

The Trafalgar School at Downton

Breamore Road, Downton, Wiltshire, SP5 3HN

Inspection dates 20–21 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- The school has secured a steady improvement in GCSE results, especially in the proportion of students who successfully gain at least a grade C in both mathematics and English.
- The most able students are making very good progress towards gaining the highest GCSE grades, especially in mathematics.
- There has been a successful focus on improving the training of teachers and students are making good progress because teaching is good.
- The behaviour and safety of students are good; the school has worked very successfully to improve attendance.
- The school is very well led and managed. The headteacher is determined to secure the best teaching and opportunities for all students. She is strongly supported by the governing body and senior members of staff.
- The whole school community is proud of the supportive 'family atmosphere' which is evident throughout the school.
- The school is firmly committed to deliver the curriculum through the International Baccalaureate programme. There is a wide and varied curriculum and students are given a free choice of subjects where possible.
- There are improved systems to check progress and to report to parents about how their children are doing.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teachers are not always using good questioning techniques to improve students' progress and students do not always respond to comments written by teachers.
- The school has not yet given sufficient attention to developing literacy skills in other subjects.
- Some students with disabilities and special educational needs, and others entitled to catch-up funding, do not make as much progress as other students. The additional help they receive is not always sufficiently specific.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 teachers in 22 lessons, several of which were observed jointly with senior teachers from the school. In addition, inspectors made some short visits to lessons and to the school's special educational needs base.
- Meetings were held with the members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders, teachers and groups of students. An inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, visited an assembly, and looked at samples of students' work. They also looked at progress data, documents about the school's development and evaluation, safeguarding information and records about attendance and behaviour. The records showing the impact of professional development for staff were also examined.
- Inspectors took into account the views of over 150 parents who completed the online questionnaire (Parent View). All members of staff were also able to contribute their views in a questionnaire; 56 responses were received.

Inspection team

Ann Cox, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fran Ashworth

Additional Inspector

Alun Williams

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average secondary school for students up to 16 years. The school serves the village of Downton and the surrounding area in South Wiltshire.
- The vast majority of students are of White British heritage, with very small numbers from several minority ethnic groups.
- The school roll has been quite stable in recent years. However, the number of students expected to join the school in September 2014 is higher and some growth of the school is anticipated.
- The proportion of students with disabilities and special educational needs supported through school action is slightly below the national average, while the proportion supported through school action plus or with statements of special educational needs is a little above average. The school has a special educational needs base to help students who have physical impairments.
- A smaller proportion of students than average receive pupil premium funding. This provides additional funding for looked-after children, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families. The proportion of students from service families is very small.
- In Years 7 and 8, about a tenth of students benefit from additional help in mathematics and English, funded by the government's catch-up programme.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- In Key Stage 4 a very small number of students attend work-related training courses off-site through The Farrington Centre, Salisbury; Riverbourne Community Farm; Wiltshire College, Salisbury; and Include, which is a pupil referral centre.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding so that students make rapid progress by:
 - improving the use of questioning techniques in the classroom to deepen students' understanding
 - encouraging students to respond to advice written in their work to help them to improve
 - matching the extra help given to students who have disabilities and special educational needs and those entitled to catch-up funding to their specific needs to enable all to make good progress.
- Developing students' literacy skills in other subjects more consistently to enable them to enhance their skills, including better use of the school's library.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- There has been a steady improvement in the proportion of students gaining GCSE grades in both English and mathematics at grade C or above. These improvements have resulted from the school's relentless focus on improving teaching and developing the skills of all staff.
- Students enter the school with standards of attainment which are in line with the national average. From this starting point students of all ages in the school are making good progress.
- Students make particularly good progress in mathematics, science and design and technology. The re-grouping of students in mathematics at regular intervals so that they receive targeted teaching has been especially effective in ensuring very good progress.
- There was an unexpected dip in the GCSE results in English in 2013, and the school has examined the reasons for this in detail with the help of external consultants. The school has put in place robust plans to address the issues and current Year 11 students are making good progress.
- The school does not usually make any early entries for GCSE. In the current academic year, however, some Year 11 students took GCSE English language last autumn. The school regards this experience as having been worthwhile to prepare their students, and if students have not yet reached their target grade they will re-sit the English examinations this summer. Inspectors agreed that this was a good decision.
- The most able students achieve very well, especially in mathematics with a higher than average proportion gaining the highest grades of A* and A. The proportion of students who gain the highest grades in English is below the national average but growing; there was a big increase in 2013.
- Pupils who receive pupil premium funding are now making better progress. In 2013 the gap between pupils in this group and their peers was about half a GCSE grade in English and in mathematics, a big improvement from previous years when the gap was closer to two grades difference. Currently, students entitled to pupil premium funding were making progress at similar rates to their peers.
- The progress of individual students with disabilities and special educational needs varies. They are given additional help and although most members of this group are making good progress a small number of them are not because the help is not specific enough.
- A small number of students receive help from the government's Year 7 and 8 catch-up funding, and the school has put in place several forms of help, especially for numeracy work. There is no clear evidence yet to show how well these measures are helping students to improve.
- The school has made some headway to secure better progress in literacy skills but these are not yet consistently developed in all subjects. Reading is being encouraged and although the school has a good library it is not fully utilised.
- There is no evidence that students from different minority ethnic groups make progress at different rates in the school.
- A very small proportion of students in Key Stage 4 receive vocational, work-related training at other centres for some days of the week; they make good progress and all leave school with useful qualifications.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching over time is good and sometimes outstanding. Samples of students' work and the school's own records about teaching show that teaching is improving.
- The school has made investment in improving the standards of teaching with regular and supportive lesson observations and feedback to teachers.
- Teachers use information about students to plan lessons well. Lesson activities usually interest

the students and are suitably difficult for every student. Particularly in mathematics, teachers are skilled at stretching students so that they make very good progress from their starting points.

- Teaching assistants and other adults are used well to help students to make progress.
- There was a variation in the standard of marking seen in written work. In the best examples students were given regular advice about how to improve, but the evidence that they acted on this guidance was not strong. The school is working on plans to address this.
- Some teachers use good questioning techniques to find out what students know and understand, and to deepen their understanding. However, this is not consistent in all subjects to consolidate understanding and to help all students to improve.
- The relationships between students and adults in the school are very good and this encourages a secure environment for learning. In many ways inspectors were told that the school has a strong, 'family atmosphere' which is something that the whole community is proud of.
- Most of the school's students transfer to local colleges and sixth forms on completion of Year 11. The school makes very good arrangements so that students know the range of their options.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Around the school students are polite and courteous to each other, to members of staff and to visitors. Students listen attentively in lessons, and nearly always respond rapidly to instructions from teachers and other adults.
- Students have good attitudes to learning and arrive promptly for lessons with the appropriate equipment. Inspectors noted, however, that written work is sometimes untidy.
- The school runs the 'Brilliant Club' for local primary school children in Years 5 and 6 to help ensure that their transition to Trafalgar School is exciting and as smooth as possible.
- A small number of the adults who responded to questionnaires do not think that behaviour is always good. Inspectors found no evidence to support this view.
- Each year the school selects a local, national and international charity. Students are actively involved with fund-raising activities, but also learn about the work of these three charities as a part of their personal development programme.
- For several years attendance rates have been below those at similar schools but in the last year there has been an improvement; attendance is now much closer to average. The level of persistent absence has fallen dramatically over two years and has now stabilised at levels lower than in similar schools. This sustained improvement has resulted from diligent work in following up and minimising absences, especially with families who can be hard to reach.
- Two years ago the school introduced a policy known as 'No Excuses' which is designed 'to promote good, kind behaviour that is appropriate for learning'. Initially there was an increase in the number of fixed-term exclusions for poor behaviour. Now that the policy is fully accepted the need for exclusions has become extremely rare. Students are well informed about different forms of bullying and the school takes active steps to ensure that anti-social behaviour and unnecessary risks are minimised. Training is given to students in order to equip them to avoid cyber bullying.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Few instances of bullying are reported and students say that on the rare occasions when there is an issue the school deals with it swiftly and effectively.
- The school makes sure that all students have equality of opportunity and it actively tackles potential sources of discrimination.
- When older students attend courses at other centres, their attendance and behaviour are carefully checked, as are all aspects of ensuring their safety and well-being.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is resolute in improving the achievement of all students and she works with a

determination which is shared by other school leaders and governors. Ambition for the students and high expectations are clearly demonstrated.

- In 2012 and 2013 some members of the school's senior staff had significant periods of absence. The headteacher was tenacious and effective in finding solutions to the difficulties and with the support of her colleagues worked very hard to minimise the impact on students.
- There is a drive to further improve the standard of teaching and so to raise standards of achievement. The evidence of improvement is reflected in the good progress currently being made by many students across the school.
- Middle leaders have a clear role in checking teaching and students' progress. Staff training is specifically targeted at areas which are identified as in need of improvement.
- The school's curriculum is now based on the International Baccalaureate, with the Middle Years Programme currently in place and further developments planned. The curriculum provides a broad range of subjects and opportunities for all students; there is a strong commitment to allowing students to make their own choices where possible, for example they may opt to study a triple GCSE award in sciences.
- There is good promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which allows students to develop well-rounded skills and understanding. The school offers trips to places such as Belgium and Iceland.
- The school has an established reporting system, known as 'TSX' where a tick, star or cross are used to regularly indicate the recent progress of a student in each subject. In the last year this system has been further developed and now allows rapid communication of both progress and issues to parents, and provides the school with a regular monitoring system. This means that parents have better information, and the school is able to recognise and respond to any signs of students falling behind.
- The school has rigorous systems in place to ensure that safeguarding and child protection arrangements meet statutory requirements. Record keeping is exemplary.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this good school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body works very closely with the headteacher, business manager and other senior staff. Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching and its impact on learning as they have regular meetings with the school's leaders. Governors keep up to date with appropriate training and carefully examine information about the school's performance so that they can evaluate the school's progress; they are well aware of its relative strengths and weaknesses. The governing body challenges school leaders to constantly review their work to ensure a continuous drive for improvement.
 - The governing body plays an active part in setting targets for the most senior leaders and has an overview of the targets set for other teachers to ensure that their salary progression is related to the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
 - Governors monitor the school's finances and make sure that funds, including for pupil premium students, are used to raise standards. The governing body works hard to collect views from parents and representatives of the community so that their opinions help to inform its decisions.

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	126447
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	441071

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	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	545
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adrian Harris
Headteacher	Jenny Lawrie
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 July 2011
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