

The John Warner School

Stanstead Road, Hoddesdon, EN11 0QF

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2014

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.

- Students achieve well. They make good progress to reach standards that are above average at the end of Year 11.
- Teaching is mostly good, with some that is outstanding. A comprehensive programme of training is helping teachers to develop their skills well.
- The determined and energetic school leaders and the governing body are passionate about including all students and providing them with a wide range of opportunities to develop academically and socially. This ensures that teaching and students' achievement continue to improve and that students leave the school well prepared for adult life.
- Students behave well. Their very positive attitudes make a strong contribution to their successful learning.
- Students say that they feel very safe in school and they have a mature understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations.
- Students are excellent ambassadors for their school. They thrive on the many opportunities to take on responsibility and appreciate the exciting range of enrichment activities on offer. As a result, their development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural values is excellent.
- The parents who responded to the online survey are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement is not outstanding and progress in science is slower than in other subjects.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Although students are offered a wide variety of academic and vocational courses, not enough students make the progress they are capable of from their starting points in AS and A level courses.
- Occasionally, teachers set work that is too easy for some pupils, especially for the most-able.
- A very small number of teachers rush their lessons and do not give students enough time to practise and reinforce what is being taught.
- When marking students' work, teachers do not always give students a clear indication of what they need to do to improve.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 parts of lessons taught by 41 teachers, of which 10 lessons were seen jointly with the headteacher or another senior leader.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors, staff, including senior, pastoral, faculty and subject leaders and groups of students. Inspectors also spoke to students informally.
- 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 202 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

David Radomsky, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jackie Jackson-Smith	Additional Inspector
Heather Housden	Additional Inspector
Fatiha Maitland	Additional Inspector
Kevin Harrison	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 April 2011. When the predecessor school, The John Warner School, Hertfordshire, was last inspected in 2011, 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 below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is average.
- Most pupils come from White British backgrounds, with the remainder coming from a range of minority ethnic groups.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Students attend only courses taught at the school and currently none attends any off-site alternative provision.
- The school has gained many accreditations, including, recently, the Customer Service Excellence Award and the Continuing Professional Development Mark.
- The headteacher is a National Leader of Education [NLE].

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, especially in science, by increasing the proportion of teaching that is outstanding by:
 - teachers always setting work that makes all students, especially the most-able, work harder and think more deeply
 - all teachers giving feedback on students' work that helps them understand what they need to do to improve and ensuring that students subsequently act on their advice
 - teachers always making sure that students fully understand what they are learning before introducing a new activity.
- Improve students' achievement in the sixth form by:
 - ensuring that students attend all their lessons
 - teachers always making sure that students understand fully what is required of them in their examinations
 - making certain that, at the start of the year, students are quickly helped to acquire knowledge and skills that are required generally and in specific subjects to undertake successful study in the sixth form.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school with standards in English and mathematics that are higher than those found nationally. They make good progress from their starting points so that their attainment in GCSE and equivalent qualifications is well above average. Achievement is not outstanding because progress is not rapid across subjects and not enough of the most-able students are attaining the higher grades of which they are capable.
- The proportion of students making good progress in English in 2013 was well above average. In mathematics, however, the proportions dropped from well above average in the previous year to well below average. This was a result of some weak teaching. Leaders have addressed these weaknesses and inspection evidence confirms the school's view that the current cohort is on track to reach higher standards and is making faster progress.
- Progress in science has been slow. Leaders now guide students to more suitable examination courses that better match their abilities. Simultaneously, leaders have focused on improving the quality of teaching in the subject and rates of progress are beginning to increase.
- The school entered some lower attaining Year 11 mathematics students in the autumn term GCSE examination for the first time in 2012. The rationale was that by achieving early success at GCSE, the students would be motivated to work harder to improve their grades in the summer. Owing to some staffing difficulties in mathematics, only one student in the group achieved a higher grade. The school decided not to continue this practice of early entry to GCSE.
- Students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up programme make good gains in reading and mathematics and are catching up with their peers.
- In English and mathematics in 2013, Year 11 students eligible for the pupil premium attained about half a GCSE grade below their peers, but reached higher standards compared to similar students nationally. They made more progress than eligible students nationally, and the most-able made more progress than all students nationally, in English. In mathematics, whilst all pupils made less progress than they did in 2012, the gap between pupil premium and non-eligible students narrowed. The funding spent on additional teaching support and additional opportunities to enhance eligible students' personal development is leading well to a narrowing of the achievement gaps.
- Support staff, teachers and pastoral leaders work well together to support all students. As a result, disabled students and those with special educational needs, students who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language make similarly good progress as their classmates. This demonstrates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- The achievement of students in the sixth form requires improvement. Although in vocational courses students mostly make good progress, in their AS and A level courses too few students, including the most-able and all other groups, are making sufficient progress to reach the grades of which they are capable. This is because some students find the transition from GCSE to post-16 difficult and the numbers completing courses, although improving, are still below average. The broad range of enrichment activities that students engage in helps them build their confidence, interpersonal skills and basic understanding of finance; this stands them in good stead for their future lives. The many opportunities to visit universities and attend careers fairs, alumni who return to the school to share their experiences, combined with personal transition

mentors, mean that students are well guided and all leave the school and proceed to either the next stage of education, apprenticeship or employment.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is mostly good with some that is outstanding.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour so that they arrive to lessons punctually and ready to get on with their work. Students know that the teachers care and want them to succeed and they respond by working hard. This, together with useful subject displays, including key vocabulary to help develop literacy and the availability of a range of reading books in pleasantly decorated and tidy classrooms, creates a very positive climate for learning.
- Typically, teachers have expertise in their subjects and prepare activities that interest and motivate students, helping them to learn new things, think hard and develop their skills. For instance, in a mathematics lesson, students made good gains in their understanding of numbers by tackling challenging questions set as a treasure hunt. Occasionally however, the work set is not difficult enough to stretch the most-able students to enable them to attain high grades.
- Books and work folders provide much evidence that all teachers regularly mark students' work, including their home learning projects. Some teachers across subjects frequently guide students on how to improve the quality of their work and students respond to their teachers' advice. This best practice, however, is not common across all year groups and all subjects.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to students' learning through the effective support they offer to students, both within the classes and in small working groups.
- Teachers usually deliver lessons that give students an appropriate amount of time to absorb what is being taught before moving on to the next activity. In a very few instances, such as in a couple of lessons seen, the teachers rushed students from one activity to the next. Students hurriedly copied down notes from the board but had limited understanding of the complex issues being taught as they lacked sufficient thinking time and had little opportunity to seek clarification from their teachers. This impedes students' progress in such lessons.
- Although much teaching of individual lessons in the sixth form is good, teachers do not always spend enough time at the beginning of the courses to help students gain any essential basic subject-specific knowledge and understanding, as well as additional guidance on study skills such as independent research, in order to help them make a confident start to their post-16 learning. On the odd occasion, teachers do not make clear to students how the work is linked to examination requirements. These factors slow students' progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are very welcoming to all and a harmonious and happy atmosphere permeates the school. They care greatly about the school and its environment. Well-established routines and expectations ensure that students wear their uniforms with pride, gum is not chewed and the school is virtually litter free.

- Students' behaviour in lessons is good and often better than this. They arrive punctually and well prepared for lessons; they are keen to learn and ambitious to achieve well. This contributes strongly to their good achievement. Very occasionally, when teaching is less effective, a few pupils display disruptive behaviour and learning slows.
- Attendance is consistently above average in the school. In the sixth form, however, attendance last year was low, especially in Year 12, and this had a detrimental impact on students' achievement. Leaders are successfully addressing this issue and figures for this year indicate that sixth form attendance is improving at a good rate. Leaders have identified that more needs to be done, however, to ensure students do not miss lessons without good cause.
- No students have been permanently excluded in recent years and short-term exclusions have reduced considerably. Those experiencing difficulties are well supported in the school's Alternative Learning Environment [ALE] where they learn strategies to modify their behaviours.
- Students are very proud of their school and relish the many opportunities to take on responsibilities. For example, sixth formers support younger students with reading, the school council has an influential voice in the development of the school and students organise a multitude of fundraising events to support a wide range of charities of their choice.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students and their parents confirm that students feel very safe in school. Very few incidences of bullying occur and, if they do, students are confident that they would be dealt with promptly and effectively. Students understand what constitutes bullying, including homophobic, racist and cyber bullying. The school's programme of annual focused days on issues related to bullying, confidence, relationships and safety, for example, ensure students are well informed and know how to keep themselves safe.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, school leaders and governors share a common vision to include all students in a supportive learning environment where they are able to thrive academically and socially.
- The school is highly committed to promoting teaching and leadership of the best possible quality. Staff highlighted the high quality training they receive such as the fortnightly 'learning lunches' led by the assistant headteachers and the regular cross-subject 'teaching and learning communities' for sharing best practice. Teachers and leaders collaborate with some universities to carry out action research to improve teaching and learning.
- Recently, the school introduced accredited national training programmes for senior and other leaders. Each of the participants is engaged on a specific project designed to improve students' achievement. It is too soon to measure the impact of these projects.
- Senior and other leaders observe teaching frequently. Arrangements for the appraisal of teachers' performance are clearly linked to improving students' progress. These processes ensure that the quality of teaching is good and improving.
- The headteacher supports a range of schools, education charities and aspiring senior leaders in

his role as a National Leader of Education. Through many other partnerships, including many overseas schools, staff both learn from and share best practice.

- Senior, subject and pastoral leaders use well-developed systems to check carefully and frequently the progress that students are making, their attendance and patterns of behaviour. Any students falling behind are quickly identified and helped to catch up.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Development plans identify a range of suitable actions designed to bring about improvements. They do not always focus sharply enough on quantifying how these actions will raise students' achievements.
- The curriculum and an excellent range of enrichment activities contribute extremely well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Through the school's modern sports centre, which is jointly run with the local authority, students and the community are encouraged to participate in a wide range of sporting and exercise activities, ensuring their physical well-being. Students have extensive opportunities to participate in a range of clubs including music, singing and drama and many educational visits in this country and abroad. Students are particularly proud of their successes in local and international Vex Robotics tournaments.
- Leaders are committed to make the sixth form inclusive and hence offer a broad curriculum. On entry to the sixth form, students are offered a wide range of both vocational and A-level courses across the faculties. For those for whom it is suitable, there is an option to combine elements of both. Students who have not obtained a grade C in English or mathematics GCSE are given additional tuition and are expected to retake and pass these examinations. Students are given impartial advice and guidance to help them decide their next steps in education, employment or training. Ever-increasing numbers of students are attending university.
- The leaders of the sixth form clearly understand that achievement requires improvement. They have therefore introduced a number of changes this year to improve teaching, checking on progress and increasing attendance. Early indications are positive but it is too soon to judge to what extent these actions will raise achievement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are proud of the school and are highly committed to ensuring its success. Skilled governors who bring expertise to the governing body include a retired secondary headteacher and a practising primary headteacher. Governors have appropriate access to the school's web-based information on students' progress and attendance, and financial information, which they interrogate regularly. Combined with visits to the school, regular presentations by leaders and by having the head boy and head girl as associate members, governors are well informed about the quality of teaching, students' achievement, and use of resources such as how the pupil premium funding is closing gaps in achievement. They are therefore well placed to offer both challenge and support to school leaders. Governors ensure that headteacher and staff appraisals are clearly linked to students' achievements. They readily reward teachers whose students make consistently good progress, but assiduously avoid giving pay increments to those who do not perform to a high standard. The school's robust safeguarding arrangements meet all statutory 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	136607
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	440666

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	1259
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	288
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fiona Ives
Headteacher	David Kennedy
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01992 462889
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