

Erith Secondary School

Avenue Road, Erith, Kent, DA8 3BN

Inspection dates

27–28 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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

- Students do not make consistently good progress in all subjects. Although students' achievement in English and mathematics is improving, standards remain low.
- The quality of teaching varies too much. Some teachers do not have high expectations of what students are capable of and do not set them challenging work in lessons.
- Teaching is not yet good enough to bring about rapid improvement in students' progress.
- Leaders, including subject leaders and governors, have not acted quickly enough in the past to improve teaching and achievement.
- Not all teachers mark students' written work well. Some students are not being given helpful advice about what to do to improve their attitudes to learning or the standard of their work.
- Students' behaviour requires improvement because some lessons are interrupted by low-level misbehaviour or inattention when teaching isn't challenging enough.
- The sixth form requires improvement as the progress that students make is too variable across subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Actions taken by the new headteacher, senior leaders and governors have been effective in starting to improve the quality of teaching.
- The number of students gaining five GCSEs at grades A* to G in recent years has been above the national average.
- Governors are well supported by the headteacher and an external consultant. They are now clearly having an impact on the improvement of the school.
- Students have a good understanding of the safety issues that might affect them and all feel safe at school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 57 lessons or part lessons. They carried out 18 joint observations with members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and other leaders to discuss the school's work. Inspectors also met with those responsible for attendance and exclusion data, safeguarding and child protection.
- A meeting took place with a group of governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and an external consultant to the governing body. A telephone conversation took place with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors listened to the views of students from all year groups through specially arranged meetings and through conversations during lessons and break times.
- Inspectors looked at students' work in a wide range of subjects.
- The views of 51 parents who completed the online survey (Parent View) were taken into account, as were letters from parents. The views of staff who completed the questionnaire were taken into account.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at information about students' progress and attainment and the school's own evaluation of how well it is doing. They also looked at the system for managing teachers' performance and staff training details. The minutes of governing body meetings were scrutinised, as were the school's improvement plans.

Inspection team

Chris King, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Diane Sherman	Additional inspector
Josephine Lewis	Additional inspector
Andrew Saunders	Additional inspector
Joanna Jones	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The large majority of students are White British. The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic heritages is below the average, as is the proportion speaking English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- The proportion of students supported through pupil premium, which is the additional funding given to schools for students in local authority care, those eligible for free school meals and those with a parent in the armed services, is above the average.
- The proportion of students that benefit from the funded catch-up programme is above the national average.
- The school makes use of alternative vocational provision for a small number of students at Bexley College and at Pathways.
- The school meets 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 quality of teaching, and hence achievement, by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan their lessons in more detail to provide activities which motivate students and excite their curiosity
 - check students' work systematically to ensure that they have fully understood what they are learning and that they are making sufficient progress
 - have high expectations of what all students can achieve, and set work in class and for homework that is sufficiently challenging and moves students quickly on in their learning
 - insist that students consistently show positive attitudes that will actively support their good and rapid progress
 - mark students' work regularly and in appropriate detail so that they know how to improve.
- Improve the impact that leaders have on teaching and achievement by ensuring that:
 - all leaders are equipped with the necessary skills to improve teaching and achievement in their areas of responsibility
 - leaders ensure that the improvements in teaching are checked regularly, so that a much greater consistency between subjects exists
 - checks made by the school of the quality of teaching take full account of the progress made by students.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because not all students make consistently good enough progress in English and mathematics.
- Students start at the school with skill levels in reading, writing and mathematics significantly below average. Students typically enter the school with low literacy and communication skill levels.
- In 2013, the proportion of Year 11 students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, improved but was below the national average.
- The achievement of students currently in the school is improving. The school's own data indicate that current Year 11 students are on track to achieve better this year with levels of progress that are broadly in line with national averages.
- Students' achievement in science has been too low over time. Leaders identify particular issues with the quality of teaching and are taking actions to improve the progress students make, including the appointment of new teachers.
- Students make better progress in creative arts, modern foreign languages and physical education than they do in other subjects.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve in line with those nationally, and sometimes above. Current school data indicate that the proportions making expected and better-than-expected progress are increasing.
- Those students supported by the pupil premium do not achieve as well as other students, although the gap is now quickly closing. In 2013 they gained half a GCSE grade less in English and one grade less in mathematics. They are currently a third of a grade behind in English and half a grade in mathematics.
- Those students who are supported through additional Year 7 catch-up funding, which helps those who join the school with attainment below the expected levels in English and mathematics, benefit from a range of provision and support to develop their literacy and communication skills. These students achieve in line with their peers.
- In the sixth form too much variation in achievement exists between subjects and achievement requires improvement. Although a clear trend of rapid improvement can be seen in the sixth form, students studying applied courses are making better progress than those that do academic subjects. In 2013 100% of students gained A* to E grades in their A-level courses.
- The most able students are making similar progress to other students in the school. However, in 2013 a smaller proportion reached higher grades in some subjects than might be expected, given their starting points. Early entry to GCSE examinations has not disadvantaged students' achievement.
- In most lessons, students are keen to do well and were observed showing commitment to their studies even when the teaching was uninspiring or the task mundane. In those lessons where students were not as well motivated, this was because of weaker teaching that meant progress was slower than it might have been.
- The small number of students that attend alternative vocational provision at Bexley College and at the Pathways programme achieve at least in line and often better than their peers.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement and is not securing rapid enough progress for students across the school.
- Planning is not consistently good. In some lessons students do not find the work challenging enough and in others they do not understand what they have to do. The challenge provided is

not strong enough to motivate and engage students. They become distracted, which too often results in lack of attention, chatter or minor misbehaviour.

- The weaker teaching is balanced by some that is good or outstanding. In this, teachers choose just the right methods to ensure the particular students they are teaching make the best progress of which they are capable.
- In many lessons teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, and relationships between students when they are working together and between students and teachers are positive.
- Although many teachers focus on the different groups of students in their classes through identifying them on seating plans, managers do not have high enough expectations that they will plan their lessons in sufficient detail to make sure that all are appropriately challenged and supported. In the less successful lessons, all the class undertake the same task, with the result that sometimes the most able students find the work too easy or those of lower ability cannot make a start because it is too difficult.
- Most teachers identify a learning objective for the lesson, but it is not always made clear to students why the task is important or what relevance it has in enabling them to achieve their targets.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of students. Relationships between teachers and students are generally positive. Students show respect towards each other and listen to each other's opinions. However, this is not enough to ensure that they all make good and better progress. Students are not always encouraged to develop consistently positive attitudes to learning so that the work they do in groups, in class or when working on their own leads to good progress.
- Marking and feedback to students are not consistently well used by teachers in all subjects. In some cases, they help students recognise their success and to reflect on what their next steps in learning should be. Too frequently, however, marking is superficial and does not give students suggestions as to how they can improve their work. Where students' books are not marked regularly, the standard of their presentation and the content of their work deteriorates.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement because despite their courteous and well-mannered behaviour around the school and in the majority of lessons, they are not always actively engaged in their learning. This prevents them making good and rapid progress.
- In most lessons, there is a calm atmosphere and students show positive attitudes to their learning, but in a small minority of lessons where teaching is less good, students are not engaged in their work. During the inspection, this was often because the task set was not appropriate or because the teacher was not insisting that students follow instructions.
- The poor behaviour seen was directly related to the quality of teaching. Some students told inspectors that their learning is occasionally interrupted by poor behaviour, and a small number of parents and staff have concerns about behaviour, as expressed in the Parent View returns and staff survey.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Safeguarding records and procedures are robust. Staff have up-to-date training, incident records are well maintained and individual incidents investigated thoroughly. Students report that they feel safe.
- Behaviour in the corridors and outside this large school site is good. Students are punctual to lessons and are polite and welcoming to visitors. Inspectors were impressed with the way students were keen to help them find their way around the building as well as in lessons, with their willingness to discuss their work with inspectors.
- Behaviour across the school is recorded and serious incidents followed up effectively by behaviour staff.
- Attendance is improving and the number of exclusions has been lower than that found nationally. The school makes use of alternative behaviour support for a small number of

students who find routines of school life difficult to manage.

- Students report that bullying is rare, and that they are confident that adults will deal quickly and effectively with any concerns. They are aware of different forms of bullying, such as homophobic and racist bullying, and have regular reminders on e-safety when using technology both at school and at home.
- Students are polite, helpful and considerate. They engage willingly in the wide variety of activities on offer and have many opportunities to take on leadership roles.
- Sixth form students want to learn and do their best. They willingly accept leadership responsibilities within and beyond the school. Sixth form students play a full part in the life of the school, acting as good role models for younger students.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leadership has improved markedly since the arrival of the new headteacher. However, leadership and management require improvement because issues remain which have yet to be dealt with effectively. The positive impact of recent changes has not yet led to secure and sustained improvements in the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- The school has evaluated its effectiveness and identified appropriate areas for development. The senior team has begun to have an impact on raising achievement and the quality of teaching. Leaders express their pride in both the staff and students and their determination to take the school forward at a rapid pace but have not yet had time to fully establish their new strategies for securing improvement.
- Managers monitor the quality of teaching closely and put in place appropriate support for those whose teaching requires improvement. A variety of training is offered for teachers in supporting their professional development. The school recognises that the quality of teaching is inconsistent within subjects and that further rapid improvements are required.
- Subject leaders have opportunities for professional development and find senior leaders and managers supportive. Recent changes have strengthened their accountability for improving teaching and students' progress.
- Processes for setting teachers' performance targets are now more secure, and salary increases are awarded only if targets are met. The systems to monitor and reward the performance of teachers have been reviewed in the light of changed requirements, and governors are committed to ensuring pay awards are linked to good performance.
- The local authority has provided challenge to the school regarding its performance and has offered to broker support if required.
- The courses that students follow have been reviewed, are flexible and meet the needs of all students. This flexibility includes not only the range of choices but also allows students to follow pathways suited to their ability. The range of subjects taught meets students' needs well, in the main school and sixth form. A good range of clubs and other activities promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are aware of the school's performance data, its strengths and areas that need to be improved. They are now being supported effectively by an external consultant to ensure they challenge leaders and managers about performance, as they have, for example, in English.
 - Governors receive reports on the quality of teaching and gather some first-hand evidence. They have reviewed systems for managing performance and pay of teaching staff. Teachers do not progress through pay scales if they do not meet their targets.
 - Governors have discussed and reviewed pupil premium funding. They are aware of the provision given to students and the impact this funding has on improving their performance.

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	136330
Local authority	Bexley
Inspection number	441107

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1999
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	285
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Friend
Headteacher	Brian Lloyd
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 June 2011
Telephone number	01322 348231
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