

# The George Eliot School

Raveloe Drive, Nuneaton, CV11 4QP

**Inspection dates** 3–4 June 2014

|                                |                      |                      |          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3        |
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Good</b>          | <b>2</b> |
| 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 standards reached by students leaving the academy in Year 11 improved on all indicators in 2013. The academy's accurate tracking data shows that standards are set to improve again in 2014.
- Students make good progress in all subjects. Subjects that performed less well in 2013 have improved and girls' progress in mathematics is now the same as that of the boys.
- Students who are eligible for additional funding are making rapid progress and, as a result, gaps in attainment and progress are closing.
- Teaching has improved and is good. Students say that teachers make lessons interesting and fun.
- Students' behaviour is good. They are keen to learn, respond well to teachers and are increasingly aspirational about their own futures.
- The principal provides highly effective and inspirational leadership that embodies high expectations of staff and students. This has led to improvements in teaching and students' progress.
- The senior leadership team carry out rigorous and regular checks on all aspects of the academy's work that have resulted in continuous improvement.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always provide precise information to students about how they can improve their work.
- When teachers set additional questions for students, in line with the academy marking policy, they do not always check that students answer them.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics in Year 7 is not as strong as in other parts of the academy because teachers do not provide work that challenges all students.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 34 lessons, six of which were conducted jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspectors observed the academy's work and looked at a range of documents, including those related to safeguarding and child protection, development planning, the monitoring of the quality of teaching and also information about teachers' professional development.
- Discussions were held with the principal of the academy, other leaders in the academy, the Chair of the local Governing Body, who is also a director of the Multi-Academy Trust that the school is part of, and representatives of the Trust Board and the academy's sponsor.
- Inspectors spoke to many students in lessons, at breaks and at lunchtimes. They also spoke formally to three groups of students on the first day of the inspection and a further group on the second day of the inspection.
- The 186 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 32 responses to the staff questionnaire were analysed.

## Inspection team

|                                 |                      |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Simon Blackburn, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Joanne Sullivan-Lyons           | Additional Inspector |
| Suha Ahmad                      | Additional Inspector |
| Gwendoline Onyon                | Additional Inspector |

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students identified as speaking English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. This is additional government funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above the national average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school uses alternative off-site provision to support the learning of a very small number of Year 10 students. Students have placements with Shaftesbury Young People and the North Warwickshire and Hinckley College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy is part of a Multi-Academy Trust, led by its sponsor, North Warwickshire and Hinckley College.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching in mathematics in Year 7 by ensuring that teachers set work that is challenging for students of all abilities and provide opportunities for students to apply their mathematical skills to unfamiliar problems.
- Increase students' progress further by ensuring that all teachers:
  - consistently give students precise feedback about how they can improve their work
  - provide regular challenging questions, in line with the academy's marking policy
  - check that students use teachers' feedback and answer their questions to increase the rate of their progress.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the academy with attainment that is below average. They make good progress and leave the academy at the end of Year 11 with attainment that is broadly in line with that found nationally.
- The standards reached by students at the end of Year 11 in 2013 improved on all indicators, including the proportion of students gaining five A\* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics, which was broadly in line with the national average.
- Current academy information, confirmed by inspection evidence, shows that the attainment of students currently in Year 11 is above average in all subjects and that increased proportions of higher-ability students are on track to reach higher levels.
- In 2013, the proportion of students completing Key Stage 4 making and exceeding the expected progress in English was above average. The proportions in mathematics were broadly in line with national figures but the proportion of girls was below the national average. Students currently in the school are making better progress in mathematics and the gap between girls' and boys' progress has closed completely.
- The detailed system for checking and following students' progress is accurate. Staff use this information well to shape tasks and activities to match students' ability and help them to build on previous learning. As a result, progress is good in almost all subjects in most year groups. Progress and attainment in modern foreign languages has improved greatly since the previous inspection and achievement in humanities has also improved.
- Slower progress is made in mathematics in Year 7. The teachers deployed in Year 7 have been inexperienced and have required support from their colleagues and senior staff. However, the quality of teaching is now improving in Year 7, and new appointments have been made for the new academic year.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is as a result of rigorous monitoring of tracking data reviewed against ambitious targets and the effective deployment of teaching assistants to provide in-class support and tuition in small groups or on an individual basis.
- The very small number of students who attend alternative off-site provision make good progress in their vocational studies and remain in education.
- A very strong focus on the achievement of students who are eligible for pupil premium funding has ensured that the gap in their attainment has closed considerably. In 2013, disadvantaged students completed Year 11 about a GCSE grade behind other students in mathematics and two thirds of a grade down in English. Evidence from students' books, their work in lessons and the academy's own data indicates that this gap has closed completely in English and almost completely in mathematics.
- Students are entered early for some examinations. The academy has a clear policy that students are expected to take the examination again if they do not achieve the very challenging targets that are set for their achievement. This ensures that students reach their potential.
- For students who join the academy with low literacy and reading skills, leaders have introduced

programmes to improve students' skills through the Year 7 'catch-up' funding. This is additional funding for students who did not reach Level 4 in English or mathematics in primary school. These programmes include an accelerated reading scheme, started at summer school and continued in Year 7. All students are also encouraged to read in the weekly reading period at the end of the week.

### **The quality of teaching** is good

- Senior leaders invest heavily in improving the quality of teaching, and the improving rates of progress in most subjects indicate that this is having a positive impact. An overwhelming majority of parents believe that their children are taught well.
- Teachers exhibit very good subject knowledge and have high expectations of their students. As a result of the excellent relationships and well-established routines in the classroom, teachers are able to take risks with their teaching and be more creative with the activities they provide. In a Year 10 biology lesson, for example, the techniques used by the teacher to revise respiration were innovative and fast moving. As a result, students learned at an impressive pace. Students told inspectors that their teachers try to make learning fun and that they enjoyed those lessons the most where they were made to think hard.
- Teachers generally use questioning effectively to gauge the understanding of their students. They change the focus of tasks if they detect that students need extra time or additional help, and they deepen students' understanding by asking questions that make them reflect on their learning and consolidate their understanding.
- The quality of marking and the feedback given to students about their work is too variable across the academy. There are examples of excellent practice, where teachers provide detailed information about how work can be improved and then follow this up with a challenging question which they check that the student has attempted. This is the policy for marking across the academy but too few teachers follow it through. This means that students are not given specific information frequently enough on what they need to do to improve their work. Teachers do not always check that their questions are answered or their suggestions are acted upon.
- The teaching of mathematics in Year 7 is improving but lacks the challenge for pupils of different abilities to make rapid progress. The teachers follow the set series of lessons and activities but do not think carefully enough about how to make the work relevant to their students or to allow them to practise their skills in unfamiliar situations.
- Students welcome the ability to get extra help with their homework or revision in period 6 every day. This period of tutor time is divided into personal, social and health education and time to consolidate understanding of the day's learning or to start on homework tasks. Lesson observations showed that teachers are adept at teaching difficult topics as part of the set programme while also directing students to useful sources of support for other work.

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

- The behaviour of students is good. Their attitudes to learning are very positive and they respond well to challenging work, welcoming it, and, in some cases, actively seeking it out. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson, students did not want to leave the classroom at the end of a lesson where they were attempting A\* standard GCSE questions.
- The excellent relationships between staff and students contribute well to students' learning.

Teachers are able to be more creative in their teaching and students feel free to respond by asking challenging questions when their curiosity is piqued in this way. Students also take a mature approach to assessing each other's work, providing useful and thoughtful feedback.

- Most students felt that behaviour in the academy was good. They are confident that poor behaviour is dealt with rapidly and they understand the academy's rewards and sanctions system. This view was echoed by parents who responded to the online questionnaire, with the vast majority agreeing that the school made sure its students behaved well. Behaviour around the school at breaks and lunchtimes was extremely good during the inspection.
- In a very small minority of lessons observed, poor behaviour by one or two students led to disruptions to learning. The school's own behaviour logs indicate that incidents are minor and relatively infrequent, and that they always lead to appropriate sanctions. There is an automatic link from the behaviour log to the parental email system so that parents receive a daily email detailing both positive and negative occurrences for their child as well as a record of their homework for that evening.
- There have been no permanent exclusions from the school for five years. The number of fixed-term exclusions has been dramatically reduced by the use of an internal unit that ensures that students have constructive work to do and that they consider the consequences of their behaviour. Since the last inspection, the quality of work provided for students who are taken into this unit has improved and the work they are given closely matches their ability and ensures continuity with the lessons they are missing.
- The academy is leading developments across the trust to raise the aspirations of the students of Nuneaton. This has taken the form of many special days where employers and motivational speakers have engaged with students to help to raise their career sights. This is having a positive impact on the students' desire to succeed, and the vast majority of students are now keen to continue their education into college and university.
- Attendance has improved slowly and is in line with the national average. The academy is working effectively with families to reduce the number of students with extended absences.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. All safeguarding and child protection policies and practice meet requirements.
- The most vulnerable students receive excellent care and support. Partnerships with external agencies are good, and rapid communication systems ensure that any arising issue can be addressed quickly.
- Students have a well-developed understanding of what constitutes bullying in its different forms, including racism and cyber-bullying. They say that bullying is very rare, and this is confirmed by the school's well-kept records.
- The academy's curriculum provides many opportunities for students to explore their understanding of risky situations and to find out how they can keep themselves safe.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The principal provides strong and inspiring leadership that is clearly focused on raising the aspirations and opportunities for all the students at the academy. The vice-principal is also highly effective in her role and, together, they have brought about rapid improvements in many areas

of the academy's work. Leadership and management is not yet outstanding because leaders and managers at all levels in the academy have not ensured the consistent high quality of teaching that will lead to outstanding achievement.

- Improvements to the processes for self-evaluation since the last inspection have ensured that the academy has a very clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses that lead to well-developed plans for improvement which are measurable and centred on students' performance and the quality of teaching.
- Leaders regularly observe teaching and provide rigorous feedback that has helped teachers to improve their teaching. This is combined with training that is adapted well to their needs and their positions of responsibility. Challenging and ambitious targets are set for teachers to improve the outcomes for their students that are based on the performance of the top 10% of schools in the country. Teachers welcome this level of challenge and are highly appreciative of the high-quality training they receive.
- Subject and other leaders are being developed well. They are increasingly confident in the use of data to hold staff to account for students' performance and make regular checks on the quality of teaching. Some of the processes to check on the quality of marking are not yet fully embedded and the academy policy is not being applied consistently across subjects.
- Pupil premium funding has been used effectively to fund one-to-one and small-group teaching as well as reducing class sizes and targeting support to eligible students. All leadership development programmes include a focus on strategies to be used to close the gaps in attainment between disadvantaged students and others.
- The curriculum is skilfully adapted to the specific learning needs and interests of all students. Students with particular needs are given opportunities with local alternative providers. The academy keeps a careful watch on their attendance and behaviour as well as the quality of the teaching they receive. More-able mathematicians take advanced courses after their GCSE, and students joining Year 7 with low literacy levels have additional time to develop their basic skills.
- There is a large array of visits and clubs, which the students appreciate and enjoy. These contribute very well to students' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The academy's sponsor provides very effective support and challenge in helping the academy to improve. It checks that the academy is doing the best it can for its students and it provides opportunities to senior leaders for wider leadership experience by asking them to lead trust-wide projects that impact on the wider community.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body knows the academy very well. It understands where the academy is doing well and why some areas need to improve more rapidly. This is because its members visit regularly, speaking to subject leaders and taking an active role in staff training. They understand the academy's performance data and how the academy is doing compared to schools nationally. Governors have a realistic view of the quality of teaching and ensure that the targets set and any pay rises for teachers and leaders are closely linked to how well their students do. The governing body has played a key role in the allocation of the budget, including pupil premium and Year 7 'catch-up' funding, and this has improved the progress of eligible students. The governing body has been particularly effective in seeking the views of parents and engaging parents in the work of the academy through 'parent voice' events.

## 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> | 137079       |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Warwickshire |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 442591       |

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>                     | Academy sponsor-led                   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 11–16                                 |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                                 |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 662                                   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                    |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Sue Beckett                           |
| <b>Principal</b>                           | David James                           |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 13 February 2013                      |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 024 76744000                          |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 024 76724530                          |
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