

Great Yarmouth (VA) High School

Salisbury Road, Great Yarmouth, NR30 4LS

Inspection dates

4–5 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires 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 good progress overall, especially in mathematics. The most able students do not achieve as well as they should.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. Teachers are not using the information they have on their students to plan effectively in order to ensure that all make good progress.
- Marking does not always provide students with clear guidance on how their work can be improved, and not enough time is given for them to act upon the advice. Teachers do not always check students' corrections.
- Presentation of work is not always of a high quality.
- Few opportunities exist for students to develop their writing skills in all subjects.
- Students' attitudes to learning are not always good because not all teaching is engaging, exciting or challenging.
- Although improving, there are still groups of students who are excluded too often or whose attendance is still too low.
- Subject leaders do not always check that school policies are being fully implemented in lessons to ensure that teaching in all subjects is consistently good.
- Governors do not challenge school leaders well enough or measure the impact that their actions have on improving teaching or raising students' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher is a strong leader who has taken decisive and successful action to improve the school.
- Students' achievement is improving in English.
- Students who speak English as an additional language make good progress.
- The school's current data reflect a recent improvement in progress, particularly for younger students.
- Senior leaders have correctly identified the school's areas for improvements and are tackling weaker areas effectively.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 lessons, of which almost half were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- The inspection team made a number of shorter visits to lessons, tutorial sessions and assemblies. Students' conduct was observed during break, lunch times and between lessons.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the leadership team, individual teachers and subject leaders.
- Members of the inspection team held meetings with four groups of students, representing all age groups in the school. Discussions also took place with students informally.
- A meeting was held with the Chair and other members of the governing body. A further discussion took place with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and scrutinised documents, including the school's own evaluation of how well it is doing, the school improvement plan and statistical information about students' achievement, attendance and exclusions.
- Inspectors looked at students' work in lessons and analysed a sample of students' work.
- The inspectors took account of the seven responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 58 responses to the staff questionnaires. Additional comments were received from parents, and consideration was given to the views expressed by students and their families in response to the school's own surveys.

Inspection team

Rob Ridout, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ian Starling

Additional Inspector

Jennifer Carpenter

Additional Inspector

John Mason

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school.
- The large majority of students come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students from other ethnic backgrounds is now above average and rising. A great many of these students are from Other White backgrounds. The majority are from Eastern Europe and most are at an early stage of learning English.
- There is a high proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school receives additional funding known as pupil premium.
- A high proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs are supported through school action.
- The percentage supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high. Many of these students have moderate learning difficulties, behavioural, social and emotional difficulties or other specific needs.
- A significant number of students benefit from the Year 7 funded catch-up programme.
- Early entry for GCSE examinations is still used in English. Early entry is no longer used in other examination subjects.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 are educated off-site for part of the week at Horatio House. This is a partnership initiative involving all schools on the East Coast of Norfolk.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress at the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better and that all students make the progress they are capable of, especially in mathematics, by ensuring teachers:
 - use data to inform planning and devise learning activities that engage students and provide appropriate challenge
 - give clear and regular feedback to students which lets them know how they can improve their work
 - allow the students opportunities to act on feedback they are given and check that they have acted on the guidance given
 - develop students' writing skills in all subjects.
- Improve students' attitudes to learning by:
 - raising expectations of students, especially of the most able students, by explaining clearly the quality of work that is required of them
 - continuing to improve the attendance and reduce the fixed-term exclusions of students.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all leaders effectively monitor, analyse and act on their findings to accelerate improvements in the quality of teaching and raise standards
 - developing subject leaders to take more responsibility for the quality of teaching and progress of students in their subject areas
 - ensuring the governing body acts on the recommendations of the recent external review so that they hold leaders to account more effectively for students' attainment and progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In 2013, achievement required improvement because too many students did not make the progress they should in both English and mathematics. The proportion of students to secure five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was well below the national average.
- Not enough students gain the highest grades at GCSE. In several subjects, including English language, science and technology, the proportions of A* and A grades were significantly below average in 2013. This reflects the lack of challenge seen in some teaching during the inspection, when the most able students were not always inspired or motivated to reach for the highest standards.
- Until last year, students made expected progress in English. Results in English fell significantly in 2013 due to less precise teaching. Students currently in Year 11 now benefit from more enthusiastic teaching and challenging work. In the GCSE examinations in November, their attainment was above average and they are making good progress this year.
- Attainment in mathematics has improved over the last two years, but was still well below the national average in 2013. The work seen during the inspection indicates that this improvement is not secure and students are not yet making good progress. Students are not entered early for their GCSE examinations in mathematics.
- In the past, students have attended courses run by other establishments away from the main school site. Their progress has not been good. The school now monitors the progress and attendance of students attending any off-site provision well, and results have improved.
- The school has placed great emphasis on developing some aspects of literacy skills. Students are encouraged to read widely, particularly during form time. This is proving effective with younger year groups. In contrast, students do not have sufficient opportunities to write at length in subjects other than in English, and this is limiting their overall achievement.
- In 2013, students supported through the pupil premium achieved one grade below their peers in both English and mathematics. These students also made less progress in these subjects than their peers. Current tracking information shows that students supported by this funding are making better progress than previously, and the attainment gap has closed.
- Students achieve well in science and modern foreign languages. School data show that results in art, geography, and information and communication technology are set to improve this year.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are monitored effectively by the school and receive good levels of support. This helps them to engage with their learning and progress as well as other students in the school.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is used well for one-to-one tuition and small-group work. Students who are supported by the accelerated reading skills programme are benefiting from this. These students' reading ages are rising steadily and they are catching up quickly with their peers.
- Students from minority ethnic backgrounds, especially those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress compared to their peers in the school.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- Teaching requires improvement because its quality is not consistently good enough in all subjects. Consequently, students do not make the progress that they are capable of making, especially in mathematics, information and communication technology, and design and technology.
- In too many lessons, the level of challenge and expectation is still too low. This is because teachers do not routinely use information about what students already know to plan their teaching.
- Students commented that they learned best in lessons that were interesting and enjoyable. Inspectors agreed that too many lessons did not encourage or exploit students' curiosity. This curbs the students' enthusiasm for learning and slows their progress.
- The marking of students' work is not consistent within departments and across the school. In some classes, work had been marked extremely well while, in others, books had been simply checked. Students said that they found it most helpful where teachers gave helpful comments and provided them with time to reflect and correct their misunderstandings.
- Students do not always take pride in their work. Some books contain hurried or unfinished work that is not checked. This results in poor attitudes to learning.
- Teachers promote good learning by asking questions of students to test and develop their understanding, making them explain their reasons and asking other students to comment or develop their answers further. Learning is further helped when teachers follow up their written comments to check that students have corrected their work.
- Some assertive and dynamic teachers use their positive relationships with students to encourage them to learn. Students enjoy the challenge of difficult work and respond well to the high expectations of the teacher.
- This year, the school entered the large majority of students in Year 11 early for the English GCSE examination. This has secured better outcomes and good rates of progress for many students. Results were very positive, but this is the first time for this new curriculum and it remains to be seen whether all students, particularly the most able, will continue to strive to achieve the highest grades in the summer.
- The school has been working to improve support for students' reading in lessons. The use of word games and the promotion of key words in lessons is helping students to spell more accurately. Students are encouraged to read in tutor periods and to use the library. Work to support writing in all subjects is less well developed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**requires improvement**

- The behaviour of students requires improvement because attitudes to learning are not always good and, in some lessons, students lose focus. This is often linked to the variable quality of teaching and is particularly evident in groups which have had several teachers over the year. As a result, these students are restless in lessons and make less progress than other groups.
- The behaviour policy has been revised to raise expectations. This is robustly enforced by the

school and has resulted in a high number of fixed-term exclusions. Levels are now slowly falling.

- In lessons, most students behave well and are orderly and compliant. Since the last inspection, students of all ages are more positive about behaviour and many parents agree. Students report that behaviour has got better but, in dull and boring lessons, a small number of students still mess about.
- The behaviour of students around the site is generally good, reflecting the higher expectations of staff. Students in Year 8 were seen entering and leaving the assembly hall in an orderly manner. When unsupervised, the large majority behave in a mature fashion, but a small number of students do not respond positively to the school's expectations and staff continue to work to address this.
- Students' attendance has been lower than the national average for several years. The school's renewed focus on reducing absence and its close work with families of the most vulnerable student have resulted in an increase in attendance levels for all groups.
- The school monitors and supports students with specific needs effectively. Well-thought-out and well-planned packages are provided for students and their families. Teachers work with individuals to improve their subject knowledge in key areas. Learning support assistants work with individuals and small groups to improve their skills.
- Students have a good awareness of the different types of bullying, including homophobic and racist. They are confident that teachers will deal with incidents of this type. Incident logs kept by the school are thorough and indicate that incidents of bullying are dealt with appropriately and are declining.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students are aware of how to keep themselves safe, both personally and online. Appropriate risk assessments are in place for all off-site activities, including alternative provision. As a result, students say they feel safe and this is supported by the views expressed by most parents.

The leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher and her team are providing the school with firm leadership. They recognise that they have not yet done enough to secure consistently good achievement, teaching and behaviour, particularly in mathematics and design and technology.
- Senior leaders have introduced good systems to help teams plan for the future, set targets for students and monitor their progress. However, they have not ensured that all subject leaders check the impact of their work on the quality of teaching and learning across all subjects and in all year groups.
- Students do not do equally well in all subjects. This is because some subject leaders have not focused sufficiently on raising the quality of teaching or standards in their subjects and the steps they need to take to improve it. Where subject leadership is strong, for example in English, students are increasingly engaged and making good progress.
- The quality of teaching is monitored regularly by leaders. Inspectors confirmed the accuracy of their judgements. However, leaders have not ensured that the school policy on marking is implemented by all teachers, or that feedback always helps students to make better progress.

- Leaders have ensured that the school is a generally safe, calm and welcoming environment for students. Parents are more supportive of the school than at the time of the last inspection but some still have concerns.
- The school generally provides good training for teachers and uses good systems to manage their performance. There are clear links between teachers' performance and decisions about their pay rises and promotion.
- The school's curriculum has been significantly revised to provide pathways to meet the needs of all students. Students are given helpful advice by the school and this allows them to decide the pathway that best matches their needs and interests.
- The school is effective in promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In addition to lessons in personal, social and health education, it offers a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, including sports clubs, art, drama and music productions.
- The self-evaluation summary is accurate and honest. Leaders are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, this has not yet resulted in rapid action to improve outcomes for all groups of students.
- The local authority has provided good support to the school. It has helped the school establish a realistic view of standards and is helping to improve teaching in key areas, including design and technology and mathematics.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are proud of the school and are committed to securing success for all students. They have a clear long-term view of what the school is aiming for.
 - Governors are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses, including issues surrounding achievement in English, mathematics and design and technology. They are aware of the need to improve achievement, the quality of teaching and aspects of behaviour, and are challenging leaders to bring about more rapid improvement.
 - They have an awareness of systems of performance management and have supported the headteacher in challenging underperformance in the classroom. They oversee decisions on salary progression so that they are linked to teachers' performance.
 - Resources and finances are managed effectively. Governors know how the pupil premium funding is used, but have not fully evaluated the impact of this spending on the achievement of eligible students.
 - Governors link the quality of teaching with students' performance and hold senior and subject leaders to account. The governing body has devised an appropriate action plan to act on the findings of the recent external review of governance.

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	121219
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	493440

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	880
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derrick Hill
Headteacher	Wendy Missons
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2013
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