

Belper School and Sixth Form Centre

John O'Gaunts Way, Off Kilburn Road, Belper, DE56 0DA

Inspection dates 23–24 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well throughout the school.
- Standards have risen over the last three years at Key Stage 4 and are above average.
- Students make good progress, including in English and mathematics.
- Sixth form provision is good. The students make good progress. They achieve very well in vocational subjects.
- The quality of teaching is good at all three key stages. Students' good understanding of the purpose of learning and challenging questioning result in their good progress.
- The gap in standards between disadvantaged students and other students has narrowed significantly from last year to this year.
- The headteacher is a very strong leader and has energised and empowered the staff.
- Senior and middle leaders have roles and accountability which have resulted in quick improvements in teaching, achievement and behaviour and which are sustainable.
- Governance is good. The governors know the achievement of different groups of students and where teaching is effective and less effective.
- Students' behaviour is good. Students feel safe in school and have a comprehensive understanding of potential dangers and how to avoid them.
- Students interact well, contributing to a supportive and happy environment in which they learn and develop as responsible young people.
- The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good in all three key stages.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The teachers' performance targets are not sufficiently challenging or measurable, nor do they always match closely the school's priorities, to drive teaching and achievement forward as quickly as possible.
- Reports do not provide sufficient information and detail about what students know, understand and can do, and their progress towards their targets.
- Although some marking is excellent, too often it does not tell students specifically enough what they have learned well and what they should do next. Teachers do not ensure that students act on any advice given.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed a total of 40 lessons. Seven were observed jointly with individual members of the senior leadership team. One inspector listened to the reading of several students from Year 8 and observed two intervention groups.
- The inspectors talked with many students during the two days of the inspection and spoke formally with five groups of students. They observed the students at break and lunch times and during assembly.
- The inspectors held meetings with senior and subject leaders, members of the governing body and two representatives from the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a variety of documentation, including information about the achievement of the different groups of students in the school. They checked the school's improvement plan and its impact on driving improvement. They looked at examples of the students' work, checked records of their behaviour, attendance and exclusions, and checked policies designed to help keep them safe.
- In carrying out the inspection, the inspectors took into account the 79 responses to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the 110 responses given by staff to the questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lynne Blakelock, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kendrick Morris	Additional Inspector
John Hucker	Additional Inspector
Huw Bishop	Additional Inspector
Colin Lower	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than most other secondary schools. The falling number on roll reflects the demographic trend.
- Most students are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students known to be disadvantaged and, therefore, supported through the pupil premium is below average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and those children that are looked after by the local authority).
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A few students are educated off-site at Derby College.
- The school works in partnership with the Belper Headteachers' Consortium in order to drive school improvement in areas such as attendance. It is also part of the Ripley Heanor Learning Community and, together with five other local schools, meets termly to discuss alternative provision.
- Most sixth form students have been educated at the school throughout Key Stages 3 and 4.
- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen further the impact of leaders and managers in driving improvements in teaching and students' achievement by making sure that:
 - teachers' performance targets are challenging and measureable and match the school's priorities closely
 - marking in all subjects tells the students very clearly and specifically what they have learnt well, what to do next, and that teachers check that their advice has been taken
 - reports include helpful information about students' performance in subjects, their targets and their progress towards them.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has inspired both staff and students in the improvements he has made to the school.
- Systems have been tightened and new strategies introduced to ensure, in particular, that leaders and managers at all levels, and class teachers, both know their roles and have accountability for them. The senior leadership team has developed well, in roles that best meet the school's needs.
- The impact has been fast in some areas, particularly in the quality of teaching and in students' behaviour, which staff, parents and students all say has improved significantly. It has also resulted in the gap between the performance of disadvantaged students throughout the school and other students narrowing.
- The school's methods of checking its work have advanced greatly and have had a big influence on all of the improvements being made. Moreover, the expectation that all staff take ownership of data about their students' learning and the fortnightly meetings with line managers to discuss achievement and the quality of teaching, mean that evaluation of what the school is doing remains a major focus.
- The quality of the leadership and management of teaching is good. The staff fully understand the expectations that leaders have with regard to the contents of each lesson, because they were all involved in the decision about it.
- Judgements about the quality of teaching are accurate. The leader of teaching is on the ball and ensures teachers are supported to improve their practice and to ensure that they cater for the average-ability students, who have performed less well historically. All staff receive regular training, coaching and support, if necessary, to improve the quality of teaching. The staff find training opportunities helpful in enabling them to carry out their roles well and as part of their career development.
- Teachers' performance targets are linked to improving teaching and leadership, but they are not always sufficiently challenging or measurable, nor do they match the school's priorities for improvement. As a result, they do not have the impact that they could on the speed of students' progress.
- Most subject leaders manage their areas of responsibility well. The headteacher is working to develop them into leaders as well as managers, to further strengthen the school.
- The new curriculum is being developed at varying rates. Computing is established. Courses provide students with a balanced education, both academically and in their personal development. Teaching, much of which is in mixed-ability settings, encourages the students to support and challenge each other. Careers information and guidance are provided right through the school, building up well students' knowledge of their options, the qualifications they need and the skills to impress a prospective employer on interview.
- A new assessment system is being introduced, to run alongside part of the existing one, as the system of assessing by levels ends.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is promoted well, mainly through subjects, but also through assemblies and daily routines. Leaders and governors check that British values, including supporting and tolerating others, are similarly built-in.
- The school uses its partnerships to improve and add to its provision, including working together with other schools to prepare pupils in Year 6 for secondary school.
- Parents are supportive of all aspects of the school's work. The school values their involvement and loyalty and communicates with them regularly, including through newsletters. Parents receive regular reports about their children's progress, effort and behaviour. However, comments about the quality of their learning lack detail and clarity about what the students know and can do and their goals and targets.

- The local authority has brokered support in the recent past from a local outstanding school in order to strengthen leadership. It is delighted with the school's improvement.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body regularly checks the school's policies and procedures to make sure they help keep the students safe. They meet the statutory requirements.
- The governors have a comprehensive knowledge of the school. Although the headteacher provides them with detailed reports of its performance, the governors also have independent knowledge. They have individual links with faculties and meet with the leaders each half term to ascertain their impact on students' progress and on teaching. A yearly governors' conference enables the governors to meet informally with leaders.
- The governors understand data about students' progress and attend other training to make sure that they have the necessary knowledge to both challenge and support the school. They know which subjects perform particularly well and areas of the school's work which can be further improved.
- Finances are in good shape and are regularly checked. All spending is carefully considered.
- The governors know the uses of pupil premium funding and its impact on narrowing the gap between disadvantaged students and those not eligible for the funding. They value the system for managing teachers' performance in order to drive school improvement and do not consider pay rises unless staff meet all of their targets.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of the students, including those in the sixth form, is good. In lessons, students have positive attitudes to learning, which promote their good progress. They settle to learning quickly and respond to the staff's instructions promptly.
- Both the students and staff say that behaviour has improved significantly in the past year, due to consistently applied sanctions and rewards.
- Not all students manage their behaviour well. They are helped by staff to do this. The 'Focus' unit enables them to consider their behaviour and how to improve it without the need for exclusion from school.
- In lessons and around school, students are polite and helpful. They like their school and mix well with students from other year groups. They move safely and in an orderly manner round the site which is clean and tidy because the students take pride in their environment.
- The school's work to keep the students, including those who learn off-site, safe, and secure is good. Parents agree. The students feel particularly safe now that the site is fully secure.
- Students say that bullying is rare. They all feel there is someone on the staff that they can talk to if they have concerns.
- Students understand the different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, prejudice-based bullying and bullying related to race, religion, sex, disability and sexual orientation.
- They display a good awareness for their age of how to respond to risks, including forced marriage.
- The school council gives representatives opportunities to develop their leadership skills and gives them a real voice. The council helps to make decisions about matters that are important to the students such as how good behaviour should be rewarded.
- Students' attendance is broadly average. At Key Stage 3, it is above average, reflecting the improved systems and actions to monitor attendance. The school continues to tackle persistent absenteeism rigorously although rates are taking longer to fall.

The quality of teaching is good

- The students' achievement has improved and is good, because of consistently good teaching, including in English and mathematics.
- Students know exactly what they are expected to know, understand and be able to do in lessons. Teachers check during lessons that students are on track to achieve the aims of teaching.
- The students and staff get on well together, which promotes a harmonious and motivational environment for learning.
- There is a range of abilities in most classes and, in most lessons, teaching, including questioning, ensures that all of the students achieve well and sometimes very well.
- A small proportion of teaching leads to students' excellent progress. In a Year 11 English lesson, which focused on a character in a text, students achieved very well in their understanding of a character. This was because the teachers' very secure subject knowledge, together with her probing questioning, helped students to learn quickly and consider and develop their views. They were keen to participate because the teaching was so interesting and stimulating.
- Students prefer teaching that involves them, and much teaching is based on their involvement. Students in Year 7, for example, thoroughly enjoyed practising their pronunciation of the French alphabet, including through sectioning the letters and chanting them. Teaching kept them focused by providing problem-solving activities.
- Most students present their work neatly, because teachers expect no less and because most students take pride in their work.
- Students practise their literacy skills in many lessons. This is a developing aspect of the school's work to reinforce what students have learnt in English. There is a particular focus on how accurately students spell and write.
- There are very good examples of marking in students' books. Although it is early in the term, some students have already received very helpful information about their learning and the next steps to take. However, there are inconsistencies in the regularity and detail of marking between and within subjects, particularly in telling students how well they have achieved, and what to do next, and in teachers' expectations of students responding to any advice they have been given.
- Although students' tasks mostly reflect the levels at which they work, there are a few occasions when tasks are not planned carefully enough to make sure that lower-ability students and the most able students achieve their full potential. Consequently, training has been set up to ensure there is consistency in this and good practice.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs benefit from working with teaching assistants who know their needs and who generally provide specific support from the start of the lesson.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The proportion of students achieving five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, by the end of Year 11 has risen over the last three years. The proportion of students making expected and better than expected progress in English and mathematics has risen to above the national average.
- Students join Year 7 with standards that have been above average and which have fallen a little now.

They make good progress in English, mathematics and science.

- Students' progress by the end of Year 11 has been pulled down previously because of variations in the standards achieved in different subjects.
- This year, standards have risen considerably in a range of subjects, including history, drama, music and physical education because teaching is good and data about students' progress is being used promptly to address any gaps in their learning. Standards are above average overall and well above average in some areas. Leaders are working to raise standards in languages and sociology.
- The progress of different groups is similar. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve well because staff know their needs and, therefore, provide specific support. Students' individual issues, whether academic or pastoral, are dealt with caringly and sensitively so that they can continue to learn well.
- Students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding receive a variety of support. This includes extra lessons in reading, writing and mathematics and more vocational courses in Key Stage 4. Learning and safeguarding mentors support individual students with issues such as attendance and behaviour, and a summer school is held to support their learning, progress, and well-being.
- The support provided for disadvantaged students is having a positive impact. Last year, their attainment in Year 11 was behind that of other students by one and a half grades in English and one and three quarters in mathematics. This year, the gap has narrowed to three quarters of a grade in English and two thirds of a grade in mathematics. The gap is half that found nationally in English and mathematics.
- The most able students make good progress and, in most lessons, are challenged well to enable them to develop higher-order skills. The progress of students of average ability has improved.
- Students who do not achieve the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 are given additional teaching and support, in small groups or individually. By the end of Year 7, most students achieve the levels expected for their age. Those students who do not achieve the standard continue to receive the necessary support to strengthen their skills.
- Almost all students sit GCSE mathematics no earlier than in the summer term of Year 11. This pays off because the students have had ample time to develop the skills they need to achieve well. An above average proportion reach grades A* to C.
- The few students educated off-site achieve well in both their academic and personal targets.
- After Year 11, most students join the sixth form, staying on into Year 13, or go on to further education or training.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Students start Year 12 with average standards. The large majority have achieved at least a C grade in both English and mathematics. Those who have not achieved this, resit the examination; most are successful in English and a majority in mathematics.
- The sixth form continues to improve because of effective leadership and management. The leader feels empowered by the new headteacher. A deputy head of sixth form, administrative support and a committed group of form tutors have facilitated improvements.
- Students achieve well in the sixth form. Standards are rising. AS standards are average. A level standards are above average. Standards in vocational subjects are well above average. The minimum standards are met.

- There are a few variations between subjects, which the leadership is addressing.
- The students speak very positively about the sixth form which promotes their good personal as well as academic development. They recognise the improvements brought about under the new leadership of the school and their impact on the quality of teaching, which is good.
- There are strong relationships between teachers, students and parents. Students know how well they are progressing and tutors provide effective support.
- The students like the fact that teaching is more personalised and also enables them to discuss in depth their learning with their peers.
- The students show very mature and business-like attitudes to learning. They set a very good example to the younger students in their focus on their work and in how they organise their time.
- In their roles as sixth form ambassadors, they support and guide the younger students, mentoring, assisting in the library and providing subject support.
- The careers information and guidance that they receive is very appropriate to their individual needs and aspirations.
- The students say that, together with good improvements in teaching and learning, they are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training, or employment.

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	112989
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	448985

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
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	1340
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Eccleston
Headteacher	Martyn Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2013
Telephone number	01773 825281
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