

Gable Hall School

Southend Road, Corringham, Stanford-le-Hope, SS17 8JT

Inspection dates 17–18 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students join the school in Year 7 with average standards and make good progress. By the time they leave the main school at the end of Year 11, their GCSE results are above average.
- Students do particularly well in GCSE English language, where they make outstanding progress, and in mathematics, statistics and drama. Performing arts is also a strength of the school.
- Students enjoy coming to school. They are punctual, and attendance is above average.
- Students behave well in and out of lessons. They take pride in their books and uniform and have positive attitudes to learning.
- Actions to ensure students are kept safe in and around the school are outstanding. Parents are positive that their children are happy and safe.
- The headteacher has improved the school. GCSE results are better, especially in English, attendance has risen and exclusions have reduced. Staff are very clear about their responsibilities and what is expected of them.
- The school works effectively with the adjacent primary school. As a result, arrangements for transfer in Year 7 are exceptionally strong and students get off to a good start.
- The sixth form has expanded rapidly in partnership with two other local secondary schools. As a result students have a wider choice of studies.
- The systems for checking on the quality of teaching are well developed and effective. As a result, teaching is good and has improved, particularly in literacy and in the marking of students' work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough students achieve the highest GCSE grades in English literature, biology, physics, geography, French, Spanish, art and music.
- Governors have not used a wide enough range of performance indicators to hold leaders to account for how well the school is doing.
- The sixth form requires improvement. It is led well and teaching is good, but too many students have not received the right support and guidance to do well on the courses they choose, particularly in Year 12.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including the school’s documents on safeguarding, and the school’s view of its own performance and plans for future improvement. They also looked at the school’s information about how well students are doing, records relating to teaching, behaviour and attendance, and documents used by leaders to plan the curriculum and check how well the school is doing.
- Inspectors observed teaching in 33 lessons and visited two form periods. Five lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors spoke to students in lessons and looked at their books. Inspectors also looked at a sample of books kept by the school to show the progress of students over time and a sample of work from 10 Year 11 students.
- Students were observed at breaks and lunchtimes, inside and outside the school and in the canteen.
- Discussions were held with five groups of students about their views of the school. Discussions were held with three governors, senior and subject leaders, and teachers who are newly qualified.
- Inspectors considered the 69 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire. This inspection was part of a pilot where parents had the option to add text comments online during the two days of the inspection; 57 parents used this option, with 40 parents typing comments.
- Questionnaire responses were also considered from 70 staff.
- This inspection was an aligned inspection undertaken at the same time as that of St Clere’s, as some students transfer from St Clere’s to this sixth form provision.

Inspection team

Anne Pepper, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Stanton	Additional Inspector
Louise Lee	Additional Inspector
Pamela Fearnley	Additional Inspector
Duncan Cooper	Additional Inspector
Andrew Lyons	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average secondary school with a sixth form.
- The school opened as an academy in September 2011. In October 2013, the academy became a multi-academy trust and took over responsibility for the adjacent Corringham Primary School.
- The sixth form is a 'soft' federation with two other local 11–16 schools: St Clare's and Hassenbrook Academy. In October 2013, the sixth form became known as Stanford and Corringham Sixth Form Centre. It is wholly governed by Gable Hall School.
- Almost all students are White British.
- The proportion of disabled students or those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students eligible for the pupil premium is below average. This additional funding is given to schools for students who are looked after by the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Ten students from the school and five students from other schools attend alternative provision on the school site. It is run by Gable Hall School and called The Skills Centre. It operates on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and offers motor vehicle and construction courses.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress at GCSE.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and achievement by ensuring that:
 - the most able students are challenged consistently so that they achieve more GCSE A* and A grades
 - in lessons, students explain their thinking, build on the ideas of others and ask questions in order to check and develop their own understanding
 - students in the sixth form receive the support and guidance they need to achieve well on the courses they select to study.
- Ensure governors use the full range of available performance indicators to hold leaders to account for the achievement of all groups of students, including the most able.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The school leads numerous activities in the local area, including performing arts, teacher training, sponsorship of the adjacent primary school and a partnership with two other local 11–16 schools to provide sixth form places. This means that for students and their parents, the schools operate more like an all-through 5–18 school. These changes are improving the progress that students make.
- Senior leaders are perceptive in their evaluation of teaching and use robust systems to reward strong teaching and improve any that is weaker. Newly qualified teachers are supported well and their training is practical and focused sharply on the school's specific areas of need. As a result the teaching of literacy and the marking of students' work have improved.
- School records show that leaders cross-reference their observations of teaching by checking the evidence of progress in students' books. However, they do not make consistent use of the records of how well students are doing in each class, particularly for the most able.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. During the inspection, the theme was British food, as part of a series of different themes linked to different foods and cultures. Students are aware of how their school differs in its ethnic diversity from typical schools in Britain.
- The school's policy on implementing its own approach to the curriculum and assessment is at an early stage. It uses National Curriculum levels for Years 7, 8 and 9 and GCSE grades in Years 10 and 11 to report to parents four times a year. Teachers value the opportunity to extend their skills by becoming examiners for external exam boards.
- The headteacher runs a weekly meeting with parents, without the need for an appointment. This is now being extended to leaders in English, mathematics, science and special educational needs. Parents are welcoming the more open-door approach and further development of reporting to parents is the focus of a working party.
- The comments made on Parent View were mainly about the consultation process for the recently introduced split lunchtime arrangements and wanting to be kept better informed when there are frequent changes of staffing, as happened this year, particularly in languages, mathematics and science.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to demonstrable effect. The school systematically analyses the impact of the support it provides for each eligible student. A particular success has been the use of 'Academic Dialogue', where students in English, mathematics and science receive highly focused teaching in small groups from teachers.
- The alternative provision run on the school site is highly effective. It is well led, the right students are targeted, and their attendance and how well they are doing are monitored well. This provision contributes well to the overall school curriculum and ensures positive outcomes for the students who take part.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good. There has been a rapid rise in the number of students and the accommodation has improved. Students now have a wider choice of courses across a range of different local providers. The linking of students' prior attainment with courses has improved and the school is improving support for any students who are not on track to achieve their grades.
- The school takes part in a wide variety of programmes leading to nationally recognised awards. As a result, it has a clear view of its success in areas such as work with parents, arts, sports and careers advice.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The school is overseen as an academy by the governing body and as a multi-academy trust by a trust

board. The trust and the school governing body have the same Chair. The governing body has a strong range of expertise which is seen in their strong oversight of issues such as safeguarding and the use of finances, including the pupil premium. They make sure safeguarding arrangements meet current national requirements.

- The governing body took a strong lead in the appointment of the new headteacher and in the setting up of the academy, expanding the sixth form and taking over the adjacent primary school. The impact of this can be seen in the hugely improved provision for students on the school site.
- The governors have not ensured that leaders are evaluating the school's performance against a wide enough range of achievement indicators. As a result, they are not aware of how well it is doing against some important national measures, particularly the achievement of the highest GCSE grades at A* and A for the most able students.
- Governors have a clear oversight of systems such as recruitment, and pay rises and promotion for teachers. They check that teachers' pay is linked to how well students are doing. They know the school well for themselves through regular visits, meeting parents, parents' evenings and other special events.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Parents and staff report high levels of confidence in the school's effectiveness in keeping students safe. Governors link well with local organisations, they make sure they are well informed. They are proactive in anticipating future needs on and around the site and consult well and organise feedback with parents and the local community to make sure things are implemented efficiently and effectively.
- Arrangements for the transfer of new Year 7 students are highly successful with a transition week. Students and parents say that they did not have the usual worries about starting secondary school. The inspection took place in the third week of the school year and Year 7 students were already settled in and working very well.
- Attendance is above average, punctuality is good and exclusions are low. Internal school systems for isolating students are effective. Attendance and punctuality in the sixth form are good and sixth form students are positive about the planned introduction of electronic cards that will keep track if students leave the site during the day.
- Behaviour is good. Students conduct themselves well around the site. They are calm and orderly both in and out of lessons. They bring the right equipment to lessons and wear their uniform appropriately, they understand the system and what will happen if this is not the case. However, inspectors observed that there are occasional but rare incidents of disruption in classes. School data on incidents and the views of some students and parents also indicated that this is the case.
- Students have a clear understanding of all forms of bullying and there very few cases racist incidents. However, students have told the school that they would like a swifter response at times. They know how to approach risk and keep themselves safe in and out of school. They understand how to use the internet and media safely.
- The new arrangements for the split lunchtime are successful. Students have reported back to the school that the new arrangements have vastly reduced the time spent queuing in the canteen. A very small number of parents expressed concerns over recent consultation processes used by the school. Inspectors are satisfied that the present arrangements for the changes to lunchtime were introduced carefully and are being reviewed effectively by the students themselves.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and improving, including in the sixth form. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to anticipate possible difficulties ahead of lessons, plan resources to address the difficulties and make adjustments to their lessons in the light of the students' spoken and written responses.

- In lessons, teachers and teaching assistants adjust the work well to take into account the needs of specific students who are disabled or are identified as having special educational needs. This is a result of clear identification of their needs, and good communication between teaching and specialist staff. As a result these students are making good progress.
- There is a high degree of consistency in the way targets are set for students, and the use of assessment is accurate in telling students and their parents how well they are doing. However, some students, particularly the most able, have already met or exceeded their target for the year. Their targets have not been adjusted and this is contributing to work in lessons that is too easy for some of the most-able students.
- Students and teachers are clear about how well students are doing and what they need to do to improve their work. Marking has improved since the last inspection. There is consistently strong use of the target stickers in students' books, and each teacher is building up a record of progress over time in students' 'best' books. Increasingly students respond to teachers' written comments, but this is not yet consistent practice across all subjects.
- The teaching of literacy, including reading, has improved since the last inspection. The impact is seen in the improvement in reading ages of students who are given additional guidance in literacy. A focus on reading for enjoyment and asking students which books they would like in the school library has led to an increase in the number of books borrowed.
- Students' communication skills have improved through a focus on debate in the mixed-age tutor groups and extra-curricular activities, good questioning in lessons by teachers and the use made of performing arts within the curriculum. There is a strong emphasis on accurate use of vocabulary in lessons and how the words are used to convey meaning and concepts. In some lessons students explain and build on the ideas of others, and ask questions in order to check and develop their own understanding. This has not yet been developed across the school.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school in Year 7 with broadly average standards. They make good progress and leave Year 11 with above-average GCSE results as measured by five A* to C grades including English and mathematics.
- Students achieve particularly well in English and do well in mathematics, statistics and drama. Across a broad range of other subjects, including science subjects, humanities and languages, the students achieve above national standards at grade C and above. As a result, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- However, the most able students do not do well enough at the highest GCSE grades of A* and A in too many subjects. These include English literature, biology, physics, geography, French, Spanish, art and music.
- The school has previously entered some groups of students early for English, mathematics, arts, humanities, science and languages subjects. This has now stopped for English and mathematics but continues for some students in arts, humanities, science and particularly language subjects. The school believes that gaining an additional language from this arrangement is valuable for students. However, it may account for the lack of the highest grades in some of these subjects.
- The school is committed to equal opportunities and closing the gaps for all groups. The gap in attainment between disadvantaged students and other students nationally has narrowed in both English and mathematics to less than a third of a GCSE grade, although the gap compared to other students in the school is still nearly a grade in English and over half a grade in mathematics. They make good progress in English. Progress in mathematics is not yet as good, but is getting closer to the progress made by other

groups in the school.

- Catch-up funding for students who join the school in Year 7 with limited skills in English and mathematics is used effectively, particularly through 'Academic Dialogue', where teachers work with small groups to improve specific aspects of their knowledge, skills and understanding. This has been used particularly effectively in English. It is now being adjusted in mathematics and science so that there is a greater link between the additional teacher and the class teacher.

The sixth form provision requires improvement

- The sixth form requires improvement because students do not do well enough in their examinations, particularly in Year 12. Students enter the sixth form broadly in line with national averages and finish Year 12 or Year 13 broadly in line overall. National measures show that students make similar progress both in academic courses and in the small number of work-related courses.
- The sixth form was opened in 2010 with 19 students. It has expanded year on year, and currently Year 12 has 155 students. Students come from three local schools, with about two thirds from Gable Hall School, and the remaining third from St Clare's and Hassenbrook Academy.
- A specialist sixth form block has now opened and this has greatly improved the provision, particularly for form time, study facilities and specialist spaces for mentoring and careers guidance. Students said they chose the sixth form mainly because it is near, they know the quality of teaching that they will get and the range of extra activities in school, and they know they will be well looked after.
- A small number of students who enter the sixth form without a GCSE in English or mathematics take this, but the proportion then gaining a grade C in mathematics is low. Other requirements of the 16–19 study programmes are in place with a strong emphasis on activities outside lessons, work-related experience, careers and a practical programme for ethics, transition and citizenship. Almost all students who complete Year 13 successfully go onto their next stage, with most going to university.
- However, too many students do not complete Year 12 or get the examination results they need to move into Year 13. Feedback from students, monitoring by the school and inspection evidence show that at the start of last year, students did not receive the information that they were not on track to meet their targets quickly enough. The quality of support and guidance given to students to ensure they achieve well on the courses they select to study has not been good enough, in contrast to the good-quality independent advice and guidance younger students are given about options and careers.
- Leaders are proactive and decisive in using information from internal and external results and other monitoring information to make changes. Guidance on entry criteria is already stronger and feedback for any students who are not on track to meet targets is clearer and earlier.
- As the sixth form has grown, more teachers have been recruited and better links made with the other schools. The range of courses and additional activities has expanded. Up until this year the sixth form functioned more like a small 'nurture' group. Leaders have developed more effective structures to manage the much larger provision and cope with any with further expansion.

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	136854
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	449113

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1508
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Nash
Headteacher	Sophina Asong
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2012
Telephone number	01375 400800
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