

Acland Burghley School

Burghley Road, London, NW5 1UJ

Inspection dates 11–12 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Students' achievement requires improvement because progress is not consistently rapid throughout the school.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Students do not make rapid progress in their AS courses due to the quality of some teaching.
- Teaching has not been challenging enough over time to ensure that students consistently make good progress. Teachers' expectations are sometimes not pitched at the right level.
- Although students are aware of their targets and actual attainment, they do not understand what steps they need to take to improve their work.
- In some lessons, students spend too long passively listening to teachers, rather than getting on with work. As a result their progress slows.
- Students have responded well to the re-launched behaviour policy. They behave in an orderly manner in lessons and around the school. However, the level of fixed-term exclusions in the last year was high.
- Although there have been improvements, students' attendance remains below average.
- Leaders', managers' and governors' checks on teaching sometimes focus more on what teachers are doing in lessons than on the impact teaching has on raising students' achievement.
- Improvement plans do not all have precise targets or use information on students' performance to enable achievement to be raised quickly.
- The pace of improvements especially in GCSE subjects where students' performance is weak has been too slow.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have made improvements that have raised the achievement of students in Years 8 and 9 and for high-attainers in Year 11.
- Students in the sixth form achieve well in their A levels.
- Students with statements of special educational needs in 'The Base' are well supported in their learning.
- Teachers create a positive climate for learning and develop good relationships with students.
- The school's specialism, especially drama and dance subjects, contributes well to students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, especially in improving their understanding of equality and tolerance.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 45 part lessons, some of which were jointly observed by senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders and other staff with positions of responsibility, teaching staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and six governors with various roles on committees, the Head of School Improvement for the Secondary Phase from the local authority and several groups of students.
- Inspectors discussed lessons they had seen with teaching staff and examined a range of documents including the school’s action plans, self-evaluation, subject improvement plans, information about students’ attainment and progress, exclusions, behaviour and the school’s records of lesson observations.
- Inspectors looked at a range of students’ work and sampled books in English and mathematics.
- Inspectors took account of 164 responses to Ofsted’s on-line Parent View questionnaire, and the questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Samantha Morgan-Price, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Lesley Cox	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Liz Duffy	Additional Inspector
Omar Ganie	Additional Inspector
Sandra Teacher	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average secondary school.
- Approximately two-fifths of students are White British. A significant proportion of students are from other White backgrounds, White and Black Caribbean and other Black backgrounds. Several other minority ethnic groups are represented in the school.
- Over 50% of students speak English as an additional language.
- An above average proportion of students are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, students known to be eligible for free school meals and those from families in the armed forces. A similar proportion of students are entitled to the Year 7 catch-up premium.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is below average. The proportion of students supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The most common needs are behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and speech, language and communication needs. There are also students with physical disabilities.
- The school has specialist arts status and has gained the Arts Mark Gold Award.
- The school has twenty-three students attending off-site alternative provision at Kings Cross Construction Centre, The Royal Free Hospital School, Westminster Kingsway College, City and Islington College or the College of North West London.
- The school is part of the LaSwap sixth form consortium, which is a collaboration of four local schools.
- The school has a small unit for students with statements of special educational needs, called 'The Base'. There are currently ten students supported by this unit from Year 7 to 9.
- The school meets the government's floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' performance.
- Some Students in Year 11 are entered early for examinations in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement throughout the school and ensure that teaching is consistently good or better in all subjects, especially for students that are underperforming, by:
 - teachers ensuring that every student knows what they are expected to learn and how they can improve their work
 - teachers setting consistently high expectations for all groups of students
 - leaders and managers focusing specifically on how well students are learning when they check the quality of teaching in lessons.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
 - making sure all leaders and managers use information on how well students are doing to set actions to improve achievement further, and that actions are checked regularly to ensure they are working.
- Ensure attendance improves quickly to reach at least the national average.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The percentage of students attaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades in 2011 went up considerably and was above the national average. Since then, it has remained just below average.
- Actions taken to improve boys' achievement in English were successful in 2013. The percentage of A and A* grades also improved in English and mathematics. In 2012, higher-attaining students made better progress than many other students. Higher-attaining students known to be eligible for free school meals also gained increased A* and A grades in their GCSE.
- Although the school has been successful in raising boys' achievement in English, there has been less success in improving girls' achievement in mathematics. Girls' progress in mathematics in 2013 was below the national expectation.
- Students who speak English as an additional language make better progress than other students. There are no discernible differences in the achievement of different ethnic groups.
- Students who are disabled or have special educational needs make progress similar to other students. School action plus students make good progress.
- Students on A-level courses make good progress. In 2012 students made the strongest progress on A-level history and sociology. The progress students make on AS courses has improved in 2013, although it requires further improvement.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium make better progress in English and mathematics when compared to similar groups nationally. In 2011, the school was successful in narrowing the gap of attainment compared to other students in the school and nationally. Since then, the attainment of these students has fallen and the gap is now similar to other schools. Students' attainment is broadly one grade below the average for students not eligible for free school meals.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding has contributed to improved achievement in Year 8. Levels of progress for English and mathematics have improved for this year group. Year 9 achievement has also improved.
- The new initiatives to improve literacy in all subjects ensure that students are reading widely and often, especially in Years 7 to 9. This is improving students' reading levels.
- The school has changed its policy on entering students early for examinations in the last academic year, as leaders were aware it had depressed the achievement of higher-attaining students. Some of these students achieved grade B in their GCSEs in English and mathematics rather than A* or A. In 2013, early entry for students was used for those at risk of not achieving a grade C at GCSE, or those most vulnerable to not achieving a grade at all.
- Students attending off-site alternative provision take a range of GCSEs and other lower level courses. However, it is difficult for the school to assess the true success of programmes, as leaders do not rigorously evaluate their success from students' starting points or as a separate group.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet good as the weaknesses in teaching that senior managers have focused on have not been eradicated. For example, teachers do not automatically use information about what students already know to plan work that is neither too hard nor too easy. This affects all groups of students.
- The amount of good teaching is improving. Some very weak and some outstanding learning was seen during the inspection. The right balance between direction and independent work results in outstanding achievement in some lessons. For example, in a science lesson on DNA, the teacher was aware of the students' learning needs and carefully assessed their progress individually.

Well-pitched appropriate extension work challenged higher attainers and all groups made exceptional progress using appropriate scientific vocabulary.

- The quality of the teaching in English and mathematics is inconsistent and requires improvement.
- Adults who support students in lessons work collaboratively with teachers to help those who are stuck or require more intensive support.
- Teachers do not routinely check that what students are expected to learn deepens their understanding of their work. In addition to this, students are not given time to reflect on their understanding of the work they have produced. Too often, students do not know how to achieve their attainment grade, as they receive insufficient guidance on how to improve their work.
- The focus on improving literacy is having a positive impact on improving students' reading levels in Years 8 and 9 and in students' written work in some subjects. However, the improvements are not consistent across subject areas.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Behaviour in lessons is generally good and students including those in the sixth form show reasonably positive attitudes to learning. However, outside of lessons, behaviour sometimes deteriorates, as some students get involved in too much horseplay moving around the school. Staff form positive relationships with students. This has contributed well to students feeling safe and supported, especially if they have any concerns. Parents also agree that their child is kept safe at school. The school works very well with outside agencies to ensure barriers are removed for those students who are potentially vulnerable to not achieving or attending.
- The school's heightened focus on improving behaviour in the last academic year resulted in a 'zero-tolerance' policy being adopted. As a result, the number of fixed-term exclusions rose in the autumn and summer terms. The school is seeing a positive result to this hard approach, as there is an improvement in the behaviour of students. A large majority of parents agree that the school makes sure students are well behaved.
- The alternative provision has been successful in re-engaging students onto courses and improving their behaviour and attendance.
- The increased awareness of students to the different forms of bullying has meant that there are more reported incidents, especially of a racist and homophobic nature. Bullying is not a concern expressed by students. The school has been successful in fostering better student relationships through its drama and dance curriculum by engaging students in relevant discussions about equality and tolerance of others.
- There are some measures in place to improve students' attendance. However, these have not been completely successful in significantly improving attendance.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher has a vision, passion and commitment for students to do well, and this is shared by the leadership team. However, uneven improvements in students' performance mean that students' achievement is not consistently good. Actions to address some weaker performance in GCSE subjects have not been successful.
- While the school is using a range of improvement strategies to ensure students achieve as well as they can there is more to do, as gaps exist in the progress of boys and girls in mathematics. The gap has widened slightly for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals over the last two years. The school has been more successful in ensuring that students who are disabled or have special educational needs achieve similarly to other students. Overall, the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles any discrimination satisfactorily.
- Senior and other leaders' checking of lessons does not always focus on how well students are learning. There is insufficient emphasis on the impact of teaching on raising achievement. As a

result, the school's assessment of the quality of teaching is too generous.

- The school's evaluation of its performance has been overgenerous as it does not give enough emphasis to pupils' achievement, especially those in Year 11. The performance of groups of students is not checked well enough to ensure that uneven achievement is picked up quickly. This is because students' performance data are not used well by senior leaders or those responsible for subjects or areas. However, there have been stronger improvements in the achievement of higher-attaining students.
- The curriculum throughout the school is broad and balanced. Since the previous inspection, the school has increased the vocational options for Key Stage 4 and the sixth form students. There are also more choices for students wanting to attend vocational programmes as part of the school's off-site curriculum. The transition curriculum for Year 7 students has had a positive impact on raising achievement for Year 8 students.
- The LaSwap consortium contributes well to students' choices of courses on entering the sixth form.
- The school's use of alternative provision is appropriate for the needs of students and has been successful in improving their achievement and levels of attendance. However, a review of this group's achievement against their starting points is not undertaken regularly.
- The school develops students' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development well. The subjects that are part of the school's specialism have had a strong contribution to students' increased awareness of equality and prejudice, especially anti-racism and anti-homophobia.
- The Base, which is the provision for students with statements of special educational needs for autism, supports students well. This enables them to make progress that is in line with other students.
- The views of parents are mainly positive on many aspects of the school's work. However, responses were not as positive when asked if their child receives appropriate homework for their age.
- The school's safeguarding procedures are robust and meet statutory requirements.
- The local authority has aided the school by supporting improvements in English, mathematics and literacy in humanities subjects. It has also strengthened the capacity of the governing body.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a clear picture of the school's main successes and areas of concern. Governors undertake appropriate training to understand students' achievement and the work of the school better. They hold senior leaders to account effectively on how well teachers' performance is managed and which teachers have not achieved the standards required to progress through salary scales. They are knowledgeable about the significant hurdles senior leaders are facing to improve some subjects. The reports by governors linked to departments are beginning to give them a stronger view of the effectiveness of subject leaders. Members of the governing body are well aware of how students' achievement compares to other similar institutions and nationally. However, they have not checked the progress of all groups thoroughly enough, especially for those students in Year 11. There is a heavy reliance on senior leaders' reports on how well the pupil premium funding is contributing to the rise in achievement. Through the relevant committee, the quality of teaching is soundly monitored; however, there have not been enough questions asked by governors of how the school's quality of teaching improves students' achievement over time.

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	100053
Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	425658

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
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	1233
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	380
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Peters
Headteacher	Jo Armitage
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 November 2010
Telephone number	020 74858515
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