

The Matthew Arnold School

Kingston Road, Staines, Surrey, TW18 1PF

Inspection dates

8–9 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures

- Students' achievement in mathematics and English is inadequate and is not improving quickly enough. GCSE results are too low.
- The progress students make is insufficient because teachers have low expectations of what students can achieve.
- Teaching in English, mathematics and science is inadequate. The standard of students' work in these subjects is too low.
- The work teachers give students is often too easy and does not help them to make progress.
- Students' standards of literacy are too low. The quality of students' writing is poor.
- Too many lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour. Students show no pride in their work and their books have too much graffiti in them; this is often unchallenged by teachers.
- Until recently, the school has had too positive a picture of the quality of teaching. As a result, leaders have not stepped in to eliminate inadequate teaching.
- Procedures in place to keep students safe have not been checked carefully enough by senior leaders and governors. Some procedures are not adequate.
- Governors and leaders have not done enough to improve teaching or halt the decline in students' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- The new acting headteacher and interim executive headteachers have swiftly identified what needs to improve and made some important changes.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress on their vocational courses.
- The quality of teaching is better in some subjects, particularly in humanities.
- The school's arrangements to support students who join in Year 7 help them to settle in successfully.
- The care, monitoring and supervision provided for students who attend courses off site are effective.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 40 lessons, 14 of which were observed jointly with the school's leaders.
- Inspectors conducted short visits to classrooms focusing on behaviour and literacy, and also attended an assembly.
- During the inspection a fire alarm was set off and inspectors observed students vacating the building and the school's procedures for checking who was missing.
- Inspectors held meetings with students, staff, and parents, as well as the new executive headteachers, the acting headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors observed the school at work, scrutinised documents relating to self-evaluation, students' achievement, behaviour and safety and externally commissioned reports of the school's effectiveness.
- Inspectors took into account 44 responses to the staff questionnaire, views expressed to inspectors by parents in a meeting and by email, a small number of which were received shortly after the inspection. Inspectors also took into account 90 responses to the on-line questionnaire Parent View.

Inspection team

Sarah Hubbard, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Carol Worthington	Additional Inspector
Stephanie Matthews	Additional Inspector
Trevor Woods	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Inspectors strongly recommend that the school should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

Information about this school

- The Matthew Arnold School became an academy on 1 August 2012. When its predecessor school was last inspected, it was judged to be satisfactory under the previous inspection framework.
- The headteacher joined the school in April 2013 but was not present during this inspection. Since 2 June 2014, the school has been led by an acting headteacher and two interim executive headteachers from schools within the Bourne Education Trust (BES). Plans are underway for the school to become part of this multi-academy trust next term. The interim executive headteachers divide their time during the week so that at least one is present in the school every day.
- The Matthew Arnold School is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students eligible for additional pupil premium funding is slightly below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children.
- The proportions of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action and school action plus are slightly above average.
- The school makes use of off-site provision at Brooklands College for a number of students in Years 10 and 11. A very small number of students benefit from off-site provision provided by Surrey Care Trust.
- The school houses a post-16 football academy which it runs in partnership with Chelsea Football Club and Strode's College.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - raise their expectations of what students can achieve, plan tasks that are sufficiently demanding and challenge students to give of their best when their work does not meet the required standard
 - make better use of information about students' prior learning and attainment when planning especially for those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, so that work is matched more closely to meet their learning needs.
- Urgently improve the achievement of all students by:
 - improving standards of work in English, mathematics and science
 - increasing the percentage of students achieving the highest GCSE grades
 - improving the quality of students' writing in all their subjects so that they are not held back by their weak written communication skills
 - ensuring that teachers' accurately mark students' work, especially in English, to provide clear

guidance to students' on how to improve their learning, is used to set challenging targets and to identify students who are falling behind

- sharing the methods that more successful departments are using to raise standards,

■ Improve students' behaviour and safety by:

- making sure all students meet an acceptable standard of behaviour in lessons so that time is not lost

- ensuring students take pride in what they do and challenging them to do better when their work is scruffy or when they are disrespectful

- rigorously checking on student absence, particularly those eligible for additional funding

- ensuring the record of bullying incidents is clearly organised and rigorously monitored so all bullying incidents are properly followed up.

■ Improve leadership and governance by:

- ensuring the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding are robust and put into practice well

- making sure that when leaders evaluate the quality of teaching there is greater emphasis on the impact of teaching on students' achievement

- leaders giving governors the information they need and governors using the information rigorously to hold leaders to account.

An external review of governance, to include specific focus on the school's use of pupil premium funding, should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- There has been a steady decline in achievement. The school's records show that, in most subjects, students' achievement will not improve significantly in 2014.
- The progress students make from when they join the school to when they leave is inadequate in English, mathematics and science.
- Students join the school with attainment that is similar to the national average. However, when they leave their attainment in English and mathematics is below average.
- In many GCSE subjects, including English language, mathematics and science, the proportions of students gaining the top grades are lower than average. Too many students who join the school with above-average attainment leave with below-average attainment. The most able students make significantly less progress than similar students nationally.
- Students eligible for additional funding make even less progress than other students in the school. They also make much less progress than this group of students nationally and their attainment is low. The proportion that gain five good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, is too low. The school's own information for 2014 shows the gap between their attainment in English and mathematics and other students is widening.
- Boys achieve less well than girls. This is due, in part, to inconsistencies in how effectively teachers manage boys' behaviour.
- Key Stage 3 students eligible for the government's catch-up funding are not making enough progress as a result of inadequacies in teaching. They forfeit taking a second language to receive this extra support in literacy.
- The progress of disabled students or those who have special educational needs is poor. It is noticeably poorer than that of other students in mathematics and science in Key Stage 3.
- The standard of students' reading and writing is too low. Students do not write enough and the quality of their written communication skills is poor.
- In 2013, approximately half the students took GCSE mathematics early in November. The majority of this group did not pass and re-sat their GCSE in the summer. Despite many students having two attempts at the examination, the achievement in mathematics of the majority of students remained below average. This is because they were not taught well. The most able students did particularly poorly in mathematics.
- The achievement of students taking vocational courses at the local college is good. However, this is not matched by their achievement on the courses they take at school, including GCSEs in English and mathematics.
- In the sixth form football academy, students make better progress in work-related courses, especially coaching qualifications, than in English and mathematics. The achievement of students at the football academy in these important GCSE subjects is too variable.
- Students' achievement in humanities, particularly history, is better than in most other subjects because the teaching is more effective.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- The quality of teaching is too variable. Too much is inadequate or requires improvement. The quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science is particularly weak. As a result, the progress of too many students is poor.
- Teachers make too little use of information about students' prior knowledge and learning. They spend too much time going over what students already know. Consequently, students become bored and disengaged.
- Teachers' expectations of students, including the more able students, are far too low, especially in English, mathematics and science. Many teachers set tasks that are too easy, like drawing posters and copying out factual information. As a result, students are not gaining the knowledge

and skills they need to do well in the subjects they study.

- Teachers pay insufficient attention to planning how they can help disabled students or those who have special educational needs to make better progress. This group of students often do not start tasks set; they rely too heavily on support from teaching assistants to complete them.
- Teachers' questioning is not effective. Too many teachers are content to allow the same students in their class to answer the questions they pose. Students who do not answer are not challenged to think more deeply. In a number of lessons seen during the inspection, students talked while questions were being asked and answered which stopped others from learning.
- Teachers' marking is too variable. Some teachers mark books regularly but some books are not marked for long periods. When teachers mark students' work, they do not challenge poor presentation. The comments teachers make do not consistently identify the specific next steps needed for improvement. Although spelling mistakes are picked out, teachers pay too little attention to correcting grammar and punctuation errors.
- Assessments of students' work in English are far too high. This means that teachers have an inaccurate view of the progress students make and are not sufficiently aware of which students are underachieving.
- The teaching of literacy skills in most subjects is poor. Teachers do not teach students how to write well to demonstrate their subject knowledge and understanding. Students are not provided with the support they need to express their ideas. For example, students in science often do not have the vocabulary to demonstrate their grasp of key scientific principles.
- Students studying the Civil Rights Movement in history made good progress. By speculating about the meaning of words such as 'supremacist' they developed a sophisticated understanding of relevant vocabulary.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- The behaviour of students is inadequate. However, most students and staff agree that, in the very short time that the new leaders have been in post, behaviour has improved.
- Many students do not behave well in lessons and too many show negative attitudes towards learning. In the majority of lessons, students become bored because their work is not sufficiently interesting or set at the right level for them. As a consequence, disruptive behaviour prevents many students from learning and achieving. In some classes, students whistle, shout out and throw small objects across the classroom.
- Many teachers accept very low standards of behaviour from students. Teachers do not always challenge students to show them respect. Students in too many lessons talk loudly while the teacher is explaining the work, and this is left unchecked. When teachers challenge students in an appropriate way, they alter their behaviour and settle down to learn. In a technology class visited by inspectors, students listened well and worked hard because they were highly engaged.
- Students say that behaviour in lessons, where another teacher is covering, is typically far worse than in other lessons. The behaviour of students in the highest ability sets is more positive because they want to learn. Students in lower sets do not behave well. In these lessons, teachers do not insist on high standards of behaviour. As a result, they are falling even further behind.
- The number of exclusions has risen over the past year. The school's new leaders are very aware that significant improvements need to be made in the way behaviour is managed to reduce these numbers. They have planned changes ready for implementation in September.
- Attendance has declined this year. The attendance of Key Stage 4 students is lower than that of Key Stage 3 students. The attendance of students who are eligible for additional funding is lower than that of other students.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is inadequate. Students say they feel safe in school. However, some of the school's safeguarding procedures are ineffective. Procedures to find out why students are absent are not working well enough and too many absences remain unaccounted for.

- The bullying record is very unwieldy and difficult for leaders to analyse. Some incidents are mistakenly labelled as bullying when they are incidents of silly behaviour. Nevertheless, the number of incidents recorded on the log is high. A small number of parents indicate they have concerns about bullying which they have shared with the school. They do not feel the school keeps their children safe.
- The procedures for accounting for absences in the event of a fire are inadequate.
- Although staff are aware of child protection policies and procedures, they have not been regularly trained in this important aspect of safeguarding.
- The school's new leaders have quickly reviewed the security of the school site and their judgments about the improvements needed are accurate.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- The leadership and management of the school are inadequate because leaders have not done enough to stem the decline in standards over time.
- Leaders' judgements about the quality of teaching have been too generous and have not placed enough importance on the poor progress students make in lessons and over time. Leaders have paid insufficient attention to the quality of students' presentation and their work in the books.. As a result, teaching that is inadequate has been left unchallenged.
- The training provided for teachers has not helped them to improve their practice. It has not been sufficiently focused on the weaker aspects of their teaching. As a result, teachers are not clear enough about how to plan lessons to ensure all students make progress.
- Subject leaders do not consistently hold teachers to account for the achievement of the students in their subject areas. Middle leaders do not pay enough attention to ensuring disabled students or those who have special educational needs make progress in their subject. Information gathered on the achievement of these students is not helpful because it is not clear how their progress is being measured.
- The school's new leaders from the multi-academy trust have accurately identified where improvements need to be made. They have already made changes to the senior leadership team to maximise its effectiveness and brought staff in from other schools in the trust to provide support. The new leaders have rightly prioritised ensuring the school is fully staffed with permanent staff for next term. They have set a clear direction, quickly winning the confidence of most staff and students.
- The school has used its freedom as an academy to create a separate curriculum in Key Stage 4 for less able students. However, the restricted choice of courses provided for these students does not interest them sufficiently. The teachers delivering the courses do not give enough attention to meeting the students' learning needs. The school's new leaders have taken immediate action to ensure all students are able to choose their options from a full complement of subjects.
- The school's partnership with off-site providers, including Chelsea Football Club, provides students in the sixth form and Key Stage 4 with work-related courses that meet their needs appropriately. Vocational coordinators ensure that students enrolled on college courses make better progress in these qualifications because they liaise well with the off-site providers, the students and their parents.
- Arrangements for students joining the school in Year 7 are a strength of the school because a lot of care and attention is given to making sure students feel welcome. The students involved evaluate the induction day. The school then considers their responses carefully and makes good use of them in their future planning.
- Decisions on pay are not consistently based on whether staff meet challenging targets for the progress students make. A small minority of staff have not progressed to the next pay scale. However, many have progressed in their pay despite low levels of students' achievement.
- Students' moral and cultural learning is developing through some subjects such as humanities. However, teachers do not always use the opportunities that arise when teaching a relevant topic

to reinforce strong moral values.

- All Year 11 students have had one-to-one interviews on their plans for next year. However, leaders are not tracking students' destinations or evaluating external support well enough. Too many current Year 11 students are at risk of not being in education, apprenticeships, employment or training after they have left.
- The majority of parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire about the school on Parent View would not recommend the school to others. Some of the parents interviewed by inspectors recognised that there had been recent improvements.
- Leaders have not evaluated the effectiveness of their procedures to keep students safe with sufficient rigour.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have not held the school to account for the decline in students' achievement or for the standards of students' behaviour. They have paid insufficient attention to keeping students safe. Governors have been unaware of students' poor achievement because they have not made sure they have the necessary information to carry out their important role. Some governors have used the limited information they have to hold the school to account at committee meetings, but this is not routinely done at full governing body meetings. The governing body has sought to improve standards by negotiating for the school to join a local multi-academy trust. They have supported the interim leaders in resolving staffing issues and making changes to the leadership team. However, although leaders from this trust are now managing the school, governors are still not holding them to account with sufficient rigour. Full governing body minutes show governors are too accepting of what the school tells them. A good example of this is when the safeguarding policy was reviewed. School leaders presented the policy to governors for scrutiny and agreement. However, governors agreed the policy without asking probing enough questions. Governors failed to support and challenge the school and, consequently, some of the school's procedures for keeping students safe are not effective. The governors are aware of the need to hold the school to account for its use of additional funding. In doing this, governors have focused on what the school has provided and ensure eligible students are properly identified rather than on their achievement. Governors do not have a clear enough view of the quality of teaching at the school and of how teachers' performance is managed.

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	138765
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	409425

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
Number of pupils on the school roll	957
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Denison OBE
Headteacher	Mr Alasdair Nicol
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 July 2011
Telephone number	01784 457275
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