

Vyners School

Warren Road, Ickenham, Uxbridge, UB10 8AB

Inspection dates 5–6 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well and their attainment is well above average and improving in nearly all subjects and for most groups.
- Teaching is good and improving rapidly. This is recognised by parents, carers and students. The best lessons are ambitious, helping students to work things out for themselves and achieve their very best.
- Behaviour and attitudes are exceptional. All students and parents and carers are clear that the school is a safe place to learn. Relationships are positive and students embrace their learning with enthusiasm.
- Students in the hearing resource base make good progress because of good provision.
- The sixth form is good. Students attain high standards and many go on to gain places at university.
- Leaders at all levels including student leaders are highly ambitious for their school. Plans for improvement are systematic and rigorous. Everyone works together to make sure that teaching and achievement improve rapidly.
- Leaders have made significant improvements to students' achievement and the quality of teaching since the previous inspection.
- Governors are effective champions of the school and challenge leaders to realise the school's aspirations.
- Actions taken since the appointment of the new headteacher have rapidly driven up standards.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Some lower attainers do not catch up rapidly in mathematics.
- The progress of students eligible for pupil premium funding is not improving in English as much as that of other students.
- Teaching assistant time could be better used.
- A small proportion of teaching does not yet give students the opportunities for the active learning they say they most enjoy and feel challenged by.
- There is some variation between students' achievements in subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 38 lessons. Of these seven were joint observations with senior leaders. Inspectors also watched two assemblies.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and Vyners School Academy Trust and three other governors, and with four groups of students.
- Inspectors took account of 139 responses to the online Parent View Survey. They also looked at questionnaires completed by 89 staff and 963 completed by students.
- The inspection team looked at students' work and a number of documents including the school improvement plan. Inspectors scrutinised the school's information about students' achievement, examined records of behaviour and attendance, and looked at the way the governing body and leaders monitor and evaluate the school's work. They also visited the hearing impaired resource base and observed students from the unit in lessons in the school.

Inspection team

Venetia Mayman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Rosemarie McCarthy

Additional Inspector

Lynne Thorogood

Additional Inspector

Jason Wye

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than average-sized secondary school. It converted to become an academy on 1 November 2011 and is governed by Vyners School Academy Trust. A new headteacher joined the school in September 2012.
- The school is a specialist mathematics and computing college and has the Healthy Schools award. It works with a range of providers of initial teacher training.
- The school has a hearing impaired resource base which supports 16 children who attend many lessons in the school as well as in the resource base.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding for looked after children, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families is well below average.
- Twelve students are eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding which is for students who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in English or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs who are supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special education needs is average. There is an above average proportion of students for whom English is not their first language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations of students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding and eliminate variation in students' achievements by making sure:
 - all teachers are responsive to each student's needs, particularly those of low attainers in mathematics and those eligible for the pupil premium funding in English so that they consistently make rapid progress
 - that tasks and questioning are always set at the right level of difficulty for all individuals
 - that teachers fully involve students in their learning, building on their ambition
 - students have every opportunity to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Ensure that teaching assistants and support staff are deployed effectively so that time is always used to good effect to help the learners they are working with.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students' attainment on entry is well above national averages. By the time students leave the school at the end of Year 11, the proportion achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to -C, including English and mathematics, is also well above the national average and improving steadily.
- The school has focused closely on raising the achievement of the most able and is increasingly successful. For example, the number of subjects in which a significantly above average proportion of students attain A* and A grades at GCSE nearly doubled in 2013.
- The school has responded robustly to the fact that GCSE achievement in English is not as good as in mathematics. Consequently, in 2013 progress and attainment improved to above average. Younger students of lower ability have more recently started to catch up more rapidly, particularly those on the Year 7 catch-up programme.
- Nearly all students have consistently made good progress in mathematics but some lower attainers do not progress as quickly.
- Achievement in GCSE science, languages and humanities has improved significantly. Leaders and managers have successfully implemented good plans to improve food technology and business studies.
- The school works hard to ensure that the achievement of those for whom the school receives the pupil premium is as good as that of other learners. The gap in attainment between these two groups of students has reduced steadily and closed in mathematics. In English it has narrowed to one third of a GCSE grade. Younger students eligible for the funding are making rapid progress.
- Achievement in the sixth form is above average in the majority of subjects, but there is some variation between subjects in the number of students progressing to the highest level of which they are capable.
- The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs is good and improving. The school has good systems for ensuring that students' needs are well understood and checked so that they can be successful in their learning. Students using the hearing impaired resource base make good progress because of the good support and teaching they receive in lessons and in the resource base itself. The school makes sure that there are good opportunities to read widely and that most teachers plan their teaching to ensure literacy skills improve. There are imaginative strategies such as the 'dads and lads' reading club and accelerated reading programme to promote reading.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity well. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different ethnic groups or for those speaking English as an additional language.
- The school has made good use of early entry policy for GCSEs in order to ensure that students attain the best result they can. Students continue to have the opportunity to try again if they do not reach their target grade so that they can have the best opportunities in the future.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is good overall, with an increasing proportion of teaching which is of outstanding. This view was very strongly supported by students and parents and carers.
- Subject knowledge is a particular strength. Teachers ensure that students have a very consistent picture of what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve. Most teaching is well matched to what students can already do so that they improve quickly.
- The best teaching is well paced, highly interactive and gives students responsibility for their learning so that they develop skills to work on their own and think things out for themselves.

Teachers inspire students' interest in their subject and make them want to learn more. For example at the end of one lesson, students made plans for what they should be learning next and recommendations about how it should be taught. Questioning is carefully targeted to make sure that students think deeply and that everyone is participating fully. Where this happens, those of all abilities make good progress and the most-able students are made to aspire further.

- In the few lessons where teaching is not as strong, teachers tend to focus exclusively on their original plan and are less flexible in taking opportunities to deepen learning or challenge each student to progress rapidly.
- Marking is regular, consistent and helpful. Students particularly appreciate the opportunities they are given to respond to assessment comments and find this helps them to improve.
- Teaching of the hearing impaired students is skilful and these students are encouraged to have the highest aspirations for success.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good and sometimes outstanding. Students say they appreciate the many opportunities to get extra help out of lessons and the way in which they are taught to have confidence in managing their learning. They would benefit from more consistent challenge to stretch them further in some lessons.
- The school's focus on literacy has been creatively planned and is beginning to have a positive impact on learning in many subject areas including mathematics. Senior leaders plan to extend this work so that every student progresses rapidly with their literacy skills in every subject.
- There is no systematic teaching of numeracy in subjects other than mathematics. Some lower attainers in mathematics need teaching more closely targeted to their needs.
- Teaching assistants are effective in supporting the learners they help. However, their time is not consistently well used because the school does not always deploy their time in the best way to meet the greatest need.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour strategy implemented from a year ago is very effective. Students are remarkably welcoming to visitors and treat each other and staff with great respect. They work exceptionally well with each other in lessons and take the initiative in speaking openly and positively to adults. They assume that their learning will be useful and interesting, as demonstrated by the fact that they always arrive at lessons on time and their above average attendance. As one student said to an inspector, 'Are you coming to our lesson? Good, we always have fun in music, it's fantastic!'
- Students appreciate the role played by student learning mentors and prefects. They say this helps to keep the school calm and safe. Older students enjoy working with younger ones and are contributing to their progress.
- Students of all ages say they feel safe everywhere in the school. They are very clear that any instance of unkindness is dealt with immediately and stopped in its tracks: 'Teachers always seem to know, and you trust they will do something about it.' Students of all ages are well educated about risks and dangers, including cyber bullying. Good instances were given of immediate action by the school when this has happened. Racist incidents and any form of discrimination are extremely rare and are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Parents and carers overwhelmingly support the view that the school is safe.
- The school works well with other agencies to ensure learners are safe and happy.
- Exclusions are below average because the school has a range of alternative strategies for responding to students' emotional needs and for communicating clear expectations of good behaviour.
- Lunchtime eating areas are peaceful and pleasant with a variety of healthy options available to buy. Students wait exceptionally patiently in the long queues for food. The school was built for a much smaller number of students. While leaders have taken successful steps to improve the way the school looks there is a need for additional recreational facilities at lunchtime. Sports facilities and those used at lunchtime are the only areas that students identified for improvement. There

are plans in place to improve the provision of all-weather sports facilities when resources are made available.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The school has improved exceptionally rapidly following the appointment of the new headteacher who is passionate in his ambition for the success of the school. The school has addressed well the issues identified in the previous report and so has improved from being satisfactory to good. This demonstrates that the school is well placed to improve further.
- Senior leaders have built high levels of self-belief and confidence in all staff. There was an unusually high proportion of staff questionnaires completed, these show that staff have great faith in and respect for the leadership and are eager to make the school even better. Leaders and managers at all levels work as a single team, striving to make the school the best it can be. All leaders model the respectful attitudes they expect to see in students. Every opportunity is taken to build ambition by showing what success means.
- Good opportunities are taken to develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education in lessons, assemblies and through inspiring displays throughout the building.
- Senior leaders have a detailed understanding of weaknesses in achievement and teaching. These are linked to exceptionally challenging systems of subject review which in a short time are securing rapid improvement for most pupils.
- Approaches to improving the attainment of those for whom the school receives the pupil premium are kept under regular review, including by governors. These have consistently had a positive impact on achievement in mathematics and are reducing the gap in achievement between these students and others in English.
- Following recent changes in English, technology and business studies, the range of subject courses is well matched to the needs and interests of students. Opportunities for learning through clubs, activities and visits at lunchtime and after school are good.
- High-quality information, advice and guidance to help students make the right decisions about their future is provided through lessons, careers days, a specialist adviser, assemblies and tutor time. A high proportion go on to university and others have secured apprenticeships.
- Teachers' performance is matched closely to the school's priorities for development. Targets set for teachers are challenging and they are held to account for the progress of their students.
- There is an effective range of programmes for the improvement of teaching and leadership linked to individual staff targets. Advanced Lead Teachers work as coaches of their colleagues. Middle leaders learn from each other and from schools that are successful.
- Governors receive advice from an external adviser on the headteacher's performance management.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance makes a very strong contribution to the development of the school. Governors and trustees ask challenging and well-judged questions of leaders. They know where teaching and achievement are strong or need improvement, and understand performance data. They work to shape the strategic vision of the school and keep strategies to improve achievement under close review.
 - Governors are proud of the school but are always looking to improve it further still: 'We want the school to be not just outstanding but the best in the country.'
 - They have been robust in ensuring that teachers' and leaders' pay progression reflects their degree of success.
 - Governors have regular training including specialist safeguarding for designated governors. All statutory safeguarding requirements are met. The school carries out the necessary checks on staff to ensure their suitability to work with children. All staff have undergone child protection training at the required levels.
 - Governors have been clear that the policy for early entry at GCSE must ensure that students

- achieve at the highest level of which they are capable and have monitored this closely.
- The governing body and trustees ensure that the school is on a stable financial footing. Governors have been directly involved in supporting improvements in reading and literacy.

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	137635
Local authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	428927

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,126
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Henry Gardner
Headteacher	James Heale
Date of previous school inspection	21–22 March 2012
Telephone number	01895 234342
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