

Abbotsfield School for Boys

Clifton Gardens, Hillingdon, Uxbridge, UB10 OEX

Inspection dates 6–7 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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 is not consistently good across the school.
- Examination results for Key Stage 4 students are not as good as they should be because some students do not make sufficient progress, especially in GCSE English and mathematics.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good enough, despite recent improvements, to secure good achievement for all.
- Not all teachers plan work that is at the right level of difficulty for all students in the class. As a result, work is sometimes too easy or too difficult for some and progress is less rapid than it should be.
- Not all teachers mark or check work in ways that help students to improve their work and better understand the ideas encountered.
- Some students find it more difficult to make progress because of their weaker skills in reading and writing.
- The sixth form requires improvement because attainment is below average and progress needs to be accelerated to be good.
- Subject improvement plans and the school's evaluation of how good it is do not always measure the impact of teaching or take enough account of students' progress.
- Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school but do not always hold subject leaders more fully to account.

The school has the following strengths:

- Teachers create a positive climate. Relationships are good and conduct around the school is generally calm and purposeful.
- Achievement is good in some subjects, including art, languages and science.
- Attendance and some aspects of behaviour have improved since the last inspection and many students want to learn and gain good qualifications.
- Students are proud of their school. They feel very safe in the school and bullying is rare.
- The school works very effectively to include all students in its community. It provides good support for those with particular social and emotional needs.
- Provision for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good, so that these learners make good progress.
- Governors and school leaders are committed to ensuring the success of the school and are addressing the weaknesses within it with increasing speed and success.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 30 lessons, of which 13 were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition they made a number of shorter visits to year assemblies and tutorial sessions.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, members of the school leadership and management and groups of staff.
- Members of the inspection team held meetings with two groups of students representing all age groups in the school. Discussions also took place with students informally.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and other members.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and scrutinised documents including the school's own evaluation of how well it is doing, the school improvement plan and statistical information about students' achievement, attendance and exclusions.
- There were eight responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 31 responses to the staff questionnaires. The inspection team also considered the outcomes of school surveys which summarised the responses of over one third of the parents and carers at the school. Additional comments were received from parents and carers.

Inspection team

Rob Ridout, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Aruna Sharma

Additional Inspector

Omar Ganie

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Abbotsfield School for Boys is a smaller than average sized 11 to 19 comprehensive school. The sixth form was established in September 2012.
- The school has specialisms in Mathematics and Computing combined with Applied learning.
- A little over half of the students are from White British, Irish or Other White or Mixed White background. The proportion from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average. The government provides additional funding to support these students because they are at particular risk of underachieving.
- Just over 5% of the students are disabled or have special educational needs. The proportion of students supported by school action is below average, but the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly in line with national averages.
- All provision for students on alternative programmes is arranged by the school. Four students follow courses with various individual providers off site. A small proportion of students in Key Stage 4 follow vocational courses at the school.
- 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?

- Improve the consistency of the quality of teaching so that the majority is good and better by:
 - ensuring that data is used to inform the planning of lessons so that all lesson activities are pitched at the right level of difficulty to challenge all students, particularly the most able
 - consistently marking students' work more regularly and thoroughly, so that students receive high-quality feedback through teachers giving helpful advice and guidance on how to improve their work, with clear evidence that teachers have checked that learning is secure
 - promoting literacy skills systematically in all subjects so that all students are able to read accurately for understanding and can express themselves correctly in both their speaking and writing.
- Increase the rates of students' progress so that it is at least in line with national figures for all schools, especially in English and mathematics, by:
 - developing the use of progress data by all middle leaders, and making sure that class teachers use the data to identify what students need to learn next
 - improving how well subject leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.
- Improve leadership and management by making sure that:
 - middle leaders and managers ensure that development plans give greater emphasis to the impact of their work on the quality of teaching, learning and the progress of students so that the governing body can check more frequently on the improvements being made
 - the governing body has both the information and skills it needs to fully support and challenge leaders and managers.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In 2013, the percentage of boys achieving and exceeding expected grades fell in both English and mathematics. Not enough students made the progress expected of them from their starting points and so achievement requires improvement.
- In recent years, boys have joined the school with skills that are typically below or significantly below those expected for their age. By the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics has been broadly in line with the national average.
- Evidence gathered during the inspection from robust data provided by the school, observations of teaching and learning, scrutiny of students' books and discussions with students show that the progress boys are now beginning to make is at least the progress expected of them in both English and mathematics.
- The school has entered students for mathematics and English examinations early. The school has stopped entering students early for mathematics in 2013 as leaders are aware that it had depressed the achievement of higher-attaining students. Some of these students achieved grade B in their GCSEs in mathematics rather than A* or A. The school will still enter some for English this year as it is proving beneficial in raising levels of confidence and aspirations of the current Year 11 students.
- Achievement in science, art, history, Spanish and a range of work-related subjects is good and contributes well to the overall attainment of students in the school.
- A very small number of students attend off-site provision to take a range of GCSE and work-related courses. This ensures that they remain engaged with their education. The school monitors the success of these learners and the boys do well considering their starting points at the beginning of the courses.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good because of the targeted support provided by many teachers and the considerable interventions.
- Students for whom the school receives the pupil premium attain almost as well as their peers in school. In English they are just under half of a grade behind their peers and in mathematics they are slightly less than one quarter of a grade behind. Evidence provided by the school suggests the gap is still closing.
- Progress data for the current Year 11 students indicate that achievement in 2014 is likely to improve, with standards moving closer to the national average again.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement. Attainment is below the national average and progress is not yet rapid enough.
- Additional funding for those Years 7 and 8 students who need help to catch up with their peers is wisely spent. A two day summer school prepares a number of boys for a more effective move to the school. Small-group work and one-to-one help provided by a skilled and dedicated team of teaching assistants ensure some of the more vulnerable learners make good progress.
- Good work is being done to help students improve their reading skills and lending rates in the library are significantly up. However, there is not yet a coordinated and consistent approach to fully develop the writing and communication skills of all learners. As a result, not all students are able to read accurately for understanding or express themselves correctly in their speaking and writing.
- Students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their classmates.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has not been consistently good enough over time to lead to good progress for all students in all subjects. However, the proportion of good teaching is rising because the school

makes regular checks on lessons and acts on concerns, promoting best practice.

- Where teaching requires improvement, teachers do not plan activities which meet all students' needs. A small number of lessons lack pace, students are not challenged to think or encouraged to exchange ideas, and questioning is aimed at the whole class rather than used to check individual and different groups of students' understanding and involvement in their learning.
- Where teaching is best, teachers give students opportunities to think creatively about their work or reflect in depth about the topic under consideration. In contrast, the questioning of some teachers is too simple, requiring only the briefest of answers from students and does not test their full understanding.
- Marking is too variable. In the best examples of marking, teachers identify what students need to do to improve their work, give students time to reflect on the feedback, provide opportunities for students to respond to advice and check their work for real understanding. However, this is not consistent across subjects or within teams.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers display good subject knowledge and an enthusiasm for their subject. In an art lesson observed during the inspection students made rapid progress because the teacher demonstrated a technique and checked in a variety of ways that students knew what they needed to do. The teacher showed awareness of literacy barriers and helped the students to overcome them.
- The school has a policy to promote literacy skills across all subjects. In the best lessons teachers focus on providing activities that allow students to read and show good understanding of appropriate and challenging texts, practise their speaking and listening skills or produce extended writing about topics within their areas. However, this is not consistent across subjects.
- The majority of classrooms are notable for their calm and purposeful atmosphere. Most students are polite, hard-working and are usually good listeners, although a small number lose their focus on their learning where the teaching does not match their needs. Teachers nurture good and respectful relationships with the students. Teaching assistants are usually well briefed and this helps them play a significant role in supporting learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils require improvement

- Behaviour requires improvement because there are lessons where some students are content to sit back and let others do the work or answer questions. This is generally where teaching activities lack pace and challenge or do not fully meet all students' needs.
- Students are well behaved around the school. They say they enjoy attending the school and feel safe. They say that teachers care for them and teach them well. They value the opportunities and activities provided for them. Students are actively engaged in many good charitable works.
- Behaviour in lessons is mostly good and students' attitudes to learning are generally positive, particularly in lessons where teaching is good or better. However, in a small number of lessons, inspectors observed some off-task behaviour where the teaching did not stretch or challenge students sufficiently.
- The school has worked successfully to improve behaviour in recent years and this promotes a calm and cohesive community. Pastoral leaders are influential in promoting positive attitudes and are well regarded by students. Exclusions have fallen in the last three years.
- Students show a good awareness of the various types of bullying, such as through text messaging and through social network sites. They report that incidents are very rare and are confident that, if it should occur, it would be rigorously dealt with.
- Personal, social and health education sessions ensure that students have a good grasp of how to stay safe in their daily lives. Students say that they feel safe and that any concerns reported to staff are dealt with quickly and effectively. The school tackles all forms of discrimination rigorously and promotes equality of opportunity well.

- One third of parents and carers completed the school's own surveys and a significant majority felt that students were safe, well behaved and cared for and that the school dealt with all incidents of bullying effectively.
- Much has been done by the school to address formerly low levels of attendance and it continues to tackle persistent absence so that this is reducing. Attendance has improved and is now above the national average. Punctuality to lessons is good.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders have not yet secured consistently good teaching so that all students achieve well, especially the most able. School policies, such as the marking and literacy policies, are not applied consistently by all staff.
- School self-evaluation shows that senior leaders are aware of the strengths of the school and the priorities for improvement. Their focus on improving teaching to raise the rates of progress for all students from their starting points is accurate. Systems are in place to support this.
- Checks on the quality of teaching in lessons are frequent, and joint observations with members of the senior leadership team confirmed the accuracy of their judgements. Teaching is better in history, art, modern foreign languages and science and resulting in good progress. However, teaching is not improving fast enough in English and mathematics and not enough is done to share the good practice that exists already across the school.
- Subject leaders produce development plans that focus on how teaching should be improved and what they will do to achieve this. However, some subject leaders do not currently take an active enough role in supporting improvements in raising the quality of teaching or measure the impact of the work done in terms of students' progress. As a consequence, there is sometimes a lack of sharpness in identifying what should be done to share the pockets of outstanding practice that currently exist and making sure teaching is all at least good.
- School leaders, particularly the headteacher, have faced significant difficulties in recent years and have worked energetically to overcome them. For example, the large budget deficit of three years ago has now been eliminated. Weaknesses in leadership and in teaching have been tackled through the effective use of performance management. New appointments have strengthened teams so the school is well placed to move forward.
- The headteacher has shown commitment and determination in addressing difficulties. Many staffing changes and more rigorous checks have promoted higher expectations among staff and students and have started to raise achievement and improve teaching. The school's track record of tackling concerns means it has the capacity for continuing improvement.
- Staff are very positive about the school and morale is high. Responses to the staff questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the school and the drive for improvement.
- The curriculum is well adapted to meet the students' needs. The school provides a good range of academic, vocational and work-related courses for students in Key Stage 4. In addition, it offers a wide range of opportunities and experiences in assemblies, lessons and tutor time. A variety of clubs and activities beyond the school day also contributes well to students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development.
- The school's sixth form is now one year old. Systems to set more challenging targets, improve teaching and raise achievement are too new to have had a sustained, positive effect to date. This means that while there are early signs of success and students make the progress expected of them, leadership and management are not yet good.
- Additional funding received through the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch-up programme is used sensibly to make sure that students get the help that they need. The school works hard to prevent discrimination and make sure all students have an equal opportunity to succeed.
- The school benefits from effective links with other agencies, schools and local businesses. There

is a light-touch working relationship between the school and the local authority.

- Arrangements for ensuring the safeguarding of students meet statutory requirements, including risk assessments for students who are educated away from the school site.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are passionate about Abbotsfield School and are rightly proud of the improvements that have already been made and are committed to providing the best education for their students in the future.
 - The governing body has commissioned a review of governance as many of the governors are new to their role and is now acting upon its findings.
 - Governors have a good range of skills through their work on different governing bodies and their own experiences in education and business. They are well informed about how the school is performing compared to schools nationally, and about the quality of teaching and learning. They understand the work leaders have done, using performance management to address underperformance in leadership and teaching and know about the links between teachers' performance and their pay progression. They manage the school's finances effectively, being responsible for reversing a significant budget deficit caused by falling rolls in the borough and is something they are acutely aware they must monitor in the foreseeable future. They are regularly informed about the school's plans for the distribution of pupil premium funds and can demonstrate that it provides good value for money.
 - Governors have plans to enhance their skills in understanding achievement data through further, regular training. They are also aiming to become more involved in performance management and increase the rigour of systems used to monitor the quality of teaching and the progress of students through regular termly meetings with subject leaders with the aim of raising standards.
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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	102449
Local authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	425573

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	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	521
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ransford Stewart
Headteacher	Mark Bland
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 December 2011
Telephone number	01895 237 350
Fax number	01895 271 995
Email address	office@abbotsfield.org

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