

The Ferrers School

Queensway, Higham Ferrers, Rushden, NN10 8LF

Inspection dates 4–5 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	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.

- Leaders have high expectations and ambitions for the school and have created an environment where students achieve well.
- The school's focus on students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and students are being well prepared for their futures and for life in modern Britain.
- Students behave well. They are smartly dressed and look after the school's buildings and grounds.
- Attendance is above average.
- There are good procedures in place to look after students and keep them safe.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan well to ensure that students make good progress in lessons and over time.
- Leaders and governors have high expectations of themselves and the students. Staff are held to account for the achievement of students and receive effective training and support in order to make ongoing improvements in their teaching.
- Governors are passionate about their work with the school and rigorous in ensuring that the school continues to improve. They offer strong and well-informed challenge to senior leaders.
- The quality of provision and the achievement of students in the sixth form is good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students, particularly the more able, make slower progress in some lessons where they are not sufficiently challenged. This can lead to some off-task behaviour which is not always dealt with by staff.
- Some teachers do not mark work regularly enough and students do not always know what they have to do to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 lessons and parts of lessons, eight of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors undertook two focused walks around the school with senior leaders.
- Inspectors analysed a wide range of students’ work in lessons. They also looked with senior leaders at a range of students’ work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers, a senior leader from the sixth form consortium, and the Chair and three other members of the Governing Body.
- A telephone conversation was held with the leader of the Pilgrim Learning Trust.
- Inspectors met with four groups of students, in addition to observing students’ behaviour. Inspectors heard some students read.
- A range of the school’s documentation was scrutinised, including the school’s own checks on its performance, the school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, and documentation about the school’s arrangements to keep children safe.
- Inspectors analysed the 90 responses from parents to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, looked at results of the school’s own survey of parents’ views and spoke to a small number of parents.
- The 58 responses to the staff survey were analysed.

Inspection team

Denise Newsome, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Edward Macintyre	Additional Inspector
Helen Owen	Additional Inspector
Bruce Clark	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than the average-size secondary school.
- The school converted to academy status in August 2013. When its predecessor school, The Ferrers Specialist Arts College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- Most of the students are from White British backgrounds.
- Almost 20% of students are eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and for students in local authority care). This proportion is lower than the national average.
- A small number of Year 7 students benefit from the nationally funded 'catch-up' programme, which is for students who do not achieve Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of their primary schooling.
- At around 18%, the proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs is broadly average.
- A very small number of students in Key Stage 4 are educated at alternative off site provisions. They attend 'EYS' or 'Seeds of Change' for part of the week.
- The sixth form is part of a consortium with two other local schools.
- The school is a stand-alone academy and is part of a voluntary trust arrangement, the Pilgrim Learning Trust. This is a group of local schools who work together on school improvement.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching by:
 - setting challenging tasks for all students, especially the more able, so that they can achieve at the highest levels possible
 - eliminating any off-task behaviour in lessons through consistent use of the school's behaviour policy
 - ensuring that teachers' marking gives all students clear guidance on what they have to do to improve and that the improvements made are always checked by teachers.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders are ambitious for the school. They know each student well and have high aspirations for their futures. The school makes full use of the opportunities to improve its practice provided through its membership of the local Pilgrim Learning Trust.
- The school's leaders have an accurate view of its strengths and they know what needs to be done to improve further. They have acted with a sense of urgency to make sure that necessary improvements are implemented quickly.
- Checks on teachers' performance are thorough and regular, and lead to improvement. Teaching that is not good is not accepted and is dealt with quickly and effectively. The management of teachers' performance is robust. Only good performance is rewarded and teachers have access to good-quality support and training to help them improve their teaching.
- Senior leaders and leaders in charge of subjects check the progress of individual students and groups of students regularly. This data is used to indicate where any students are falling behind and to arrange for them to be given extra support.
- Leaders in charge of subjects are held to account for the achievements of the students. They appreciate the opportunities they get to share what they do well with each other. They are effective in improving results and rise to the challenge set by senior leaders to, in the words of the headteacher, 'make the best the norm'.
- Leaders make sure that good use is made of pupil premium funding. Extra staff have been employed so that there are small class sizes and teachers can help disadvantaged students to make good progress. The Year 7 'catch up' money is used in a similar way to provide extra lessons in small groups for eligible students. There is striking impact on their progress as a result.
- The curriculum is well planned to make sure that students of all abilities can achieve well and are able to choose from a good range of options in Key Stage 4.
- There is good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assemblies, 'Learning for Life' lessons, the curriculum and extra-curricular activities all help students know right from wrong, appreciate the values of tolerance and respect, and learn about other cultures. There is an extensive programme of trips and visits, both in Great Britain and abroad, which supports this aspect of the school's work. Students are being well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Staff generally hold the school in high regard. They say that it is a 'very positive' and 'very supportive' place to work.
- Teachers who are new to the profession are well supported in their first year of teaching. They appreciate the training that they get from the school and the support that they get from their colleagues.
- The quality of the information, advice and guidance that all students receive from Year 7 upwards is good and reflects the schools' high aspirations for them. Students also benefit from good careers guidance from external providers.
- Leaders make daily checks on students who are educated for part of their week at alternative provision. They ensure that their attendance and behaviour are good and that they are making good progress.
- The school's safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements.
- The sixth form is well led and managed as part of the consortium arrangements.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors know the school well. They ensure that teachers are not rewarded for poor performance and regularly receive information on the school's own judgements on the strengths and areas for development in teaching which contributes to their decisions. They ask for and regularly receive data about students' attainment and progress which they analyse and interpret for themselves. They have a good understanding of the school's performance and regularly attend training to enable them to become more knowledgeable and to challenge the headteacher and senior leaders. They are aware of how pupil premium funding has been spent and monitor this and the whole school budget regularly. Governors have a range of skills, knowledge and experience which ensures that they are effective in their role. Each governor is the named link governor for an aspect of the school's work and governors visit regularly to monitor the aspects for which they are responsible.

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

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are polite and courteous. Good behaviour and attendance are contributing well to the good progress that students make. Students are well prepared for lessons and respond quickly to teachers' instructions.
- Behaviour at break and lunchtimes is good. Students move around the school in an orderly manner and are punctual to lessons. There is almost no litter in the buildings or around the school site. Students dress smartly in their school uniform.
- Attendance is above the national average and the numbers of students away from school for long periods of time has fallen. The school acts quickly if a student's attendance becomes a cause for concern. It works closely with parents to make sure that they know the importance of good attendance and to help students with issues that may be affecting their attendance.
- There have been no permanent exclusions and the number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced and is on track to be below the national average this year. This is because the school ensures that students at risk of exclusion benefit from a range of provision in and out of school so that they can remain in school.
- A very small number of students attend some off-site provisions for part of their week. The school liaises effectively with the providers to ensure that students are attending and making good progress.
- Students say that behaviour is nearly always good around the school. They know the sanctions imposed for any misdemeanour but report that teachers do not always consistently apply the behaviour policy.
- In a small number of lessons where the level of challenge is not high enough, students' concentration can waver and they lose focus and find it hard to remain on task. When the school's behaviour policy is applied consistently by staff, students respond quickly.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is good and students act as 'buddies' to new Year 7 students so that they are helped to settle in and have positive role models for their behaviour.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students are kept safe. Staff training is up to date. Students' safety is given a very high priority within the school and all staff ensure that they keep themselves up to date with relevant guidance.
- The school ensures that students attending alternative provision are kept safe.
- Students are taught well how to keep themselves safe; for example, when using the internet. They fully understand the need to report any concerns they might have.
- Students show a good understanding of the different types of bullying. They are taught in assemblies, and in their 'Learning for Life' lessons, about how to identify bullying and what to do about it. They say that

there is very little bullying in the school. If there is any bullying, students are confident that they can tell any member of staff about it and they know that it will be swiftly and effectively dealt with.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and maintain students' interest with a range of activities. They ask questions that encourage students to think for themselves. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects is passed on to their students and, as result, students are keen and eager to do well. For example, in a Year 10 history lesson on medicine, students were so absorbed in their learning that they did not realise that the lesson had finished and break had started.
- Teachers' expectations are usually high and lessons proceed briskly. Teachers generally make sure that students are focused and on task, and that they do not waste any time. Students respond to these expectations and make good progress as a result.
- Students work very well together when they are given opportunities to work in pairs or groups. Students are often asked to support each other in their learning and to mark each other's work, including letting their peers know how they can improve their work. Students respond well to this and help each other to make good progress.
- Teachers make good use of a range of interesting resources in lessons, including computer-based resources, which they use to maintain students' interest and broaden their experiences. This is effective in making sure that students do well.
- Students are keen to achieve well and this is reflected in the work in their books. Work is neatly presented and shows that they have made an effort. Students' responses in lessons and the work in their books shows that they are being well prepared for the next stages in their education.
- Students know their target grades and speak highly of the quality of teaching that they receive. They know that teachers are keen for them to do well and appreciate the help that they are given.
- Marking in English and science is particularly good, and it is also good in mathematics. The teaching of literacy, reading and mathematical knowledge is good and is helping students to make good progress in these subjects. Small-group teaching for students who need extra help to catch up, especially in Year 7, is very effective in helping them to make rapid progress.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, particularly students with a statement of special educational needs are supported well to make good progress from their particular starting points. The support of other adults in the classroom is managed well and is crucial to these students' success.
- There is some good marking and assessment of students' work done by teachers. It is regular, thorough and gives students good guidance on what to do to improve their work. However, this is inconsistent throughout the school. Some teachers do not give students enough guidance on how to do better and do not always check that the improvements that they have suggested are completed by students.
- There are a few lessons which do not challenge students to achieve at the highest levels and this affects the progress of some students, especially the more able. Where students are not interested and involved fully in these lessons, there is some off-task behaviour which is not consistently managed by teachers and other staff.
- Students in the sixth form benefit from teaching that is mainly good.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students start at the school with skills in English and mathematics which are below the national average. By the end of Year 11, the proportion of students achieving at least five GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, at grade C or above is close to the national average. This represents good progress.

- Achievement in mathematics is good because the proportion of students making expected progress and better than expected progress is close to that seen nationally. The proportions of students making better than expected progress in English is also close to that seen nationally. The proportion of students making expected progress in English in 2014 was lower than that seen nationally. This followed a period of staffing turbulence in the English department and a decision to enter students early for their English examination. This strategy has now been revised. Work in books and the school's own data shows that students of all abilities are now making at least good progress in English.
- Students gain GCSE results that are above the national averages in history, religious education, French and German. The numbers of students gaining GCSE passes in a set of subjects including English, mathematics, science, a modern foreign language and either geography or history, is higher than the national average. This reflects the school's high aspirations for students' academic achievements.
- Students who have a statement of special educational needs make good progress because of the effective support that they get from other adults in the classroom. The development and use of student 'passports' makes a strong contribution to their progress. The school is in the process of recategorizing students who need additional support within the school. Where specific learning needs are identified, extra help is ensuring that these students make generally good progress.
- The gap between the attainment and progress of disadvantaged students compared to other students is lower than that seen nationally and has narrowed over time. The school's own data shows that the gap is continuing to narrow. This is because the extra funding that the school receives for these students is being used well to provide extra support and teaching in small groups to help them catch their peers up. Disadvantaged students are, on average, one GCSE grade behind their peers in both English and mathematics.
- The Year 7 'catch-up' premium is being used effectively to teach extra English and mathematics lessons in small groups to students who join the school with below-average skills in literacy and numeracy. Students are making rapid progress as a result.
- The school's data and the work in the books of students in Years 7, 8 and 9 shows that they are also achieving well in English and mathematics. The school's examination results are expected to continue to improve.
- Students read widely and often and are happy to read out loud. The library is well used and new students are given a reading journal that they are expected to keep and add to when they have read a book.
- Students who are educated for some of their week at alternative provision are making good progress because the provision suits their interests and abilities.
- Students are being well prepared for the next stages in their education, employment or training because teaching is good. Last year, no student left the school at the end of Year 11 without a place in further education, employment or training.
- The school no longer enters students early for their GCSE examinations in English and mathematics.
- The number of students achieving the highest grades in some GCSE examinations is lower than average and the most-able students are not always challenged sufficiently in lessons to ensure that they achieve the top grades.
- Students achieve well in the sixth form because the consortium enables the school to offer a very wide range of options for students to choose from which caters for their interests and abilities. Achievement is strongest in Year 13.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Students enjoy their time in the sixth form. Their behaviour is good and they set a good example for

younger students to follow. They engage purposefully in their learning and are keen to do well.

- Students in the sixth form make good progress because of the mainly good teaching that they receive. They benefit from teachers' strong subject knowledge and from the good feedback that they receive on their learning. There are good relationships between staff and students.
- The curriculum that the school offers as part of a consortium with two other schools is broad and ensures that students have a good range of courses to choose from.
- Achievement across academic and vocational subjects is good. Students' progress is above the national average in both Year 12 and Year 13, although it is stronger in Year 13.
- Attendance in the sixth form is good because students enjoy their learning and benefit from good teaching and support.
- Students are aiming high and are nearly all keen to progress on to university. They say that their teachers have high aspirations for them. They receive good guidance and support to prepare them for the next stages in their education, employment or training. No student left the sixth form last year without a place in higher education, employment or training.
- The consortium leadership of the sixth form is effective in continuing to secure improvements in attainment and progress.

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	139988
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	449935

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	967
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Hopkins
Headteacher	Jonathan Giles
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01933 313411
Fax number	01933 410755
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