

# Garth Hill College

Bull Lane, Bracknell, RG42 2AD

## Inspection dates

21 May – 22 May 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Students find lessons interesting and make good progress because teachers organise activities to get students quickly active and engaged.
- By the end of Year 11 students achieve above average results, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Teachers use assessment information well to give extra attention to those students making the least progress to their targets.
- Behaviour and safety are good because students know the college has high expectations of them and they respect each other's rights.
- Boys and high-ability students have lagged behind other main groups in the past. Boys are now progressing equally well and high-ability students are making better progress this year.
- The sixth form is good because the progress of students is improving well under very good teaching and guidance.
- Leaders and the governing body are very well informed about students' progress, including those supported by the pupil premium. They take effective action when there are indications that any group is making insufficient progress.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Although progress is improving, not enough A\*/A grades are obtained by high-ability students in GCSE or at A level.
- Teachers do not spend enough time in lessons challenging high-ability students to reach the highest levels of the task.
- When marking work, teachers do not give enough guidance on how to improve or expect students to show they can respond to advice.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 49 lessons, five of them jointly with senior leaders.
- They asked some students to read aloud and discussed their reading habits.
- They looked at work and marking in students' books.
- Some small group and individual learning support sessions were visited.
- Inspectors met with staff, representative groups of students, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- They took account of the 124 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 49 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspection team looked at a number of documents, including information about safeguarding, information on the progress and attainment of students, the school's checks on how well it is doing and records of monitoring in relation to teaching, students' behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

Anthony Byrne Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Patricia Goodhead

Additional Inspector

Colin Lower

Additional Inspector

Julie Miriam

Additional Inspector

Veronica Young

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Garth Hill is much larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Over four fifths of students are White British. The proportion of students from other ethnic groups is below average, as is the proportion speaking English as an additional language.
- The proportion supported through the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and children of service families, is lower than average.
- Below average proportions are disabled or have special educational needs at school action level, or at school action plus, or with statements of special educational need. The most frequently identified need supported by school action plus is behavioural, emotional and social difficulty.
- Small groups of students in Years 10 and 11 attend vocational courses at Bracknell and Wokingham College as a small element of their full timetable.
- The college meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

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

- Improve the proportions of students gaining the highest grades (A\*/A) at GCSE and A level by:
  - increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching
  - ensuring that high-ability students are challenged in lessons to reach the most demanding levels of tasks set
  - increasing the recruitment of students with highly developed subject skills to A level courses.
- Make very clear to all students how they can improve towards ambitious targets by:
  - ensuring marking guides all students on what they need to do to improve and that students are required to show they understand and can respond to guidance given.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students begin Year 7 with average standards of literacy and numeracy. Over recent years progress has improved strongly, so that by the end of Year 11 students achieve above average results in five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics.
- School information and inspection evidence show boys, high-ability students, minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are beginning to match other main groups in progressing faster than similar groups nationally. More work needs to be done, however, to ensure that high-ability students always attain the higher grade of which they are capable.
- Students read a good range of texts in English lessons and wider reading is supported by the well-stocked school library. Writing for a variety of purposes is supported in schemes of work in English and other subjects emphasise literacy through correct subject language and opportunities for answering and discussion.
- Mathematics is now securing good progress for all. A substantially increased proportion of higher-ability students are assessed as working towards the highest grades. For the first time, last year there were more A\* to C grade passes than in English, even though English maintained above average performance. Year 11 students who were entered early for GCSE mathematics did not obtain the highest A\*/A grades in January. In the summer 38 students (16% of the year group) obtained A\*/A passes.
- Those supported by the pupil premium do significantly better than their similar group nationally in English, but only equally well in mathematics. They are about a third of a grade behind other groups in the school in English. The gap has been wider in mathematics but in the current Year 11 and Year 10 the gap is now closing more rapidly.
- The progress of students who are disabled or have special educational needs has varied because in the past identification of needs had not been precise enough. The area is now effectively led so that in support sessions and most lessons students, including those with behavioural difficulties, make good progress.
- Students enter the sixth form with a lower proportion of high grades at GCSE compared with the national profile. Pass grades at AS level have fluctuated, but improved in 2012 on the previous year. The proportion of students who stay on to take A level is lower than nationally and a lower proportion of high grade passes at A\*/A is obtained, but last year all students entered for A level gained passes in the range A\* to E. This year, on the four occasions when overall progress has been assessed and analysed, there has been a strong trend of improvement, with a marked increase in progress towards higher grades.
- Information on students' achievement is used very effectively by the school and any indications of underachievement are tackled decisively at student, teacher or leadership levels.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- The reason that pupils make good progress is that teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Thorough and accurate records of lesson observations, confirmed by inspectors, demonstrate this. Students say that learning is usually 'interesting and fun'. Sixth formers often cited their trust in their teachers as a reason for staying on.
- Typically, after a crisp introduction, students are rapidly engaged in independent learning, often sharing ideas in groups or pairs which gives them confidence and deepens their engagement and understanding. Teachers make good use of the information they have on students to spend time helping those who are currently further from reaching their targets than others.
- It is less common for teachers to make extra demands on those capable of the highest

attainment. These students address tasks willingly, but are not pushed often enough to reach more ambitious levels. Consequently they are not always extended to reach their full potential.

- Lessons usually proceed at a good pace with reminders from the teacher about what stage of the task students should have reached. In design and technology lessons, within the hour all students had made templates in time for their designs to be cast in pewter or moulded in plastic.
- Assessment to check progress is frequent. Effective use of assessment data arises from the regular tests set in all subjects. Teachers analyse where any weaknesses have emerged and carefully design lessons to revise and develop these areas.
- However, while that retrospective use of assessment is useful, in on-going marking there is inconsistency in how well teachers guide students about what their next improvement step should be. Some teachers expect students to respond to the marking and secure immediate progress by demonstrating how they can improve work already done, or explain how they have applied the advice in further work. This good practice, seen for example in the English department, is not widespread.
- Lessons usually have a clear structure and students know that their teachers have high expectations of them. Just occasionally, when planning is less tightly structured, students take the opportunity to be too casual and drift off task.
- Teaching in the sixth form is generally of high quality, based on teachers' subject expertise and their ability to enthuse their students. Expectations of students reaching the highest levels are now becoming established and students report that the guidance they receive about their work is very clear and helpful.

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

**are good**

- Students know that their teachers care about them. They know what is expected of them at Garth Hill and apologise for occasional minor misdemeanours with a ready smile. The vast majority of parents and carers responding to Parent View believe their child is safe and that behaviour is good. The inspection confirmed this opinion.
- In lessons they usually work hard to please their teachers. Working in mixed gender groups helps boys to maintain mature attitudes to learning.
- The well-designed building helps students to move between lessons in an orderly, uncrowded manner. At social times the students mix together very well. Students understand everyone's right to be treated equally.
- Students' mature attitudes maintain recorded incidents, for instance of racist language or bullying, at a very low level and there are no recorded incidents of use of homophobic language.
- Students understand that bullying can take many forms from physical aggression to persistent negative comments on social media. They are strongly convinced that it is morally wrong, that it rarely occurs in Garth Hill and that they could go to adults for help if they were worried in any way. Within the curriculum they receive good advice on keeping safe.
- A few students do have difficulties with behaviour but support for them is strong and well organised. Permanent exclusions and moves to other schools have reduced to zero this year and some students moved from other schools have maintained good attendance.
- The college analyses attendance patterns carefully and persistent absenteeism is low. Attendance has improved to above average and shows a continuing upward trend.
- Sixth form students provide good role models. They are conscious of this responsibility and express willingness to be involved and help younger students.

### **The leadership and management**

**are good**

- The Principal's vision of the college's 'journey to excellence' is widely accepted. The college's checks on how well it is doing are realistic and acknowledge that the journey is not complete. However, considerable distance has been travelled since the previous inspection when teaching was not judged to be good. Records show a very significant increase in the proportion of good or outstanding teaching and the progress of all groups has improved. The sixth form is now well placed to expand with a higher number of applications from Year 11 students and an expanded curriculum on offer.
  - Policies to improve teaching and learning are backed up by regular reviews and professional development. Performance management sets clear targets related to improving students' progress and the college robustly challenges and supports staff who do not rise to the college's expectations.
  - In this large college a united team of managers are clear about responsibilities, what is successful and what needs further development. Leaders in the sixth form for example were very clear about the changes they have made to improve progress for current students and have thoroughly informed Year 11 students about the positive experience that awaits them.
  - Progress of different groups is analysed and effective action taken to improve progress to secure equal opportunity. The school gives a clear account on its website of how it spends the grant to support students eligible for the pupil premium by paying for them to take part in trips and activities and their progress is showing rapid improvement. The college takes all reasonable steps to ensure the behaviour and safety of students when attending off-site provision.
  - Safeguarding procedures are managed well, meeting all statutory requirements and providing support for students whose circumstance make them vulnerable.
  - The Key Stage 3 curriculum is completed by the end of Year 8. The extra year to prepare for GCSE in Key Stage 4 is contributing to progress. Small groups of students in Years 10 and 11 benefit from an opportunity to attend part-time courses at the local college of further education. This opportunity offers them a taste of alternative training and education when they leave school. Within the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities students extend their understanding of themselves and develop their personal values, so spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strong element in their education.
  - The college is popular with parents and carers. Places in Year 7 are heavily oversubscribed. Responses posted on the Parent View online survey indicate high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the college's performance.
  - The local authority is strongly of the opinion that the college provides a good quality of education and has confidence in its capacity for continuing improvement.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - The governing body is well informed and decisive. Governors set demanding targets for the Principal based on a very good understanding of student and staff performance.
    - They have insisted on changes in leadership in some posts and performance has subsequently improved. They strictly insist that staff progress in pay only when performance targets are met.
    - They pay special attention to the effective use of pupil premium funding to secure equal opportunity for eligible students.
    - They review and revise policies of support development priorities. They review the safeguarding policy annually. They visit school regularly and keep themselves fully briefed on developments in education.
    - The governing body plays a significant part in maintaining improvement at Garth Hill.
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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>	110069
<b>Local authority</b>	Bracknell Forest
<b>Inspection number</b>	413453

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<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>	1,439
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	140
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Baildam
<b>Principal</b>	Keith Grainger
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16–17 September 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01344 421122
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