

The Broxbourne School

High Road, Broxbourne, EN10 7DD

Inspection dates 20–21 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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 and management are good. All leaders and governors are sharply focused on identifying any inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and tackling them so that students' progress continues to improve.
- Every student is spurred on to achieve their best because leaders and teachers have high expectations and aspirations for all.
- Teaching is good, with an increasing proportion that is outstanding across the key stages. Teachers benefit from well-chosen training and support, and best practice is shared across the school. This has a very positive impact on students' learning.
- Students make good, and often excellent, progress to reach high standards across the majority of subjects at the end of Year 11.
- The sixth form is good and improving. Students make good progress because they are given high-quality guidance on their subject choices, and teaching is good.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils respect and get on well with each other and with adults. They have good attitudes to their learning and are very proud of their school. Attendance across all year groups is consistently high.
- The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Students have a very broad range of enjoyable opportunities and experiences, including exchange visits with overseas students.
- Highly effective support ensures that disabled pupils, including those who have physical and/or neurological difficulties or other special educational needs, make similar progress and reach the same high standards as their classmates.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a few subjects, some teachers do not give students enough opportunities to develop independent and group learning skills. They are passive for too long during these lessons, and this slows learning.
- When marking and giving feedback, not all teachers consistently explain exactly how students can improve their work or make sure that students respond to their comments.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 parts of lessons taught by 42 teachers, of which 13 lessons were seen jointly with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, staff, including senior, pastoral and subject leaders, and groups of students.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including teachers' planning, the school's analysis of its strengths and weaknesses and resulting development plans, information on students' attainment and progress, records of the monitoring of teaching and governing body meetings, safeguarding documentation and samples of students' work.
- Inspectors considered the 160 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 93 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Susan Sutton	Additional Inspector
Rosemarie McCarthy	Additional Inspector
Alan Brewerton	Additional Inspector
David Davies	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school converted to academy status in January 2011. When the predecessor school, The Broxbourne School, Hertfordshire, was last inspected in 2007, its overall effectiveness was judged to be outstanding.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding which in this school supports pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average. Most of these pupils have physical and/or neurological difficulties.
- A very small number of students spend part of the week studying a course in horticulture at Capel Manor, Enfield.
- The school 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?

- Ensure that students across all subjects and year groups always make the rapid progress of which they are capable by:
 - giving students more opportunities to work together or independently to find out information and learn for themselves
 - developing the quality of marking and feedback so that students always know how to improve their work
 - making sure that all students subsequently edit and correct their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students arrive at the school working at standards well above those of most students nationally. They make good and often rapid progress so that the proportion attaining at least five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, is consistently high.
- Students across the ability range make good progress in English and in mathematics. The progress that students, including the most able, make in their best eight GCSE subjects is consistently high. This is because teaching in these subjects is outstanding.
- Attainment in science, history, religious education and physical education is consistently high. In other subjects there has been some variation, but in most it is consistently above average. Significant improvements have been made in languages since the school became an academy. Progress in mathematics slowed in 2012, but improved well in 2013. Performance has improved as senior leaders addressed well some weaknesses in leadership and teaching in these subjects.
- The school entered students early – in the spring term of Year 11 – for the mathematics GCSE examination and all students for English language in the summer of Year 10. In mathematics, more-able students who attained the highest grades continued studying further mathematics and the remainder retook the examination in the summer in order to raise their grades. In English, students continued to study English literature and those who did not reach their targets had additional tuition and retook the language examination in the autumn of Year 11. As all students are given the opportunity to reach the highest grade of which they are capable, the school's early entry policies place no limits on any student's potential high achievement.
- Support staff and teachers work well together to include all students and give them well-focused support. As a result, disabled students, including those with physical and/or neurological difficulties and other students who have special educational needs make the same good and often rapid progress as their peers.
- The school closely monitors the progress and attendance of the students who study part time at Capel Manor. These students make similar progress to their peers.
- Students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding make good gains in reading and mathematics and are closing the gaps in achievement with their classmates.
- In 2013, the few Year 11 students who were eligible for the pupil premium funding attained on average one GCSE grade below their peers in English and one and a half grades below in mathematics. Their attainment and the progress they had made from Key Stage 2 were lower than those of other groups of students. However, more made expected progress in English and mathematics and attained five good GCSEs than the eligible students in 2012. This was a result of additional teaching support and more opportunities to enhance their personal development.
- In the sixth form, students consistently achieve well at AS level and there has been a three-year upward trend in achievement at A level, where attainment is now above average. Achievement is not yet outstanding because not enough students are making rapid progress from their high starting points across the post-16 subjects to achieve the highest A-level grades of which they are capable.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching across the year groups is at least good and, increasingly, more is outstanding.
- Teachers have very strong working relationships with the students who, as a result, are engaged and motivated to try their best. This creates a very positive climate for learning.
- The most effective teaching has a number of common characteristics. Teachers demonstrate high expectations for learning and they employ a number of resources and plan varied activities that cater for the full range of students' learning needs and interests, including for the most able. They work well with other adults in the class to ensure effective support for those experiencing difficulties. They ask questions skilfully to help students develop their thoughts and ideas. As a result, learning proceeds at a quick pace.
- In the best lessons seen, teachers provided opportunities for students to develop their skills independently, working together in groups and helping one another. In a geography lesson on a possible flood in London, students applied their map skills to determine which areas would most likely be flooded first. By taking on different roles, they were able to think about different reactions to the situation and probe and question each other about their perspectives. They made rapid gains in their knowledge and understanding of the complexity of a real-life situation, applying their prior learning through reading contour maps, and also developed their literacy skills well in writing as well as speaking.
- Such outstanding teaching is becoming more common, but is not yet typical across all subjects and year groups, including the sixth form. When, in a few cases, teachers allow students to be passive for too long a period of time, their lack of active engagement in learning means that progress slows.
- Notable strengths in teaching are the opportunities created for students to develop their moral and cultural understanding. For instance, inspectors observed students discussing the 'benefits' culture, the social context of the 1950s and the emotions that pieces of music might evoke.
- There is a strong focus on literacy development in all subjects. Students are positively encouraged by their teachers to make good use of the well-resourced library and the expertise of the librarian to identify suitable books and read around their subjects. The students whose reading skills are less secure are taught in a well-structured way, so that their reading improves. As a result, students are developing good written and communication skills.
- The school has begun working on improving the quality of teachers' marking and feedback to students. In many cases, students are now given helpful guidance on how to improve their work. A few teachers are not yet doing this to a high enough standard and do not routinely ensure that students respond to marking by making improvements to their work or undertaking a more challenging task to extend their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students behave well around the school and in lessons. They get on well with each other and with adults in the school, and understand how these attitudes will stand them in good stead for adult life.
- Attendance is consistently above average, reflecting how much students enjoy coming to school.

- Students have positive attitudes to learning, which help them make good progress. Behaviour is not outstanding because in some lessons students are passive learners. On those occasions, their opportunities to make outstanding progress are limited.
- Students say that they feel safe in school and they are aware of how to keep safe, for example when using the internet.
- Students are well aware of the various forms of bullying. As confirmed through its recent local authority anti-bullying accreditation, the school has a comprehensive programme that actively promotes positive behaviour and tolerance towards all, and deals with any incidences of bullying and inappropriate behaviour effectively.
- Students are proud of their school and readily support each other. Some, for example, are trained as 'peer coaches' to support younger students to settle into school life. Sixth form subject prefects help their classmates with their work. Students also undertake a range of activities to raise funds for a variety of charities.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, other school leaders, staff and governors, many of whom are long serving members of the school community, share a deep commitment and passion to strive for excellence in all aspects of the school's work.
- Leaders frequently check all aspects of the school's work. They have an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses, and have detailed plans for improvement. The improving quality of teaching and students' progress in subjects that have previously underperformed demonstrate that leaders have a strong capacity to improve further.
- Leadership in the sixth form is good. In line with the improvements in the quality of teaching, A-level attainment has risen and is now above average. Students receive appropriate advice in choosing suitable courses, and good independent guidance helps to ensure they are well prepared for the next stages of their lives. As a result, every student who left the sixth form last year is either in further education, employment or training.
- Leadership and management are not yet outstanding, as leaders have not yet ensured enough outstanding teaching to secure outstanding achievement across some subjects in Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching closely. Teachers appreciate the many training opportunities through the school's in-house training programme, as well as through coaching each other. Many teachers volunteer to participate in the 'teaching and learning' group and some are involved in a university based action research project, working together to improve the quality of teaching. As a result, teaching is increasingly outstanding. Where teaching is weaker, leaders organise additional personalised training, including learning from best practice, to bring about sustained improvements.
- Middle leaders, such as subject leaders, benefit from high-quality training in school and from external providers. They also have opportunities to expand their leadership expertise through applying to serve temporarily on the senior leadership team. These opportunities help them to become highly competent in their respective roles.
- The curriculum meets the needs and interests of students, including the study programmes for

those who join the sixth form. Leaders make sure that students are well prepared for the future, for example through opportunities for undertaking work experience overseas and by providing programmes of study that help them acquire mature attitudes and behaviour.

- The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and physical well-being very well through the many opportunities provided within taught subjects and additional activities. These include a range of sporting opportunities, exchange visits with overseas students and regular theatrical productions.
- The school works well with parents and carers. They have opportunities, for example, to study alongside their children and to volunteer for focus groups to discuss proposed changes in the school. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the parental survey would recommend this school to other parents and carers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very experienced and bring a great deal of expertise from a wide range of professional backgrounds. Through the work of its monitoring groups who visit the school, regularly speaking to staff and students, and through reviewing performance data and observing lessons, governors are fully aware of the quality of teaching and students' progress, including those supported through the pupil premium. They support and challenge senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching and students' achievement whenever underperformance is identified. Governors check spending priorities to ensure value for money. They make sure that pay rises and promotion are strongly linked to teachers' performance and their impact on students' achievement. They make sure safeguarding policies and procedures meet current national requirements.

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	136396
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	425432

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1269
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margot Shawyer
Headteacher	Paula Humphreys
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01992 411060
Fax number	01992 411061
Email address	admin@broxbourne.herts.sch.uk

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