

Boston Spa School

Clifford Moor Road, Boston Spa, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS23 6RW

Inspection dates 29–30 April 2015

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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Most students make good progress, including in English and mathematics and in the sixth form, because teaching is good and sometimes better.
- Standards by the end of Year 11 are now above average and rising throughout the school.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior assistant headteacher provide strong leadership, which is improving teaching, accelerating students' achievement and preparing them well for the future.
- The governing body holds the school to account effectively in all aspects of its work. It challenges and probes the quality of teaching, achievement and all other aspects of its work.
- Students' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.
- Students feel secure and safe in school because they trust the staff and there are good systems to help to keep them safe.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because the school has a comprehensive programme that promotes well their understanding of their roles and responsibilities as young citizens and the skills and knowledge that they need.
- Students achieve well in the sixth form because courses match their needs and they are guided and supported well towards their goals.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attendance, particularly for those students who are regularly absent, is not high enough to give all students the best chance to learn as well as possible.
- In the sixth form, the programme to develop students' personal skills and readiness for adult life is not sufficiently broad or structured to ensure they are well prepared for life after school.
- Subject and faculty leaders are not all checking students' work sufficiently regularly or robustly to make sure that all students achieve as well as possible, or to quicken the progress of the most able disadvantaged students and those who are disabled and have special educational needs
- There is some variability in the quality of marking. Students do not always respond to teachers' marking.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed a wide range of teaching and learning. They observed several lessons jointly with individual members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspectors talked with students during lessons and at break and lunchtimes. They met formally with five groups of students to find out their views about the quality of education they receive at the school.
- The inspectors also held meetings with senior and subject leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a variety of documentation including information about the achievement of all groups of students in the school. They checked the school’s development plan and how well leaders are driving improvement, including in the sixth form. They scrutinised students’ work, checked records of their attendance and behaviour and reviewed policies to help keep them safe.
- In carrying out the inspection, the inspectors took into account the 118 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View), the phone calls from parents and the 53 responses given in the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lynne Blakelock, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Steven Goldsmith	Additional Inspector
Pamela Hemphill	Additional Inspector
Nick Merifield	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than others of its type. The number on roll is increasing after declining since the last inspection. Eighty-one per cent of the students now come from the local area, with a small proportion journeying from Leeds.
- Most students are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students and therefore supported through the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium funding is additional government funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- There are a greater proportion of boys than girls in most year groups.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- The school is part of the Wharfe Valley Learning Partnership.
- A very small minority of students learn off-site, at either the Grafton Centre, which is the home teaching service, or at Carlton Barracks. The purpose is to retain students' engagement in learning by providing a bespoke curriculum appropriate to their need.
- The school enters a few students early for GCSE examinations but does not intend to do so going forward.
- Since the previous inspection there have been many changes to staffing, at a senior level and amongst teaching staff, especially in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance through Key Stages 3 and 4 by ensuring that:
 - every student has an individual attendance target to aim for
 - team leaders lead the drive to reduce the proportion of students who are regularly absent by implementing rigorously the school's new initiatives and checking very regularly that all students are achieving their targets.
- Strengthen the impact of faculty and subject leaders in raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching further, by ensuring that:
 - any gaps in the progress of different groups of students, particularly the most able disadvantaged students, and those who are disabled and have special educational needs, are eliminated
 - they check very regularly and robustly the impact teaching has on learning for these students and the quality of work of all students, including the presentation of their work and the quality of teachers' marking and student's responses to it
 - there is a structured and broad programme in the sixth form to ensure that the students develop the personal skills, knowledge and understanding they need to equip them very well for life after school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, extremely ably supported by the deputy headteacher and a senior assistant headteacher, has acted to stabilise staffing and has restructured the leadership team so that roles match very closely the needs of the school. In doing so he has raised his and others' expectations of the school's performance so that it can move forward ever more confidently in all aspects of its work.
- The school's effectiveness has been strengthened by the robustness that the leadership team has shown in addressing a fall in achievement since the last inspection and the very good systems put in place to address it. Checking of the school's work is a major focus, including in the sixth form. Through detailed and regular assessments of students' progress, leaders have been able to identify and address previous shortcomings in achievement quickly. They are rightly ambitious for further improvement.
- Significantly, the deputy headteacher in charge of achievement holds very regular meetings with faculty and subject leaders to ensure that all students are making progress, with an expectation that nothing but at least good progress is good enough.
- The school's high expectations extend to attendance, where better systems have been implemented to raise attendance in a fundamental first step to moving it to above average. Students have responded to the strict uniform guide, reinforcing the ethos of high standards in behaviour, attendance and achievement.
- The leadership of teaching by the senior assistant headteacher is very good. Teaching and learning are checked very regularly and the deputy headteacher meets frequently with other leaders of learning to check students' achievement. Any teaching which is less effective is, therefore, identified quickly and support put in place.
- Teachers' performance targets are powerful in improving teaching and leadership because they focus on areas that individual teachers and leaders need to strengthen in order to increase the speed of students' progress.
- Leadership at other levels, including middle leadership, is generally effective, including in the sixth form and for disabled students and those with special educational needs. Systems are carefully planned, implemented and checked. The leader responsible for pupil premium provision is ensuring that funding is used increasingly effectively. The gap in attainment between these students and the other groups of students in the school continues to be successfully narrowed. Leaders' attention is starting to focus more sharply on narrowing the gaps in progress for the most able disadvantaged students.
- Senior leaders have identified and are tackling some inconsistency in teaching in the regularity and detail of faculty and subject leaders' checking of the quality of presentation of students' work. This has resulted in some teaching not helping students to learn as well as they could or preparing them fully for the expectations of external examinations and employers. This includes a few variations in the quality of marking and the presentation of students' work between subjects which have either not been identified by leaders or not acted upon by the staff.
- The school has planned for the changes in the curriculum effectively so that the students have a well-balanced range of subjects, matching the needs of all groups of students. Teachers are using the new assessment system in most year groups and the students understand it. Students enjoy lessons overall, which provide well for their academic and personal development. They really enjoy the good range of opportunities to participate in lunchtime and after-school activities. Careers information and guidance ensures that the students make informed decisions about option choices and destinations after Year 11.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding and good relations are promoted well. British values, such as democracy, are incorporated through a programme of citizenship that is broad ranging, including visiting other countries to help improve people's lives through teaching them and helping to construct a water supply. Students' preparation for the future is supported well by work and enterprise skills.
- There is no discrimination. Teaching and support ensure that all groups of students can now achieve equally well in their courses.
- Safeguarding systems meet requirements and are effective. They extend to those students who learn off-site whose attendance, behaviour and progress are checked regularly and who consequently are successful in their courses.
- The school's links with local primary schools helps staff to know the needs of the students before they join Year 7, in order to ensure a quick start to their learning. The headteacher and staff appreciate the partnership with parents, including their role on the parents' focus group in discussing the school's future plans. The school has the support of most parents in all aspects of its work and the headteacher is keen to

ensure that all parents feel there is good communication between home and school about all matters.

- The local authority reviews the school's performance regularly and is very supportive in ensuring that its drive to ensure the good progress of all groups is sustained and effective.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governors are effective in helping the school to drive improvements and in holding it to account because they know the school very well and have the skills to do so.
- Governors have supported the school in addressing issues in English and mathematics after the previous inspection, which they knew were aggravated by the instability of staffing as well as some teaching that was just not good enough to help the students to learn well.
- The governing body keeps a close eye on all aspects of the school's work, including the curriculum and the new model for it, as well as attendance, which they know for some students is not what it should be.
- The governors are provided with wide-ranging information about the school's performance but their capacity to help steer it successfully forward is far more due to what they find out about the school for themselves. They hold the school to account through links with individual leaders and very regular meetings with senior leaders, all of which have a clear agenda and follow-up sessions. Several governors have a good understanding of data about students' performance, which helps them to fulfil their roles effectively.
- The school's budget is very carefully managed to ensure that it both balances and provides a quality education for every student.
- The governing body speaks accurately of the impact of the school's work on the achievement and well-being of disadvantaged students, which are now improving as a result of the school's priority.
- Governors also know the processes and importance of performance management in driving improvements in teaching and do not agree to pay rises for staff unless they meet all of their targets.
- Governors understand the school's teaching quality to be good, but know there are a few inconsistencies, which they are checking are being addressed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Students' behaviour around the site, including in the dining hall, is sensible, calm and polite. Movement is orderly between lessons and at the end of the day to the buses that some of them travel in, to and from school.
- In lessons, students generally behave well and are keen to learn well. They settle quickly and organise themselves well. The exception is if work is too easy or too hard; this then often is when a few students lose focus and learn more slowly. Students confirm this to be the case. They also say that the staff deal quickly with any inattention and that the behaviour policy helps them to do this.
- Students like their school, including the chances they have to be involved in activities outside of lessons. Students value having responsibilities, such as being house captains and tutor and school council representatives. They feel their voice is heard and makes a positive difference, such as getting new lockers for the school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students, staff and parents agree that the school is a safe place to be. Students say there is little bullying because the staff, who they trust to help them, deal with any 'falling-out' promptly.
- Students support each other because they know it is the right way to behave.
- Students are aware of potential dangers, particularly when using the internet. They have not had specific teaching about the problems caused by extremism or radicalisation but they recognise inequalities in society and understand that unfairness can cause problems in society.
- Students attending courses away from the school site are safe because the school has good practical arrangements and checks in place to check they get there safely and remain safe and behave well.
- Attendance is now improving but remains broadly average. The school's increasingly good systems to monitor and address absence are starting to come through, particularly lower down the school. An above-average proportion of students are regularly absent from school and it is this that is the major issue in holding attendance rates down. Rewards help to remind students of the importance of good attendance in

making quicker progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Much teaching through all three key stages is good, including in English and mathematics, with some that is outstanding. As a result students' learning and progress are improving quickly.
- The scene for learning is set well by the good relationships between students and between students and the staff. Students are responding well to more settled staffing, particularly in mathematics, and are now making more rapid progress in understanding challenging concepts and in acquiring the knowledge and skills typical for their age.
- Teaching is very well structured so that students build-up their skills effectively through each lesson. Students like the way that teachers share with them at the outset of new topics 'learning journeys', which detail what they will learn over a sequence of lessons.
- Other common strengths include teachers' good subject knowledge and links to developing students' literacy in many lessons, which reinforce students' skills in reading and writing. The school is ensuring there are growing links to numeracy in a range of lessons. This was evidenced, for example, in several science lessons.
- There are many opportunities for students to develop study skills and to discuss what they are doing and why, with other students. This not only quickens their progress but also promotes their evaluative skills.
- A group of Year 9 students made very quick progress in a history lesson in developing their knowledge and understanding of the extent to which different groups opposed the Nazis during the 1930s and 40s. They learned very well by discussing their ideas with their peers and justifying them. They articulated their thoughts confidently and clearly to the rest of the class.
- Students read a lot, including in tutor time and in lessons. The library is timetabled for lessons and the rate of book borrowing by students has quadrupled in the last three months, following the library's makeover.
- Marking often helps students to learn at a good rate because it tells them exactly what to do to improve. There is some variability in the quality of marking however; not all students respond to teachers' comments in the marking of their work.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are supported well in lessons. They make progress in many lessons because of the individual guidance provided by the learning support assistants, who know exactly what the students need to learn and help them to achieve it. Nevertheless, some teaching is not consistently strong enough to ensure that these students make consistently good or better progress over time.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students achieve well, including in English and mathematics throughout Key Stages 3 and 4, as well as in the sixth form, because much teaching is good with some that is outstanding, and they are keen to learn.
- Standards have improved, are in line with those nationally and continue to rise. The school's data, backed up by lesson observations and the checking of students' work show that they are learning the skills and knowledge expected of their age, with many students working at levels that are above average. Increasingly students' attainment, particularly in mathematics, is rising rapidly throughout the school. This year, attainment in English and mathematics has increased with more students working at the standards expected of the highest grades.
- Since the fall in achievement after the last inspection, the rate of students' progress has increased throughout the school. Last year, a large proportion of students were entered early for GCSE English and mathematics examinations. When comparing those results with the published national average for students achieving five good GCSE grades, it would appear the students did not attain well. However, these students performed much better when they re-sat their examinations at the end of Year 11. Almost all students now study courses for the full two years before first sitting GCSE examinations.
- Published data showed that in subjects such as French, Spanish and history, students achieved very well and inspection evidence confirmed the strong teaching in these and other areas, such as science.
- The improving rate of progress has been facilitated by the robust work of leaders who assess the learning of all students very regularly and ensure that support is put in place to help those at risk of underachieving. School data and inspection evidence show that a greater proportion of students are now making faster progress in English and mathematics to meet more challenging targets. In English, a greater

proportion of Year 10 and 11 students are on track to make better than expected progress; their rate of progress in mathematics is rapidly catching up.

- Lower down the school, where the good systems and detailed tracking of all groups of students have been in place from Year 7, students are making increasingly quick progress.
- Expectations of students' progress are high so there is a much greater focus on the proportion of students making better than expected progress throughout the school. This includes boys, who form a larger proportion of the cohort than girls. The achievement of average-ability students is also a focus because they made slower progress last year. This year, the school's evidence and work in students' books points to an improvement. Boys and girls achieve well.
- The performance of disadvantaged students has improved and more students are now making good progress. As a result there has been a three-year narrowing of the gap in attainment between them and other students in both English and mathematics. In 2014, disadvantaged students attained half-a-grade behind other students in English and three-quarters of a grade behind in mathematics. Compared to other students nationally, disadvantaged students were just over half a grade behind in English and a grade behind in mathematics. In 2014, the rates of progress of disadvantaged students were similar to other students nationally in English but slower in mathematics. The school knows that the proportion of disadvantaged students making better than expected progress remains below other students in the school and nationally in both subjects. Further improving the achievement of this group of students, including the most able disadvantaged students, to ensure they achieve as well as possible continues to be a key school priority.
- Some disabled students and those with special educational needs make variable progress. Some of the students cannot attend school regularly enough to learn well. As a result of careful analysis of their achievement, support has become more focused and is quickly implemented. As a result students make better progress in securing their English and mathematical skills, although rates of progress remain relatively slower than for other groups of students.
- Overall, the most able students learn well because in many lessons they are challenged to think hard and to critically evaluate what they are thinking. They are developing good skills in applying their knowledge in, for example, mathematics. Increasingly they are expected to apply their skills in unfamiliar settings in a range of subjects.
- Students of all abilities read regularly, such as in tutor time. The school has rich data to show the good progress, especially of those who find reading difficult.
- Those students who have not reached the expected standards in English and mathematics by the end of primary school, receive specific help, such as one-to-one support through catch-up funding in Year 7 to enable them to do this. By the end of Year 7, the majority of students reach the standards expected of them in English and the large majority do so in mathematics. The remainder make good progress towards the targets set for them.
- Students who learn off-site make better progress in their courses because the courses are carefully selected to meet their needs and interests. As a result of the skills and qualifications they gain many students stay in education and training.

The sixth form provision

is good

- All students go on to join the sixth form, further education, or go into training. Students make good progress by the end of Year 13 because the quality of teaching and support and the leadership of the sixth form are good.
- The majority of students in Year 11 go on to join Year 12. This figure is set to increase further in September 2015 and the large majority stay on into Year 13. Not all students in the sixth form have passed both English and mathematics examinations with at least C grades so they re-sit one or both of these. The students who did not reach at least a C grade continue to study for the qualification.
- Students' progress accelerates through their courses because teaching is consistently good; they enjoy lessons and find them interesting. They develop good skills of enquiry through questioning by staff and learning and researching for themselves. By the end of Year 13, standards are above average.
- Students value the good support and guidance they receive. They have regular tutorials with their personal tutor in order to discuss their progress, which is tracked regularly, as well as their plans for the future.
- Students are good role models to the rest of the school in respect of the British values that they demonstrate and in their sensible and mature behaviour. This includes leading election debates, in the run up to the general election. They support younger students who need help to secure their numeracy and

reading skills and they raise money for those who are less fortunate for themselves.

- The programme in the sixth form to help ensure that students are fully prepared for life after school and their roles as responsible young citizens is not sufficiently structured or broad. It does though have strengths in careers education and in providing information to help ensure their safety. Students are kept safe.
- At the end of Year 13, all students enter higher or further education, go into training or get a job. Almost all who applied to university last year were successful in getting into their first choice.

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	108091
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	461881

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
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	1,037
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Hall
Headteacher	Christopher Walsh
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2012
Telephone number	01937 846636
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