

Eaton Bank Academy

Jackson Road, Congleton, Cheshire, CW12 1NT

Inspection dates 8–9 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although improving, students' achievement in English and mathematics is not yet as good as it could be. In 2012 for example, students' attainment declined and this meant that their progress from their starting points in both subjects was disappointing.
- The quality of teaching is variable across and within subjects and there is not yet enough outstanding classroom practice.
- Students have insufficient opportunities to find things out for themselves and to take enough responsibility for their own learning and progress.
- Assessment is not always used well enough to plan activities which meet the needs of all students closely enough. In addition, marking does not consistently give students enough advice on how they can improve their work.
- The new curriculum, designed to involve students more in their learning, is not yet fully embedded.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Students enter Year 12 with broadly average attainment and standards at the end of Year 13 are average, but improving.

The school has the following strengths

- Students' progress is accelerating and standards are rising rapidly as a result of good leadership from the talented and committed headteacher and deputy headteachers.
- Accurate and honest self-evaluation of the school's performance has resulted in effective action planning to promote ongoing improvement, especially in teaching. Heads of academic departments, including creative coaches, are taking increasing responsibility for sharing exemplary practice and for improving the quality of teaching.
- Pastoral care is good. Students are very proud of their school, feel safe and behave well. They have a high regard for their teachers and comment, 'The staff give us so many opportunities to help us raise our aspirations about what we can achieve.'
- The governing body knows the school well, supports it to the full, but also challenges the leadership with increasing rigour.
- Financial management is good. The school's use of its funding is based closely on its educational priorities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 37 lessons, taught by 36 teachers. One lesson observation was made jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also visited two year-group assemblies.
- Inspectors met with four groups of students, including students in the sixth form. They also had discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors. They held meetings with heads of subject departments, pastoral staff, the special educational needs coordinator, the business manager and senior leaders.
- Inspectors took account of the 138 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and also of the 41 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school at work and looked at students' files and exercise books during lessons, internal and external student progress and attainment data, school improvement planning and procedures to enable the school to gain an accurate view of its performance. They considered minutes of meetings of the governing body and also scrutinised documentation on attendance, behaviour, safeguarding and child protection.

Inspection team

James Kidd, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Gary Kelly

Additional Inspector

Osama Abdul Rahim

Additional Inspector

Mary Lanovy-Taylor

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a slightly smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above that usually found.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority and those from service families) is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Most students are White British and there are very few students with English as an additional language.
- Small numbers of students visit Congleton Fire Station, Macclesfield College and Reaseheath College to follow courses, including hairdressing and animal management.
- Eaton Bank Academy converted to become an academy on 1 September 2012. When its predecessor school, Eaton Bank School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning, in order to accelerate the progress and raise the attainment further of all groups of students by:
 - building upon the impressive work of middle leaders, including creative coaches, to share exemplary classroom practice across the school to move more teaching from good to outstanding
 - using data on students' performance more effectively to plan activities which meet the learning needs of all students more closely
 - giving students more opportunities to be more independent in their learning so that they can find more things out for themselves and thus take more responsibility for their own progress
 - ensuring that marking consistently gives students advice on how they can improve their work
 - fully embedding the new curriculum, which is designed to engage and interest students more in their learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **requires improvement**

- Although it varies from year to year, students' attainment on entry to the school is broadly in line with that usually seen. Following disappointing results in mathematics in 2011 and 2012, and in English in 2012, students' now reach broadly average standards in these subjects by the end of Year 11. This is the result of good leadership from the senior team which is improving the quality of teaching and learning and which is, therefore, beginning to accelerate students' progress. Nonetheless, students' achievement still requires improvement.
- There is a similar picture in the sixth form: students' achievement requires improvement and they reach broadly average standards in their A-level examinations.
- Over a two-year period, the proportion of students in the main school making expected progress in English and mathematics was not as good as it should have been. Inspection evidence, however, including observation of students' learning in lessons and a consideration of their oral responses and of their written work, demonstrate that all groups of students are now making better progress. The sterling work of the learning and progress managers is also having a positive impact here.
- In addition, the school's detailed tracking procedures, which ensure that students' progress and attainment are monitored closely, confirm that an increasing percentage of students are now making and, on occasions exceeding, the progress expected. Indeed, nearly half of the current Year 11 students are demonstrating the potential to make four or more National Curriculum levels progress in mathematics since they entered Year 7. Standards are now rising rapidly and in 2012, for example, attainment in core science, English literature and statistics was above average. The school uses early for GCSE examinations wisely and it does not limit the potential of the most-able students.
- As a result of effective use of pupil premium funding, the progress and attainment of students known to be eligible for free school meals are rising and the gaps between their performance and the performance of other students in the school are closing. It is too early to make any judgment on the impact of the use of the 'catch up' premium.
- Good support for disabled students and those with special educational needs, often on a one-to-one basis, leads to these students making similar progress to their peers. The performance of students who follow courses in local colleges and in Congleton Fire Station is monitored regularly. They are safe and progressing well.
- The majority of parents who completed the online questionnaire are satisfied with how well their children are doing in the school.

The quality of teaching **requires improvement**

- The school's leadership demonstrates an overriding emphasis on improving teaching and learning and on basing its judgements on teaching quality on the progress students are making. As a result, although teaching still requires improvement, it is getting better. Relationships between students and teachers in the classroom are a major strength.
- Students' progress is not as good as it could be when there is a 'one size fits all' approach and when the activities are too easy for some students and too difficult for others. In some lessons, students are not given enough opportunities to work independently and to find things out for themselves. As a consequence, they are not required to take enough responsibility for their own learning and progress.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent. There is some good and outstanding practice in which students receive congratulation on their work and effort and detailed comments on how they can do better. On occasions, however, marking is cursory and lacking in such comment. Students, therefore, are not always fully aware of how they can improve their work.

- The school is now beginning to share exemplary classroom practice across all subject areas in order to improve even more teaching to be good or outstanding. This is already having a positive impact and, during the inspection, outstanding teaching was seen in both key stages in the main school and also in the sixth form. Students recognise that teaching is improving: as students in Years 10 and 11 commented, 'Teachers are not complacent in improving teaching and they listen to us when we tell them how we believe we learn best.'
- The most secure learning and the best progress take place when students are given opportunities to work collaboratively and to share their ideas with each other. In a Year 11 French lesson, for example, where teaching was rated outstanding, students talked openly about the many different ways to learn vocabulary; they were delighted to listen to the experiences of their classmates and many decided to try the new methods in preparation for their forthcoming examinations.
- Similarly, when lesson planning, based on the effective use of students' performance data, ensures that the work is tailored to their individual needs, students show interest in the activities, are fully involved in their learning and make good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students show pride in their school and have a high regard for their classmates and for the adults who work with them. In their words, 'The staff are approachable. Our friendship groups and the fact we feel safe in school reassure us.' Parents agree and the vast majority of those who completed Parent View believe their children are happy and safe. One parent commented in a letter, 'Our son has found new enthusiasm for school because the staff have tackled the challenges he faces with such optimism.'
- Although a minority of students are a little passive in lessons, most are involved well in their learning. They behave well, and on occasions outstandingly well, in lessons and around school. Students are supported effectively by the behaviour and welfare managers who oversee pastoral and behaviour issues. The 'Achievement for All' strategy has attendance as its major focus. As a result of the strategy, attendance is broadly average and is improving strongly.
- Students have an impressive awareness of the nature of bullying in all its forms. They believe that bullying is rare and that if it does occur, it is dealt with swiftly; they also point to the value of the anonymous texting facility. Students also express the view that bullying based on prejudice, including racism and homophobia, is not an issue.
- Students display an impressive social conscience and do much to help younger students and also people who are less fortunate. For example, talented sixth-form mathematicians provide individual support for students in Year 11 who are experiencing difficulty with the subject. The student leadership team, including the peer support group, mentor students who are feeling unhappy.
- The student council, including the year group councils, take the lead in charitable work and members continue to be proactive in their support for schools in Gambia and Romania. This is just one aspect of the school's impressive promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- There is wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, including lunchtime and after-school clubs, visits and visitors. Drama, music and dance are important elements of school life. Students speak highly of the residential trips to Conway and the Year 7 trip to France. Their spiritual and moral development is promoted particularly well by the visit of an Auschwitz survivor.

The leadership and management are good

- The school knows itself well and its view of its performance is accurate and honest. The senior leadership team leads by example and the headteacher and deputy headteachers have a clear view about how the school can continue to improve and move forward. This view is shared by

the staff, who believe that they have been empowered to take ownership of the areas for which they are particularly responsible. Heads of academic departments pay tribute to how, in their words, 'Senior leaders are driving up standards.' They add, 'We now take much more responsibility for performance within our departments.'

- Financial management is strong and the school's budget is spent wisely, putting the school's educational priorities and the welfare, both academic and personal, of all its students, first.
- There is a shared view on how to improve teaching and learning and middle leaders act as 'creative coaches' to share good practice and to support teachers in the further development of their skills. The school recognises that there is not yet enough outstanding teaching.
- The curriculum, including in the sixth form, is under continuous review. New arrangements emphasise the vital importance of meeting students' interests and engaging them more in their learning. The 'multi-age learning block' for Years 10 to 13, for example, will comprise of a range of programmes involving community and voluntary work, sporting activities and academic courses. The new curriculum, however, is not yet fully embedded and it is too early to see its full impact.
- Performance appraisal arrangements are fully in place and outcomes link to relevant in-service training. Teachers are fully aware that they must meet their classroom targets, based primarily on students' progress, if they are to progress on the salary scale.
- The school's promotion of equality of opportunity is sound and discrimination in all its forms is rejected. Safeguarding and child protection arrangements fully meet current guidelines.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body take their roles seriously and they have a secure awareness of the school's strengths and of its areas for development. They support the school well but are never afraid to question the leadership when they feel it is necessary to do so. Indeed, they use their many different skills well to hold senior leaders to account with increasing rigour.
 - Governors require heads of academic departments to outline performance in their subjects and they also look closely at how the school is attempting to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They oversee the spending of the pupil premium funding and consider the impact of this spending on the achievement of students who are supported by it. They ensure that teachers only receive financial reward if they meet their classroom targets in relation to students' progress.

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	138662
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	412748

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	940
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Smith
Headteacher	Ann Webb
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01260 273000
Fax number	01260 297352
Email address	a.webb@eatonbank.org

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