

Easthampstead Park Community School

Ringmead, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 8FS

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| Inspection dates | 8–9 June 2016 |
| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| 16 to 19 study programmes | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and the senior leadership team's work has borne fruit this year. Teaching, pupils' behaviour and their willingness to learn have all improved since the previous inspection.
- The governing body blends its full support for the headteacher's approach to education with detailed analysis and challenge of the school's work.
- Progress in English has been well above average for the last two years.
- Most teachers use their good subject knowledge effectively. They assess standards accurately and give pupils clear feedback on how well they are doing. They prepare them well for examinations.
- The sixth form is good with improving progress and results in work-related and academic courses. Students mature into thoughtful young adults.
- Pastoral care is of a high quality. Experienced and knowledgeable teachers and staff make sure that pupils receive whatever support they need.
- The development of pupils' knowledge and understanding of spiritual, moral, social, cultural and topical issues permeates the school's work.
- Pupils feel safe, enjoy school and make the most of the rich opportunities it offers beyond the academic curriculum.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some pupils struggle to remember the basic numeracy skills they need to make rapid progress in mathematics; a gap remains between the progress disadvantaged pupils make in mathematics and that made by other pupils.
- In several subjects too few pupils, especially the most able, attain high GCSE or A level grades.
- Attendance is below the national average.
- A few teachers lack insight into how to generate outstanding learning and do not have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Consistency in how teachers and teams develop pupils' progress further has yet to be fully established.
- Progress is not equally good for all sixth formers.
- A small minority of pupils do not present their work legibly and neatly.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement, by:
 - strengthening pupils' knowledge, application and memory of fundamental numeracy skills and mathematical concepts
 - insisting that pupils, particularly boys, write legibly and present their work neatly in all subjects
 - increasing the percentage of pupils, particularly the most able, who attain the highest outcomes in GCSE and A-level examinations
 - striving to eliminate the progress gap, especially in mathematics, between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school and others nationally
 - persevering with the actions being taken to bring attendance up to national levels.

- Develop leadership and management, by:
 - sharing the middle leadership expertise that already exists in some departments
 - establishing consistency within and between subjects, particularly those with new leaders, in how teachers develop their curricula and teaching so that pupils of all abilities can flourish
 - intensifying the high-quality training for teachers so they all understand the characteristics of outstanding learning and have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since her appointment, the headteacher has focused on making sure that all pupils feel safe, happy and confident so that they learn well. This did not happen overnight but it is now apparent in pupils' much-improved behaviour and their positive response to the good teaching they receive. A parent wrote that 'my expectations have been exceeded and my three children actually enjoy going to school'.
- Since the beginning of this academic year, the senior leadership team has become very competent, cohesive and effective. Consistency in dealing with poor behaviour and increasingly successful care for pupils' welfare underpin the school's peaceful atmosphere within which learning is predominantly good. Almost 90% of the teachers who responded to the questionnaire feel proud to be members of staff. Staff share governors' and leaders' determination to keep improving and pupils have increasingly higher aspirations for their futures.
- Leadership and management are not outstanding because some improvements have not been in place long enough to raise standards to where they should be. Keen new middle leaders have yet to mirror the successful departments such as English, physical education and technology. In these subjects, experienced staff collaborate and adapt their curricula and teaching in response to pupils' varied abilities and interests.
- Improved collection and analysis of information about pupils' progress has led to quicker and more accurate identification of pupils who fall behind and the precise actions being put in place to support them. The school monitors and verifies the accuracy of its predictions rigorously by working with other schools and external consultants. The school's predictions for improved GCSE results in 2016 are both more secure than they were in 2015 and more encouraging.
- In addition, none of the factors which contributed to the poor progress in some of the 2015 GCSE subjects have been repeated this year. For example, the school identified that it was the wrong decision to enter pupils for the core science GCSE examination at the end of Year 10; science leadership has since changed. Major unpredicted staffing issues, affecting the quality of teaching and outcomes in a few subjects, were beyond the senior leaders' control; they coped as well as possible.
- Supporting the local authority's push to raise standards in mathematics in its primary schools, Easthampstead teachers have worked in several local primary schools. This has given them a useful insight into how best to deploy catch-up funds to support Year 7 pupils who have weak numeracy skills. Catch-up funds are used equally effectively in English.
- The allocation of funding for disadvantaged pupils, which has been tighter and more successful this year, has also contributed to literacy training for groups of Year 7 and 8 pupils. Close to 70% of pupils made rapid progress over seven months. Funds have also been used to raise the most able disadvantaged pupils' aspirations (attending a university languages event, for example) or for careers advice for any pupils at risk of not moving into education, employment or training. Financial support for participation in valuable extra-curricular trips has improved pupils' subject knowledge but also strengthened their confidence and enjoyment in learning.
- The curriculum is now good with a stronger focus on academic subjects but an equally well-considered choice of BTECs and creative subjects, such as dance and photography. A Skill Force qualification has been very successful for pupils who find academic work challenging. Only a handful of pupils studied a modern foreign language for GCSE in the past. Changes to how Year 7 and 8 pupils experience languages has led to three classes of pupils choosing to study French or Spanish in September 2016 when key stage 4 starts in Year 9. Stimulating workshops for the most able pupils are built into the curriculum.
- There is a comprehensive range of extra-curricular activities, regular charity events and trips and visits. Topics included in interesting 'criss-cross' days have covered sustainable transport, robotics, how historic events shaped British culture, jobs within the civil service and learning cardiopulmonary resuscitation. These strengthen pupils' development into becoming good citizens. Having well-established links within the community, outside speakers such as the police and health professionals also contribute much to pupils' well-being and preparation for life in modern Britain.
- Validated by staff from the local authority and other schools, senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning accurately. They use the outcomes to inform the high-quality, personalised training provided for all staff. This includes encouraging and sharing research, a selection of practical short training sessions and support for external courses. Sharing good practice within the school and with other schools is increasing and has much potential to improve teaching further.

- Senior leaders also welcome a wide range of external support, working with new middle leaders and teachers and helping where there are staffing issues. The headteacher of a local school that has supported Easthampstead describes her admiration for the 'great resilience and effectiveness of the school's work'.
- Leaders strive to involve parents in their children's education. Many more parents than previously attend parents events and discussion evenings. Revamping the website and the introduction of Facebook, especially where these show descriptions of successful activities, are attracting parents' interest. The school has the local authority's support to work towards the Leading Parents Partnership Award, which it last achieved in 2010.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The previous inspection report and subsequent monitoring visits referred to the governing body's strengths and members' resolute support for the headteacher. They continue to evaluate all initiatives, probe the 'laser-sharp' data they receive and know exactly what still needs to be done. Aware of the issues behind the disappointing 2015 results, they rightly remained confident that the school was on an upward path. A parent governor describes how 'staff are honest and provide us with the detailed information we need to assess, challenge and support them'.
 - Governors bring a wealth of relevant professional experience to their deliberations including data analysis, special educational needs, human resources and working with 16–19-year-old students. Their financial acumen is sharp, as are the regular updates senior leaders write for them.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Recruitment information and personal information about staff, pupils and families is detailed and follows all recommended national procedures and policies. Several members of staff commented on the 'robustness' of training and the regular updates they receive. The school works closely with outside agencies to ensure the safety and welfare of all pupils, particularly children looked after and those with child protection plans. The school's website gives parents much helpful information and contact details should they have any safeguarding concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers' good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their subjects have contributed to most pupils being positive about learning. Other factors include stimulating resources that generate interest and thinking, and thoughtful lesson planning so that new work flows smoothly. Until this year, the school's computer set-up was unreliable. Teachers now use the efficient, updated system to prepare presentations and pupils and parents access materials easily online. This has improved learning in many ways.
- In many subjects, pupils know what they need to do to improve their work because most teachers follow the school's marking policy well. The policy includes 'dedicated improvement and reflection time' when pupils absorb and respond to written comments on their work.
- Practice tests and examinations start in Year 7 so that pupils get used to working in silence and to time. In a science lesson, the teacher reinforced the most able pupils' understanding of the difference between 'describe' and 'explain' by using the story of Goldilocks. In another class, Year 12 students were on hand to help lower attaining pupils' revision.
- A few pupils lack the self-discipline to check their answers when they feel they have finished a test, so some lesson time is unproductive. Most pupils write legibly and present their work neatly but this is not always the case, especially for boys.
- A successful English lesson started with the teacher saying, 'I am looking for three lines of genius from you'. This inspired equally good progress from disadvantaged, the most able and other pupils. Just occasionally teachers give the most able pupils work that is too easy for them or do not ask them probing and challenging questions.
- Most learning support assistants do a good job of knowing when to work with pupils and when to step aside. They deliver useful reading support sessions for small groups of pupils. Most teachers also help to develop pupils' reading and writing by exploring subject-specific or unfamiliar vocabulary. However, pupils do not practise writing at length often enough with legible handwriting and good spelling and grammar to tackle some examination questions confidently. The enthusiastic librarian contributes well to stimulating a love of reading in pupils.
- The focus on numeracy through other subjects is not as well developed although more teachers now check, for example, that pupils draw graphs accurately in science. Some middle leaders (in subjects other than in mathematics) acknowledge that they have yet to identify when they can strengthen pupils' confidence in this important area.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Several parents praised the high-quality care: 'My child has rarely missed a day due to the school nurse's excellent care' and 'The school caters for all my child's disabilities'. The designated teacher for children looked after has close links with their 'virtual headteacher'; these pupils are supported very well. The experienced and committed special educational needs coordinator does a great deal to combine academic and pastoral support to match these pupils' individual needs: 'Since joining the school I realise life can be better,' said one pupil.
- Well-organised tutor time, with topical quizzes, literacy and numeracy sessions and stimulating assemblies, give pupils a very good start to the day. Democracy featured strongly during the inspection with discussions about the EU referendum linked to the importance of voting for the school councils and parliament elections. Pupils described them as being effective and vibrant.
- Personal, social and health education promotes pupils' welfare very well by covering topics relevant to their future well-being. The programme to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues is equally effective. At the appropriate age, pupils learn about mental health, sex education and relationships and discuss pornography and child protection. Links to moral aspects of such topics are delivered sensitively. Year 10 pupils found mindfulness training helpful and its impact on how they tackled this term's examinations will be reviewed. Leaders are responding to their growing concern about some pupils' mental health by having a counsellor in school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Exclusions have fallen, and the inclusion room is an effective sanction where pupils do not miss work. Many pupils described the 'massive' improvements in recent years and referred to teachers dealing with behaviour issues consistently. They observed that there was still some 'silly' behaviour by a very small number of pupils but that teachers stopped it quickly and firmly.
- Attendance improved following the previous inspection but recently staff have struggled to keep it up to match national figures and to reduce the number of persistent absentees. Leaders analyse patterns, probe individual cases, work to get parental support and are determined to explore all avenues. The majority of pupils with special educational needs or disability attend well.
- The off-site provision attended by a very few pupils improves their attendance and behaviour significantly; they often return to school after six weeks. Year heads oversee their personal development, attend all meetings about their progress and have excellent links with the provider.
- No pupils have concerns about racism or bullying because they are so rare; a Year 7 pupil commented that bullying experienced in primary school had been resolved 'instantly here'. Pupils learn about e-safety, the dangers of social media and sharing selfies and discuss homophobia, for example. These topics prepare them well to be tolerant of others with different lifestyles.
- Many pupils relish the numerous ways they can take on roles of responsibility such as becoming computer science champions, digital leaders, performing arts ambassadors or joining the 'bike it' crew.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Pupils' progress in English was good at the time of the previous inspection. Their progress improved in 2014 and again in 2015 – the percentage of pupils attaining high grades was above that seen nationally in GCSE English language. In several other subjects including art, business studies and information technology, the percentage of pupils attaining GCSE grade C or above was above the national averages. Nevertheless, leaders are fully aware that the percentage of high GCSE grades is not as good as it should be.
- Outcomes in GCSE mathematics in 2015 were reasonably close to average but pupils' progress was not good because a number of them should have attained higher grades based on their starting points. Achievement in science was poor. The picture is very different this year because the quality of teaching and preparation for examination has improved in both subjects.
- Year 11 pupils have made good progress this year as have pupils in Years 7 to 10. However, some pupils lack confidence in basic numeracy and mathematical concepts, particularly those who started in Year 7 with below average standards. They find it hard to memorise and retain the essential information for them to make rapid progress.
- In 2015, disadvantaged pupils made almost exactly the same progress in English as others in the school and others nationally; both gaps have closed since the previous inspection. In mathematics, the small gap

between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school increased slightly but it narrowed a bit between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally. It is predicted to narrow again this year but it is still too large. In Years 7 to 10, disadvantaged pupils' progress is either the same or close to that made by others.

- A number of disadvantaged and other pupils attained A* to C grades in both English and mathematics in 2015 but had limited option-subject choices in 2013 and did not do as well in these subjects. The changes to the curriculum routes introduced in September 2014 underpin the school's confidence that 2016 results will be better. Based on the new Progress 8 measure being introduced for 2016 results, the school has calculated that it will go from a marginally negative outcome in 2015 to a positive one in 2016.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disability make at least the same, and sometimes better, progress than others. Those attending off-site provision do well; they follow a bespoke timetable which incorporates their GCSE options as well as English and mathematics.
- There is no pattern in outcomes by gender. In 2014, there were more girls than boys and boys did better than girls, in 2015 the opposite was the case. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well-supported and make rapid progress in English and mathematics.
- Pupils are well prepared for their post-16 choices with an increasing number opting to stay on into the sixth form. The local authority tracks the small number of pupils (none of whom were disadvantaged) who did not proceed into education, employment or training in 2015 and keeps in touch with the school.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The recently appointed, effective leader of the sixth form is improving provision and standards for all students. Excellent relationships between staff and students and among students flourish in the small sixth form; it looks set to grow in future years.
- Outcomes in work-related courses are strong and represent at least good progress from students' starting points. Outcomes in academic courses have not been consistently good but progress and results in A levels improved in 2015 with nearly half of the examinations taken being awarded A* to B grades.
- Sixth form teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Students, including those eligible for free school meals, make good progress and enjoy their lessons. They appreciate teachers' useful feedback and value having one-to-one guidance. They describe the teaching they receive as 'challenging'. Talking to students and visiting a few lessons, it is clear that they are very well prepared for their examinations.
- In the past, students who attained an average B grade in their GCSEs made better progress than those with lower average grades and boys did better than girls. The leader of the sixth form is very aware that it will not be outstanding until all students make the best possible progress. Staffing issues have now been resolved so there is stability, subject expertise and good teaching to tackle these differences. Girls have been monitored carefully this year and are predicted to do nearly as well as boys. Students' essay writing is improving but some still struggle to use academic language well.
- Study programmes meet national requirements and include worthwhile work or apprenticeship experience in Year 12. When possible, senior leaders add courses to match students' interests and requests, for example applied criminology is starting in September 2016. Safeguarding has a high profile and students discuss many current topics such as British values, e-safety and texting (thoughtfully delivered to male and female students separately). Their personal development and welfare has a high priority; it is well-planned and sensitively dealt with.
- Leaders make sure that those who need to retake GCSE English or mathematics have several lessons a week taught by experienced teachers. In English, three out of six students have already achieved grade C or better and two thirds of the 12 students resitting mathematics are predicted to do the same.
- Careers information and guidance is broad, useful and informative. All students have a session with an impartial adviser and a mock interview if it is relevant to their future plans. Retention rates between Years 12 and 13 are usually good. In 2015, all Year 13 students proceeded to further or higher education, employment or training. Against stiff competition, two students moved on to apprenticeships with prestigious companies.
- Most students attend regularly, with only a handful failing to meet the school's high expectations. Their behaviour is exemplary and they contribute much to school life. They support younger pupils in lessons and, interestingly, presented and discussed 'Prevent' duty strategies with them. For several students, staying on into the sixth form gives them time to mature in a familiar and supportive environment. They make the most of this time and leave well prepared for their future lives.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 110071 |
| Local authority | Bracknell Forest |
| Inspection number | 10012271 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 821 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 68 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Rene Rastall |
| Headteacher | Elizabeth Cook |
| Telephone number | 01344 304567 |
| Website | http://epschool.org |
| Email address | info@epschool.org |
| Date of previous inspection | 25–26 June 2016 |

Information about this school

- The school is a little smaller than the average sized school for 11–18-year-olds.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium is just above average. The pupil premium is funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for children looked after.
- The school receives additional funding for a small number of pupils in Year 7 who had not achieved level 4 in reading and/or mathematics at the end of primary school.
- An above average proportion, over four out of five pupils, are of White British heritage with pupils from several minority ethnic backgrounds. A below average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for special educational needs or disability is above average.
- A very small number of pupils attend full-time alternative educational provision at the nearby pupil referral unit for six-week sessions.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school meets the requirements on the publication of information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in over 40 part-lessons and tutor sessions. Several lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. In practically all lessons, inspectors looked at pupils' work in books.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and talked to others informally during breaktimes. Discussions were held with staff, including pastoral and academic senior and middle leaders. Meetings were held with the chair of the governing body, three other governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 33 parents' responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 12 parents submitted written comments. Inspectors also considered responses to 63 online questionnaires completed by members of staff and 91 completed by pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised the senior leaders' statements and reflections (regularly shared with governors) on the success or otherwise of the actions taken to meet the school's 2015/16 targets for improvement. Other documents included standards and progress information, behaviour and attendance records and a range of policies.

Inspection team

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| Beverley Murtagh | Ofsted Inspector |
| David Smith | Ofsted Inspector |

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