

The Royal Liberty School

Upper Brentwood Road, Romford, Essex, RM2 6HJ

Inspection dates 15–16 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Leadership, including governance, is good and improving. The leadership team and governors have worked together successfully to raise standards. As a result, all groups of students are now making rapid and sustained progress and most are achieving well.
- The improvement in students' achievement is a direct result of the school's drive to improve teaching and learning. Teaching is now good and improving. Teachers have high expectations and are ambitious for students' achievement.
- The school's curriculum is good. It offers students a range of appropriate and varied courses and qualifications at Key Stage 4 and meets the needs of students of all abilities.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good. Students are appreciative of changes in the school and say that these have helped to improve their behaviour and achievement. Students say they feel safe in school. Behaviour is good.
- There are wide-ranging opportunities for students to deepen their experiences through clubs, trips and competitions, which are very popular. The partnership built with Eon during the 2012 Olympics has been especially beneficial. Students are enthusiastic about the opportunities they have to represent the school at sport.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teaching is not yet outstanding. Teachers do not use data as effectively as they could to plan lessons that provide challenge for students of all abilities to make the best progress possible.
- Teachers do not always make sure that following marking, students respond to the comments they make for improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 lessons, a number of which were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors attended tutor group sessions and an assembly.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, heads of departments, staff, several groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and vice-chair, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including school policies, data on standards and progress, safeguarding and lesson observations, improvement plans, anonymised performance management records and minutes of governors' meetings.
- Inspectors took into account the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and questionnaires completed by members of staff.

Inspection team

Heather Leatt	Lead Inspector
Beverly Dobson	Additional Inspector
Kewal Goel	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Royal Liberty School is a smaller than average-sized secondary school for boys.
- The school has a specialism in science.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and children from service families, is also higher than average.
- There are 19 students eligible for catch-up funding, which is for Year 7 students who did not attain Level 4 in English at the end of primary school.
- The proportion of students who have special educational needs and receive support through school action is average. The proportion of disabled students and those on the school action plus programme or with a statement of special educational needs is also average.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- A small number of Key Stage 4 students receive part of their education off site at Havering College.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise students' achievement in all subjects by ensuring that:
 - teachers use data effectively to plan lessons that meet the needs of all students and challenge them to make the very best progress they can
 - students take note of written guidance on how to improve their work and respond to the comments they receive
 - staff development is always clearly linked to individual teachers' needs to enable them to drive improvements in teaching and learning even more effectively.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students now join the school with attainment that is in line with national averages. However in past years, many students, including those in the current Year 11, arrived with Key Stage 2 scores that were well below average.
- The strong rise in students' attainment is demonstrated through the very good results obtained already by those students in both Year 10 and Year 11 who have taken their mathematics GCSE, English IGCSE and science modules early this year. This is the result of the robust approach the school has taken to improving teaching and students' learning over the past 18 months. Those who achieve their target grade in English go on to study English Literature and those who achieve their target in mathematics then study statistics. Students in science continue to study for a higher grade, as do the most-able students in mathematics.
- Students' progress in English and mathematics is now good at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 due to better teaching and better leadership of these areas than previously. Data for most other subjects show similar good progress being made, although this is not yet the case in religious education (RE).
- Good progress is also being made in addressing the weak reading and writing skills of those students who are in receipt of the Year 7 catch-up premium. Data show that the large majority are achieving well and will meet their end-of-year targets. Many students say they enjoy reading for pleasure outside of school and are enthusiastic about the texts studied in English lessons.
- Many groups of students, including those in receipt of free school meals, looked after children and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress and achieve in line with national averages. Data for disabled students and those who have special educational needs show that they are on target to make very good progress this year, with almost half of students set to gain five or more good GCSEs, including English and mathematics. Progress at Key Stage 3 for this group is also very strong.
- The pupil premium has been spent very wisely and has had a significant impact on the achievement of students who benefit from it. The school has targeted support to raise standards in literacy and numeracy and also to improve attendance for this group with notable success. As a result, the average points score for students eligible for the pupil premium is broadly in line with national averages, and the gap between them and those who do not receive the pupil premium narrowed considerably in both English and mathematics last year. There remains a very high awareness of the need to continue to improve the standards achieved by this group of students to further narrow the gap.
- The progress of the small number of students attending courses off site is tracked and monitored carefully. As a result, this group achieves very well. The school predicts on convincing evidence that all students who leave the school this year will have a place in further education or training.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is improving rapidly and most is at least good, with some that is outstanding. As a result, most students are now making good progress. Students appreciate the improvements made in the quality of teaching and enjoy their lessons. A Year 11 boy commented that teachers go out of their way to help students do the very best they can.
- In most lessons, teachers use their strong subject knowledge to promote good learning and also use questioning effectively to engage students.
- Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve and most plan lessons that ensure the needs of all are met. However, some teachers do not use data and assessment information about students' starting points and progress to inform their planning as effectively as

they might to challenge all groups. Consequently in a few lessons work is too hard for some and too easy for others and so their progress slows.

- Teaching in English, mathematics and science is a strength. Teachers in these subjects make sure there is a balance between teaching the students directly and allowing them to learn more independently and thinking things out for themselves. For example, in a Year 8 lesson which focused on developing the boys' speaking and listening skills, they worked enthusiastically in groups to present the concept of heaven in a variety of interesting ways, including through the use of song.
- Work is marked regularly in the vast majority of subjects and provides students with good feedback as to how to improve. However, not all teachers provide feedback that is as detailed and useful as it could be and there is not always an expectation that students will respond to the advice they are given.
- Most lessons have a strong focus on helping students to improve their literacy. Teachers emphasise the correct use and spelling of key subject words, and errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar are corrected in books. Many rooms have eye-catching literacy display boards. Numeracy is also promoted in other subjects and through 'Project Einstein' which combines the teaching of RE and science in Year 7.
- Teaching assistants provide effective, targeted support for those students who need it, including those with special educational needs, enabling them to make good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students behave well around the school, during unstructured time and in lessons, where relationships are good. They cooperate with staff and also with one another and have positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy working in pairs or groups and are supportive of each other when they do. In a Year 10 drama lesson for example, boys in one group were observed planning carefully how to make sure a dyslexic student was fully involved in the performance they were preparing.
- The school has clear systems and strategies in place to enable teachers to manage behaviour well. As a result, this year there have been no permanent exclusions and the number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen this year.
- Although attendance is a little below average, it is also improving. The school is continuing to strengthen its efforts in this area to ensure attendance is brought in line with national averages.
- Students say they feel happy and safe at school and that staff look after them very well. They have a clear understanding of the different forms of bullying, including homophobic and racist bullying. When incidents of bullying do occur, the boys say staff deal quickly and effectively with them. They know exactly who to go to for help should they need it.
- The school has an effective programme in place to develop boys' understanding of how to stay safe through lessons, assemblies, tutor time and visiting speakers. They have a clear understanding of the dangers of cyber bullying, for example, and have also received advice on the dangers and adverse effects of drugs, alcohol and substance abuse which they found valuable. Year 11 boys, however, said that they would have liked more information about sexual health issues.
- Most parents, carers and staff believe that behaviour in the school is good.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are committed to raising standards and have been robust in challenging both underperformance in teaching and underachievement over the past 18 months. They are very well aware of what the school's strengths and weaknesses are. The leadership team, which was restructured at the beginning of the academic year, has been strengthened considerably and is now able to support the headteacher to drive forward

improvements effectively.

- There is now a very clear focus on improving teaching and learning, with the headteacher's vision and high expectations shared by staff at all levels. The impact of this can be seen in the rapid improvement in students' attainment and progress across both key stages. However, while leaders and managers have improved the quality of teaching to good, there are still only a few lessons which are outstanding.
- Most middle leaders are good leaders of teaching and learning in their areas. Senior leaders hold them to account for the progress that pupils make and the leaders of English, mathematics, science and humanities benefit from attending monthly meetings as part of the extended senior leadership team. Not all leaders have been fully effective, however, in checking that all teachers consistently use data effectively to plan tasks at the right level of difficulty for all students.
- The school's curriculum is very well suited to the needs of students of all abilities, offering them a range of appropriate and varied courses and qualifications at Key Stage 4. The curriculum is also enhanced by offering students a wide variety of opportunities through 'flexible learning days'. These cover aspects of citizenship and also contribute well to the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of the boys, which is good. Alternative provision to support the students whose circumstances make them most vulnerable, which takes place at Havering College, is also very effective and they achieve well.
- The headteacher has been effective in tackling poor performance and the school's procedures for performance management are rigorously applied. Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching closely and teachers say they are supported well in developing their classroom skills. There is a good professional development programme in place, but this should be better tailored to meet the needs of individual teachers.
- The school is very effective in ensuring equality of opportunity for all students and discrimination is tackled robustly. The performance of groups of students is monitored closely, to ensure that all achieve well, including those in receipt of the pupil premium. Good relationships are fostered both within the school and in the wider community.
- The school receives light-touch support from the local authority.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements. The school takes all reasonable steps to ensure the behaviour and safety of students when attending off-site provision.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has been strengthened recently by the appointment of a new vice-chair to enable it to better challenge the school to improve further. It has proved itself effective over the past two years in holding the headteacher to account for all aspects of the school's performance, including raising standards. It instigated the restructuring of the senior leadership team that was completed in September 2012.
 - Through careful analysis of performance data, the governors know how the school's performance compares with that of schools nationally and also similar schools. They are aware of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and have been fully involved in monitoring teachers who have not met the rigorous targets set for them. They now oversee the performance management process closely.
 - The governors have an expert oversight of the school's finances. For example, they know exactly how the school has spent the pupil premium and the impact this has had on raising standards and narrowing the gap with other groups.
 - There is a governor training programme in place which has concentrated on behaviour management and exclusion. The Chair of the Governing Body recognises that the governing body needs further training to enable it to continue to provide effective support and challenge to the school.
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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

Unique reference number	102343
Local authority	London Borough of Havering
Inspection number	412741

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	543
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gary Woodman
Headteacher	Julia Deery
Date of previous school inspection	30 September – 1 October 2009
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