the performance of students in national tests, and the school's procedures for keeping students safe.
- The records of governors' meetings, reports made by external advisers and the school's improvement plans were considered.
- The inspectors listened to the views of students and staff.
- The views of the 99 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were considered, along with the opinions of those who spoke to the inspectors or from whom they received correspondence.
- The inspectors held discussions with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, school leaders and support staff.

Inspection team

James McAtear, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Heather Housden	Additional Inspector
Duncan Kanya	Additional Inspector
Paul Bartlett	Additional Inspector
Jackie Jackson-Smith	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Boswells School is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Students are taught in eight form entry year groups and in a combination of mixed-ability and set groups.
- The vast majority of students are White British. The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium, which in this school provides funding for children in the care of the local authority and for students known to be eligible for free school meals, is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is well below average. The proportion receiving support at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The headteacher also serves as an adviser to other headteachers within the county.
- No students attend alternative provision away from the school site.
- Boswells became an academy school on 1 February 2012. When the predecessor school, Boswells High School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum level expected for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, especially in English, by ensuring that all teachers consistently plan lessons that engage and interest students more fully.
- Improve achievement among more-able and middle-ability students by making sure that:
 - all teachers consistently plan lessons in which the work set is suitably demanding for students of all abilities
 - students in the sixth form make the best use of all available time beyond lessons, including homework, to improve their work as they move through the second year.
- Strengthen leadership and management by increasing the focus on rigorously improving teaching, specifically where it is less strong and where progress is less consistent.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students join the school with attainment that is slightly above the national average. They get off to a good start and maintain a good level of progress throughout their time at the school. By the time they complete their final year, they have made more progress in mathematics than is expected nationally. Their progress in English is still good but not as rapid as that in mathematics.
- The attainment of students is above national averages and improving quickly. Standards in mathematics are much higher than those achieved nationally and current standards in English are high although, as with rates of progress, not as good as those in mathematics.
- In other subjects, and especially in the performing arts, students make consistently strong progress. Performance is particularly good in subjects where teachers assess the learning of the students most carefully, and adapt what and how they teach for different groups of students.
- In 2012, the attainment of students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding was on average one third of a grade lower in English and just under one third of a grade lower in mathematics than that of other students at the school. Since the examinations held in 2012, this gap has narrowed very slightly and eligible students now attain just under one third of a grade below their classmates in English and mathematics. These students are making similar progress to their classmates in mathematics and in English.
- Students who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium, which is for students who did not achieve Level 4 in English at the end of Key Stage 2, make good progress as a result of the school's work to improve standards of reading in Year 7.
- Students who receive support through a statement of special educational needs make exceptional progress. This is because the school tracks their progress very effectively and quickly steps in to help those who have fallen behind to get back on track. The progress made by other disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good.
- During lessons, students typically make good progress as a result of good teaching. A brisk pace is a characteristic feature of most teaching at the school. This engages students and helps ensure that they make progress that is in line with or exceeds national expectations. Work in students' books confirms that this good level of progress is being sustained over time.
- Students read widely and frequently. For example, students in Year 7 read on a daily basis and do so across all subjects so that their ability to read with fluency is consistently improving.
- Students who are more able, and some who are of middle ability, are not always stretched enough during lessons. This is because teachers do not always set work at the right level of difficulty for all students. As a result, although students make good progress they do not yet make outstanding progress.
- Students achieve well in the sixth form, although students in the second year of sixth form do not always continue to make progress at the same high rates as those in their first year. This is because students are not making the best use of their time when they are not in lessons to further their learning.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- Teaching in most subjects is good, and this is particularly true in the performing arts and in mathematics. The school checks the quality of teaching closely and accurately.
- The school plans support programmes that are effective in getting any students who have fallen behind back on track. These sessions are taught well, both by teachers and by other adults who help students in small groups. The work of these adults who help students to learn is very effective. They know clearly what their role is during lessons and understand the needs of the students they are assisting in detail. They work well as a team with the teachers.
- Teachers do not all plan lessons that consistently include work at levels that stretch and provide the right level of challenge for students who are more able and for some students who are of middle ability.
- Teachers are effective in asking questions that encourage students to think more deeply about the things they are learning. As a result, the quality of discussions among students about their work is high. This was notably the case in a dance lesson, where students remained highly focused when analysing how to improve their own work further.
- Although the quality of teaching in English is good, it does not always match that found in mathematics and in other areas of the school. This is because lessons do not consistently engage and interest students in English as much as they do in other subjects.
- Marking in students' books is regular and positive. It gives useful feedback to students about improving their work, although they are not always given the opportunity to respond to the comments made by the teacher or to engage in a dialogue about this through their exercise books and folders.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Students are given enough scope to apply what they are learning to their own work. As a result, they are learning to work independently during lessons. However, they do not always use the time they have outside lessons as effectively as they could to continue their learning. Homework tasks set do not always support them fully in using their time to best effect.

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

- The overwhelming majority of students behave well in lessons, and this makes a considerable contribution to the school's positive learning environment. They cooperate with their teachers and with one another, and work well individually and more independently in pairs and groups.
- Attendance is above average and the school's work in addressing the poor attendance of a very small minority of students has been effective over time. Students are punctual to school and to individual lessons.
- Logs kept by the school about behaviour and bullying indicate that behaviour is good over time and that bullying is rare. Students agree with this and confirm their confidence in staff to address any issues reported to them. They are taught well about the risks associated with the internet, fire and water.
- Although some areas of the school can be crowded, students move around safely and with consideration towards one another. They conduct themselves responsibly during social times and

mix well together at break and lunchtimes. The overwhelming majority of students show good manners and respect for their teachers and for one another.

- Low-level disruption is uncommon because the vast majority of lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. As a consequence, students remain engaged and interested and progress is rarely marred by poor behaviour. Relationships are usually warm because teachers use praise well to acknowledge the achievements of students and are skilful in managing their behaviour.

The leadership and management are good

- The school's leaders are accurate in their assessment of the performance of the school and the quality of its work. The inspection team agreed with leaders and managers about the quality of teaching, standards of behaviour and progress. A large majority of parents agree that the school is led and managed well.
- The school's arrangements for checking the quality of teaching and marking are effective. They ensure that these areas of the school's work are usually good and sometimes outstanding. The performance of teachers is linked to salary progression and the training provided is based on the needs identified through checks on teachers' work.
- The school provides a wide range of subjects and topics that meet the needs and aspirations of its students. It is particularly strong in providing for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, it enhances their sense of social responsibility through a dance performance that includes disabled students from other schools. The courses offered include a good balance of academic and work-related opportunities.
- The school's arrangements fully met national requirements for safeguarding students at the time of the inspection.
- Although the school's improvement plans are extensive and help to ensure progress is good throughout the school, they are not always sufficiently well focused to improve it further. This is because they do not always concentrate specifically enough on improving areas that, although good, are not yet outstanding.
- The academy trust provides effective support in ensuring that the school provides good value for money and uses available resources well to improve progress for students.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. The governors provide strong support to the headteacher's vision for the school. They are knowledgeable about the use of pupil premium funding and the effect it has on students' progress. They demonstrate a clear awareness of the relative strengths of teaching between subject areas and the rates of progress made by different age groups. They analyse data well to compare the school's performance with that of similar schools nationally, and to inform the way they challenge school leaders. They support the school's thorough arrangements for managing staff performance and ensure that these are effective so that only the teachers whose students do well are rewarded.

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	137874
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	413423

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
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	1488
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ruth Bird
Headteacher	David Crowe
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01245 264451
Fax Number	01245 264451
Email address	admin@boswells.essex.sch.uk

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