

# The Brakenhale School

Rectory Lane, Bracknell, RG12 7BA

## Inspection dates

11–12 March 2014

|                                |                      |                             |          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory                | 3        |
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Requires improvement</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Require improvement         | 3        |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Require improvement         | 3        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement requires improvement because students do not make good progress from their different starting points.
- The sixth form requires improvement because students make variable progress across subjects, and the range of courses offered does not closely match the needs of the students.
- Teachers do not always plan lessons so that work is set at the right level. They do not consistently challenge all students, particularly the more able students, so that they achieve the highest grades of which they are capable.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent. It does not always give students clear guidance on how to improve their work. Students are not routinely responding to feedback from teachers.
- The best teaching is not being shared effectively to the benefit of all teachers.
- In some lessons, where teaching is less effective, low-level disruption by some students hinders learning.
- Senior leaders have not fully developed the role of leaders in charge of subjects. Many of these middle leaders are new to their roles.

### The school has the following strengths

- Assessment information indicates that standards are improving.
- The school has a core of good and outstanding teaching that could be used to support further improvement.
- Attendance levels have improved and are now in line with national averages.
- Recent additions to the senior leadership team mean that there is increased capacity for improvement.
- Students feel well supported and cared for by the school.
- The governors provide increasingly effective challenge and support to school leaders.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 39 lessons. Seven of these observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors observed senior leaders giving feedback to teachers on the quality of learning and students' progress in lessons. Inspectors also visited assembly and tutor time and talked to students at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors analysed 61 responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also considered the views of staff, including those expressed in 59 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students, the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. An inspector held telephone conversations with representatives from Bracknell and Wokingham College, NACRO and the Path Hill Outdoors organisation.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentary evidence provided by the school, including information about the progress of students, the school's own checks on how well it is doing, the school's improvement plan, attendance records and logs of behavioural incidents.
- Safeguarding procedures were checked.

## Inspection team

|                             |                         |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Lisa Moore , Lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Heidi Boreham               | Additional Inspector    |
| Gill Walley                 | Additional Inspector    |
| Avtar Sherri                | Additional Inspector    |

# Full report

## Information about this school

- The Brakenhale School is an average-sized secondary school.
- The percentage of students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority and the children of service families) is broadly in line with the national average.
- Most students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above the national average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- There are 21 Year 11 students currently attending courses at Bracknell and Wokingham College, two Year 11 students attending courses provided by the charity NACRO and two Year 10 students attending courses at the Path Hill Outdoors organisation.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that the quality of teaching is consistently good and increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding, so that students' progress improves, by making sure that:
  - teachers consistently plan lessons so that work is set at the right level
  - teachers challenge students, particularly the more able, to achieve the highest grades of which they are capable
  - marking and feedback consistently tell students how they are doing and what they need to do to improve, and that students are given opportunities to respond to teachers' suggestions
  - all teachers manage behaviour effectively in their lessons.
- Improve the impact of leaders on teaching by making sure that:
  - the best teaching is shared between departments so that inconsistencies in students' performance are addressed
  - the role of middle leaders is strengthened through training and support in order to build further capacity for improvement
  - the range of courses available in the sixth form more closely matches the needs of students.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students start at the school with levels of attainment that are generally well below those expected for their age; many start secondary school at least one and half terms behind their peers nationally.
- Achievement requires improvement because students do not make good progress from their different starting points. Attainment and progress in English and mathematics were below the national average in 2013. Recent assessment information indicates that current levels of attainment and progress are improving.
- In 2013, students eligible for the pupil premium did not make as much progress in English and mathematics as other students. In 2013, the gap in attainment between these students and others in mathematics was equivalent to three quarters of a GCSE grade. Current assessment information shows this gap is closing. There was no gap in attainment between these students and others in English.
- In a number of subjects the more able students are not consistently achieving the higher grades of which they are capable. More able students are not sufficiently challenged in some of their lessons.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to other students. Although these students receive some well-targeted high-quality support from their teachers and other adults who support them, not all make good progress from their individual starting points.
- There are 21 students in Year 11 who attend vocational courses at a local college. Their attendance, behaviour and learning are monitored frequently by the school. These students make similar progress to other students in the school.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement because students make variable progress across different subjects. The courses currently offered do not closely match the range of abilities of students joining the sixth form.
- Students entering the school with low standards are receiving effective support through the Year 7 catch-up programme and, as a result, gaps in achievement between these students and their peers are closing.
- Students' literacy skills are being developed well across some subjects; inspectors saw examples of teachers addressing errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar; weaker reading skills of many students have improved as a result of support. Numeracy skills are less well promoted.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently effective enough to ensure that enough students make good progress across the range of subjects and year groups.
- Teaching is improving. There is now a nucleus of good and outstanding teaching which results in some students making good progress.
- In lessons where teaching requires improvement, teachers do not plan work at the right level to ensure that students of differing abilities build on what they already know. As a result, there is a lack of challenge in these lessons, particularly for the more able students, and the pace of learning is slow. In these lessons teachers do not have high enough expectations of what students can achieve.
- The quality of teachers' feedback to students is variable. In several subjects teachers give students valuable feedback on their work and encourage a response from students, but this good practice is not consistent across the school.
- Where teaching is best, teachers have high expectations, they plan challenging tasks that are

well tailored to students' ability levels and learning time is used effectively. In these lessons, teachers frequently check students' understanding through skilful questioning, which often develops into a productive class discussion. For example, in an outstanding Year 7 music lesson, the teacher used questioning most effectively to deepen students' understanding of music composition.

- There are good opportunities in some subjects for students to improve their literacy skills with the support of appropriate materials and extra help.
- Lessons are characterised by positive and supportive relationships between staff and students. Where teaching assistants are in lessons, they offer effective and well-targeted support.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **require improvement**

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. In some lessons, where teaching requires improvement or is inadequate, low-level disruption by students occurs because the lesson lacks pace, the teacher has low expectations or does not manage students' behaviour well through applying the school's behaviour policy properly. Students said to inspectors that there are some lessons where poor behaviour hinders their learning.
- Students are courteous and welcoming. Students listen well to one another and show respect for each other's different opinions, demonstrating the school's promotion of equality of opportunity.
- Behaviour is improving as a result of the recently reviewed and revised behaviour policy. The number of fixed term exclusions has decreased and there have been no permanent exclusions for the last two years.
- Attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. This is a result of improved leadership of this area and the greater involvement of parents and outside agencies. The profile and importance of attendance and punctuality have been raised through frequent celebration and reward assemblies across the school.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students say they feel safe in school. They have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including racist and homophobic bullying. They say that bullying does not occur frequently in school but, when it does happen, it is dealt with effectively.
- Safeguarding requirements are met well. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place and, when appropriate, the school works successfully with outside agencies to tackle particular concerns. Governors understand their responsibility to safeguard students.

### **The leadership and management**

### **require improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because the school's leaders have not yet secured sufficient improvement in the quality of teaching and students are not yet making good progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher is realistic and accurate in his assessment of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. Although the school's action plan focuses on the correct areas for improvement, it is not sharp enough in explaining how and when progress and the impact of actions will be measured.
- The review of roles and responsibilities and subsequent additions to the senior leadership team have ensured that key staff are in place to tackle the main priorities of improving teaching and learning, especially in English, mathematics and science.
- The role of middle leaders is not sufficiently developed and so they do not play an active enough role in driving school improvement. Training and development for these leaders are needed to strengthen their role and create further capacity for improvement.
- Middle leaders are increasingly held to account for the progress of students in their departments. Training on how to use assessment information has enabled them to identify underachieving students more effectively and areas where students' progress needs to be accelerated.

- There is good and outstanding practice in planning, teaching and assessment across the school; however, this is not being effectively shared with all teachers so that inconsistencies in students' achievement can be addressed.
- Senior leaders monitor teaching carefully and manage the performance of staff well. Leaders have taken appropriate action to address weaker teaching and to provide focused training for staff. There are clear links between teachers' performance, students' outcomes and teachers' pay progression.
- Students' spiritual, moral and social development is promoted well across subject areas and in assemblies. Students work well together, know right from wrong and frequently engage in charitable activities. There are fewer opportunities for students to develop an awareness of other cultures.
- Responses to Parent View indicate that parents and carers feel confident that their children are kept safe and well looked after.
- The curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 meets the needs and aspirations of students and is regularly reviewed to ensure that students' future needs are better met. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is available to students and the number of students who take part is high.
- The proportion of students who do not complete their course in the sixth form is higher than the national average. The school has endeavoured to offer a place to as many students as possible in an effort to engage all students in further training and education. However, the range of courses on offer does not closely match the range of abilities of the students.
- Since September 2013, the local authority has provided valuable and sustained support for the school. A local authority adviser, with expertise in English, has worked with the department and, as a result, the standard of teaching in English has improved. The adviser has also provided useful training to a range of departments in making accurate assessments of students' work. A representative of the local authority has provided challenge and support to school leaders about students' progress thorough half-termly meetings.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body knows the school well through its system of committees and visits to the school. Its members regularly examine the school's assessment information and are asking increasingly challenging questions of senior leaders. The headteacher provides detailed reports to the governing body on standards and students' progress, and governors know how well the school is performing in comparison to other schools. Governors receive information about the performance of teachers and are fully aware of how decisions are made regarding staff pay progression.

## 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

|                                |                  |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 110047           |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Bracknell Forest |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 431007           |

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

|   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                         | Secondary                      |
| <b>School category</b>                        | Community School               |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                    | 11–19                          |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                       | Mixed                          |
| <b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>     | Mixed                          |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>    | 973                            |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b> | 131                            |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                  | The governing body             |
| <b>Chair</b>                                  | Andrew Young                   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                            | Paul Salter                    |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>     | 27 June 2012                   |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                       | 01344423041                    |
| <b>Fax number</b>                             | 08432905662                    |
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