

Theale Green School

Theale, Reading, RG7 5DA

Inspection dates

11–12 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Not all teachers have high enough expectations of students and the result is that students are not always motivated to achieve their best.
- Some teachers do not insist that students take pride in the presentation of their work.
- Not all teachers use the information about students' progress to plan work that meets the needs of all groups.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs do not achieve as well as they could. The most-able students do not all attain the highest grades.
- Some teachers do not regularly provide students with clear guidance about how they could improve or extend their work.
- Not all teachers provide opportunities for students to reflect and act on the advice about how to improve their work.
- Disadvantaged students do not make as much progress in mathematics as they do in English.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher provides inspirational and determined leadership for this rapidly improving school. She has significantly raised staff morale and there is now a positive working atmosphere in the school. Students' behaviour has improved significantly and staff feel well supported.
- The headteacher, well supported by senior leaders and governors, has taken decisive action to eliminate any inadequate teaching.
- The new systems for tracking and monitoring students' progress lead to accurate and reliable identification of students who are at risk of underachieving.
- Students' behaviour around the school and at social times is good. They are polite and courteous, wear their uniforms with pride and show respect for their school.
- Students say that they feel safe at school. Attendance has improved and fixed-term exclusions are rapidly reducing.
- Middle leadership has been strengthened. These leaders are helping to maintain improvements in students' behaviour and to raise standards across almost all subjects.
- Governance is very effective. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and remaining areas for development. They hold leaders to good account. This is having a good impact on the quality of teaching.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Teaching in the sixth form is good and students make good progress to achieve well in a range of subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students' learning and behaviour in 28 lessons, including 15 which were observed jointly with school staff. Inspectors also made a number of shorter visits to lessons to observe the work of teaching assistants.
- Inspectors visited tutor groups and conducted a separate scrutiny of students' work in their books.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teachers, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Telephone conversations were also held with the School Improvement Partner and with the local authority's virtual headteacher for children in care.
- Meetings were held with groups of students from most year groups. Additionally, an inspector listened to a sample of students read, and observed students with autistic spectrum disorder talking to a member of staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of documents relating to aspects of the school's work, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, behaviour records, safeguarding records, governing body documents, information about students' achievement and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- Inspectors considered the 62 responses submitted by parents to the online survey (Parent View). They also considered the school's own survey of parents, letters from parents received by the school prior to the inspection and one comment submitted by a parent during the course of the inspection.
- Inspectors also considered the views of the 34 members of staff who completed the Ofsted questionnaire.

Inspection team

Caroline Dearden, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Ann Short	Additional Inspector
Beverley Murtagh	Additional Inspector
Harry Kutty	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Theale Green School is larger than the average-sized secondary school. It has a sixth form.
- The school opened as an academy in September 2013. It is a sponsor academy; the lead school is Bradfield College, which is an independent school with boarding provision.
- When the predecessor school, Theale Green Community School, was last inspected by Ofsted in October 2012, it was judged to be inadequate and placed in special measures.
- The headteacher was appointed in February 2015, having joined the school in September 2014 as the interim headteacher. All other senior leaders, apart from the head of sixth form, have been appointed since September 2014.
- There have been considerable changes in teaching staff since the appointment of the headteacher. This includes those in senior and middle leadership positions.
- The majority of students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported through the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The school has specially resourced provision for up to 14 students with autistic spectrum disorders. The provision is funded by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for Year 11 students' progress and attainment in English and mathematics.
- A small number of students attend alternative work-related education off-site at Newbury College. A small number of Key Stage 4 students attend The Key for additional support for their behaviour.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, and thereby raise students' achievement, by ensuring that all teachers consistently:
 - set high expectations for students which ensure that all have greater aspirations and are motivated to achieve their best
 - insist that all students take pride in the presentation of their work
 - use information about students' achievement to match work set to the needs of the different groups of students in each class
 - provide regular feedback to students that clearly identifies the steps they need to take to improve or extend their work
 - provide opportunities for students to reflect and act on the advice given about how to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides inspirational and determined leadership for this rapidly improving school. Staff feel very well supported and morale is now good. Teachers have faith and confidence in the headteacher to lead further developments in the school. There is a shared vision to provide the best education possible for all students, regardless of background or ability.
- The headteacher is very well supported by senior leaders and governors to make difficult staffing decisions. The overall standard of teaching is improving because strong action has been taken to eradicate inadequate teaching.
- Leaders have recognised that expectations for students' achievement were previously too low. New procedures for setting targets for students have been introduced, and these are helping to raise teachers' expectations of students across the school. However, the full impact on students' achievement has yet to be seen.
- The system for tracking students' achievement has been simplified and is now easier for teachers to understand. Teachers' assessments of students' progress are now routinely checked to ensure that they are accurate. Consequently, those students who are at risk of underachieving are now identified quickly and get the help they need to catch up.
- The leadership of teaching is strong, and effective use has been made of the recently introduced appraisal procedures to eradicate inadequate teaching and to share good practice within and across departments. The quality of teaching is therefore improving quickly.
- Training and development for staff, including teaching assistants, has been well matched to the school's priorities. Teachers have a better understanding of how to use information about students' progress to plan work that motivates and engages them in their learning. However, this is not yet consistent across the school. In particular, the progress of the most-able students and those who are disabled or who have special educational needs is not yet good.
- Senior leaders have worked effectively as a team with pastoral middle leaders to address previously poor standards of behaviour and to improve attendance. Behaviour and safety are now good. This is endorsed by the views of parents.
- Middle leadership has been strengthened and is now effective. New heads of department have been appointed for English, mathematics, science and music. Subject leaders now use information about students' progress more effectively and this is helping them to hold teachers more robustly to account for students' progress.
- The school's self-evaluation reflects the significant improvements that have taken place in a short period of time. It also accurately identifies the areas for further development. There is an honest understanding that many of the good strategies for enhancing the school's performance have yet to have full impact on students' achievement.
- Governors, together with the sponsor school, regularly monitor and evaluate the improvements to the school in order to ensure that the rapid pace of improvement is sustained.
- The curriculum includes all statutory subjects and meets the needs of students, as demonstrated by the low numbers not in education, employment or training when they leave the school. Effective action has been taken to reduce the financial impact of very small class sizes in option subjects and in the sixth form. Good use has been made of the partnership with the sponsor school to share teaching and maintain a broad range of subjects.
- Students are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Assemblies and the personal development programme include a wide variety of opportunities for students to learn about the rule of law, the importance of democracy, how to keep themselves safe and to debate moral or emotive issues.
- During their ethics and philosophy lessons, students learn about different faiths, cultures and beliefs, and this means that they are appreciative of diversity. Good use has been made of the local 'Prevent' team to teach students about the potential impact of radicalisation or extremism.
- There are very good opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. The very impressive exhibition of students' art work demonstrates their empathy for others and their good understanding of different cultures. Extra-curricular activities are well attended and enjoyed by students.
- The additional government funding is now well managed and effective action to raise the achievement of disadvantaged students has been taken. These students are now well known by staff and the actions to accelerate their progress are accurately matched to their individual needs. The achievement of disadvantaged students is improving; however, it is more rapid in English than in mathematics.
- Leaders take effective action to tackle discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity. Incidents of

racist or homophobic behaviour are rare; the use of fixed-term exclusions is diminishing rapidly and the persistent absenteeism of disadvantaged students has been dramatically reduced. Children in the care of the local authority are very well supported to participate in the full range of school activities, including trips and visits.

- The Year 7 catch-up funding has been used effectively to improve the skills of those students who have fallen behind with their reading when at primary school. The recently introduced strategies to encourage students' reading are starting to increase their desire to read for pleasure.
- Students receive high-quality careers advice and guidance which helps them to make appropriate choices for their GCSE options, for post-16 education and for their lives beyond school. The number of students securing places at universities is increasing.
- The arrangements for safeguarding students are effective and meet all statutory requirements. The school site is safe and secure. Risk assessments are rigorously carried out for all trips and visits. Students are very effectively taught how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when using the internet.
- The school is currently under a financial notice to improve due to the predecessor school's deficit budget. Effective plans to quickly reduce the deficit are in place and all spending is now robustly monitored to ensure maximum impact on educational provision. The school is currently undergoing a restructuring of the support staffing and this, together with curriculum reforms, is having a considerable impact on the school's financial efficiency.
- There are effective links between school leaders and the leaders of Newbury College and The Key. This means that the progress, behaviour and attendance of students attending part of their education off-site are routinely closely monitored.
- The school has taken effective action to improve communication with parents. Most would now recommend the school to other parents.
- The local authority has provided good support for the school. Leaders participate in county-wide networks and this is helping to improving the quality of teaching thorough the sharing of good practice.
- The sponsor school and the School Improvement Partner provide a very good level of challenge which enables leaders, including governors, to ensure high levels of accountability across all aspects of the school's work.
- The leadership of the sixth form is strong and this ensures teaching of good quality and high standards of achievement.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is very effective. The governing body has been reorganised into committees that are led by very skilled and experienced governors. The Chair has recently taken up post. There is a rich variety of professional skills and expertise among governors which they use very well to hold leaders to account for school developments and for sustaining the rapid pace of improvements. The headteacher of the sponsor school is a member of the governing body and this ensures effective communication and strong accountability.
- Governors have supported the headteacher to introduce a system for the management of staff performance that is seen to be open, honest and fair. This has had a strong impact on improving staff morale. Governors have a very good understanding of the impact of the quality of teaching on students' achievement. They rigorously oversee the headteacher's recommendations for pay progression and have provided good support for the headteacher when difficult staffing decisions have been necessary.
- Governors have a good understanding of the way in which the additional government funding is now being managed to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged students. They know that the gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged students and others are narrowing more quickly in English than in mathematics.
- Governors receive a range of detailed information about the achievement of students. They use this information to hold senior and middle leaders to account for the quality of teaching and for improving students' attitudes towards learning.
- Governors have produced a very effective plan for addressing the predecessor school's deficit. They use their financial skills and expertise to monitor school spending robustly while also ensuring that high quality, skilled and appropriately qualified staff are recruited.

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

- The behaviour of students is good. Students behave well around the school site and at social times. They are polite, courteous and respectful towards staff and each other. Break and lunchtimes are calm and orderly, and students are punctual to lessons.
- Students have pride in their school, as demonstrated by the neat and tidy way in which they wear their uniform, the way they welcome visitors and the lack of litter and graffiti around the school site.
- The students who spoke to inspectors said that disruption to lessons has been significantly reduced as a consequence of improving teaching and a more stringent and consistent application of school rules. Where staff have high expectations of students, for example as seen in a Year 7 science lesson about the speed of sound, they engage very well, enjoy their learning and there is a real 'buzz' in the classroom.
- Bullying has been greatly reduced and is now rare. Students say that when it does happen it is dealt with quickly and effectively by staff.
- Behaviour has improved rapidly in a very short period of time. In discussions with inspectors, students said that relationships between students are now harmonious and that they hold many staff in high regard. This was verified by inspectors' observations of students' behaviour.
- The school's behaviour records show a significant reduction in fixed-term exclusions and removal from lessons. Racist, homophobic or violent incidents are now very rare.
- The behaviour and attendance of students who attend alternative education off-site is good because of careful tracking by school staff who are in regular contact with college staff. Those students who attend The Key for support with their behaviour are successfully reintegrated into mainstream school.
- Behaviour is not outstanding. Where teaching is less than good, some students lose interest on occasions in what they are learning.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. This includes those who attend Newbury College or The Key on a part-time basis.
- The school site is safe and secure. Fencing and gates that are locked during school hours prevent unwanted persons from accessing the premises. Visitors' identity is thoroughly checked before they are allowed into the school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding students, including child protection procedures, have been strengthened and are now good. The way in which new staff are recruited involves robust checks. Measures to prevent unsuitable persons working with children are meticulously and routinely carried out.
- Key staff have been trained to recognise the signs of female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation and domestic abuse. This means that any child at potential risk of harm is quickly identified and safeguarded.
- Students feel safe at the school and this view is endorsed by parents and staff. Pastoral care is very strong and students know who to go to if they have any problems or concerns. Staff with responsibility for child protection are clearly publicised around the school and students have good understanding of their role in keeping them safe.
- Students have a good understanding about how to keep themselves safe. They are effectively taught about the risks associated with substance misuse and with sexual activity. Students are also taught how to recognise potential grooming or child sexual exploitation when online; they have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and social media.
- Attendance is rising and is now average. The previously very high persistent absenteeism of disadvantaged students has been dramatically reduced.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- Teaching over time has not been good enough to enable students to make good progress and achieve well in some subjects, most notably in science.
- Strong action has been taken to eradicate teaching that was inadequate and this means that a number of posts are currently covered by temporary staff. However, the school will be fully staffed with well-qualified teachers from September 2015. This includes use of high quality teachers from the sponsor school to make up shortfalls where recruitment has been difficult.

- Not all teachers have high enough expectations for students' achievement. When students are not encouraged to have high aspirations or are not sufficiently challenged to achieve their best, their progress slows.
- Furthermore, not all teachers insist that students take sufficient pride in the presentation of their work.
- The information about students' progress is not used consistently well by all teachers. As a result, the work set is sometimes not well matched to the needs of the different groups of students in each class. Poor match of work sometimes slows progress, especially for the most able or for those who are disabled or who have special educational needs.
- The focus on marking and feedback to students has increased since the appointment of the headteacher. When teachers routinely provide students with precise guidance which identifies the steps they need to take to improve or extend their work, marking has strong impact on accelerating students' progress. In these positive instances, teachers also expect students to reflect and act on the advice given. However, this good practice is not yet consistent across the school.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. The result is that many are able to extend students' learning through skilled questioning.
- Mathematics teaching is improving but is not yet consistently good. Consequently, the gap between the progress and attainment of disadvantaged students and others in the school is not closing as quickly as it is in English.
- The teaching of literacy and reading across the school is developing well. Students are routinely supported to develop their understanding of subject-specific words and this helps them to write accurately and in detail, for example when completing assessments in science.
- The school does not yet provide students with good opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in other subjects. For this reason, students' mathematical skills do not develop as quickly as their literacy skills or their competence in reading.
- Most teaching assistants provide good support for students with additional needs. Recent training is beginning to give teaching assistants increased confidence to accelerate students' achievement as well as to help them to develop positive attitudes towards learning.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because not all groups of students are doing as well as they could.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs in Years 10 and 11 do not make the same good progress as their peers. This is because expectations for their achievement have not been consistently high enough. The support provided by teaching assistants has not always concentrated on accelerating these students' progress. However, the picture is much more positive for students in Years 7 to 9 where progress is good.
- The most-able students are sometimes not challenged to achieve the highest grades and this means that they do not make as much progress as they could.
- Students in most year groups enter the school with broadly average prior attainment. In 2014, the proportion of students who achieved at least five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics was above the national average. This represents good progress in a range of subjects.
- In 2014, the overall proportion of students who made the expected rate of progress in English and mathematics was similar to the national figure. However, teachers' low expectations for the achievement of lower ability and middle ability students in the predecessor school meant that too few of these students made expected progress. The new procedures for setting aspirational targets for all students' achievement have yet to have a full impact on outcomes.
- In 2014, disadvantaged students did not make as much progress or achieve as well as others in the school. On average, they were one-and-a-half grades behind in English and one-and-three-quarters grades behind in mathematics. Compared to other students nationally, they were one grade behind in English and one-and-three-quarters grades behind in mathematics.
- The school now uses the additional government funding to match help and support more precisely to individual students' needs. The school is putting greater emphasis on the achievement of disadvantaged students, and all teachers are expected to quickly identify those at risk of underachieving. Information provided by the school shows that the progress of disadvantaged students is improving. The gap between their attainment and that of others in the school is narrowing, particularly in Years 7 to 9 and in English. However, the gap in attainment is not closing as rapidly in mathematics.
- Students are now making better progress in science than in the past. The school is addressing previous low achievement through improved teaching and strengthened leadership of the subject.

- Students entering the school in Year 7 with low literacy attainment receive additional support funded by the 'catch-up' fund. By the end of Year 7, almost all students work securely within the expected level in English. The school has not yet fully implemented arrangements to improve these students' mathematical attainment.
- Students with autistic spectrum disorder who attend the specialist provision on-site achieve very well in their GCSE, AS and A-level examinations. This is because the support they receive helps them to have the confidence to work by themselves; all develop in their ability to make and sustain friendships. Many move on to academic courses at university.
- The school does not enter students early for their GCSE examinations.
- Students attending alternative education off-site make good progress because the courses they follow are well matched to their needs, talents and aspirations.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Students make good progress in the sixth form. In almost all A-level subjects, attainment is at least in line with national averages and, in a number of subjects, it is high. In vocational and applied subjects, attainment is above national averages.
- Students who do not attain GCSE grades A* to C in English and mathematics are given good support and all are successful when they retake examinations in these subjects.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers have strong subject knowledge of which they make good use to plan interesting work that engages students in learning and motivates them to achieve well.
- Students enjoy being in the sixth form. A high proportion of students join the sixth form from Year 11, and almost all are retained from Year 12 into Year 13. The relationships between sixth form students and their teachers are strong. Students appreciate the help and advice provided by their teachers and know that expectations of them are high. This has a strong impact on students' good progress.
- Students in the sixth form are safe and secure when at school. They behave very well and act as positive role models for younger students. Their attendance at school and punctuality to lessons are good.
- Effective leadership of the sixth form ensures good quality teaching and high standards of achievement. Students' progress is tracked regularly and high quality guidance provides them with good support to achieve their targets. The curriculum is very broad. Good use is made of the partnership with the sponsor school to extend the choice available to students where very small class sizes would make it financially difficult to offer some subjects.

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	139938
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	450308
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1,093
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dudley Fishburn
Headteacher	Sally Beeson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
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