

The Emmbrook School

Emmbrook Road, Wokingham, Berkshire RG41 1JP

Inspection dates

14–16 March 2017

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| 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 | Good |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, who joined the school in June, has taken decisive action to raise standards further. He is determined that pupils should achieve outstanding results and his actions to secure this are driving rapid improvements across the school.
- Typically, pupils make good progress and achieve results above their peers nationally at the end of Year 11. Current pupils are on track to achieve the same again this year.
- Groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, make good progress. The most able pupils achieve well in most subjects but occasionally they are not challenged to achieve quite as much as they could.
- Governors know the school well and provide effective support and challenge to leaders, holding them accountable for raising pupils' progress further.
- The majority of middle leaders successfully drive improvements in their areas. New staff performance processes are helping to hold less effective leaders to account.
- Leaders check teaching and provide useful feedback, so teachers know what they need to do to be even better.
- Persistent absence has been higher than in other schools for a number of years.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well through well-planned opportunities in a range of subjects.
- Teaching is effective and meets pupils' needs well. Lessons are planned at the right level for pupils' differing abilities, and activities are interesting and practical. In science, there are inconsistencies in teachers' practice, so some pupils do not do quite as well.
- Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils are respectful towards adults and work cooperatively with peers. Almost all staff demonstrate high expectations of pupils' behaviour.
- Pupils receive high-quality, relevant and timely guidance about future career and study options. This is a particular strength of the school.
- Provision in the sixth form is good. Academic lessons meet students' needs well and they make good progress. Slight variances in the quality of teaching in some subjects and courses are being tackled.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils are kept safe because staff know and fulfil their responsibilities. Almost all parents and pupils comment that pupils feel safe.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Embed improvements in leadership and management so that:
 - middle leaders are held fully accountable for pupils' progress and the effectiveness of their teams
 - any inconsistencies in expectations of behaviour are resolved
 - persistent absence is in line with, or better than, that in other schools nationally.
- Raise standards of teaching and achievement to outstanding, by:
 - ensuring that teaching consistently meets pupils' needs, particularly in science, so they do as well as in other subjects
 - consistently challenging the most able pupils to achieve even more.
- Embed improvements in teaching, so students consistently do well across all subjects and courses.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is passionate for the school to provide an outstanding education for the pupils it serves. Consequently, he has acted swiftly to raise expectations and aspirations for what can be achieved.
- The two deputy headteachers and other leaders across the school are committed to, and provide effective support for, the headteacher's vision. A few leaders, who are not quite as strong, are beginning to be held accountable.
- The headteacher has rightly implemented systems to increase accountability for all staff. Many people recognise and appreciate that this is a good thing for the school, but this has not consistently been the case. The leadership team has introduced a number of mechanisms for promoting open, two-way communication. Consequently, almost all staff are now on board with recent changes and are keen to see the school improve further.
- Frequent informal checks on teaching and useful feedback result in good teaching. However, a few department leaders are not as effective as they need to be in challenging weaker practice. Where this is the case, teaching in a few subjects is not quite as good.
- Leaders' checks on progress are systematic and robust. Consequently, leaders and teachers know exactly which pupils are on track to achieve expected and better than expected progress. The new approach of identifying what pupils should achieve by the end of Year 11 has helped teachers to focus sharply on where insufficient progress is being made and take swift action to ensure they catch up.
- Leaders have sensibly reviewed provision and use of funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Previously, the well-being of these pupils was supported effectively but at the expense of their learning. These pupils are now being taught effectively alongside their peers and this has had a significant and positive impact on their progress. Leaders are rightly reviewing all aspects of provision for these pupils so that they make as much progress as they should.
- Funding to support the progress of disadvantaged pupils is used effectively to support individuals where they have fallen behind. The Year 7 programme to identify pupils' potential has been particularly helpful in recognising what some disadvantaged pupils might achieve with the right support. These pupils are now on track to achieve as well as other pupils nationally.
- Pastoral support for pupils is effective. The organisational change of pupils' tutor groups from vertical to year groups ensures that year group leaders have a thorough understanding of each pupil's needs and how well they are doing. They check tutor support to ensure that it is effective and are available to pupils if they have any concerns.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils enjoy learning a wide range of subjects and appreciate the interesting in-school and off-site experiences which support their learning, such as whole-school productions and being entered for the Cresta award for excellence in creative marketing. There are a wide range of extra-curricular

opportunities, such as table tennis, dodgeball, circuit training and basketball; these are popular and attended regularly.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported very well. Pupils develop a good understanding of British values, such as democracy, tolerance, respect and justice through lessons and assemblies. This understanding is particularly well developed in the sixth form, where it is woven through the curriculum.
- Many parents appreciate recent changes as being positive for their children. There is an increasing sense of confidence in the new headteacher, although about a quarter of the parents who completed the Parent View survey said that leaders do not respond well enough to concerns.
- Leaders and governors actively seek support from the local authority. Where it is available, the information and guidance to support improvements are useful. However, the headteacher has sensibly supplemented this by developing supportive relationships with local primary schools and other secondary schools across the authority.

Governance of the school

- Governors provide effective support and challenge for school leaders.
- Governors have given a clear mandate to the headteacher for school improvement. They ask appropriate and relevant questions to ensure that changes being made will bring about necessary improvements. Minutes of governors' meetings indicate that, although governors have confidence in the headteacher and senior leaders, they sensibly look for evidence to support what they are told.
- Governors are clear about their specific roles and responsibilities. They work effectively in sub-committees to review policies, pupils' progress and the strategic direction of the school. They have correctly identified budgetary challenges and have appropriate plans in place to ensure that the school continues to meet pupils' needs well.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The number of concerns raised by staff indicates that they have a thorough understanding of their responsibilities and fulfil them, so that appropriate action is taken to keep pupils safe. Leaders involve outside agencies appropriately and swift action is taken.
- As a result of governors' thorough understanding of how to keep pupils' safe, they check the school processes and systems, carrying out spot checks to ensure that a strong safeguarding culture is embedded. They are rightly confident that pupils are kept safe. School leaders work effectively with parents to ensure that pupils' well-being and safety are promoted well outside school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers plan lessons which meet pupils' needs well; pupils make good progress in almost all subjects. Teachers plan and deliver activities which enable pupils to work independently and participate actively in lessons.

- Teaching in English is effective. Teachers are clear about what they expect pupils to learn, provide exciting activities and develop skills well.
- In mathematics, teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and provide activities which support and challenge pupils' learning.
- In the majority of other subjects, including drama, art, food technology, physical education and humanities, teaching is effective and results in pupils making progress. In drama, for example, pupils demonstrate confidence and independence when working together to create short plays in response to stimuli from the teacher. They edit and improve their work cooperatively, sharing ideas and giving reasons.
- Teachers mostly plan activities which challenge pupils at the right level. Where teachers set pupils targets so they know exactly what they need to do to improve, this is having a clear impact on pupils' learning. However, although this is an agreed approach across the school, it is not embedded in all subjects. Occasionally, the most able pupils are not challenged to achieve as much as they should.
- Additional support is effectively provided for pupils who need to catch up. The teaching for these pupils is high quality and focused on exactly what they need to learn. For example, when pupils in Year 7 are not working at the expected level in reading, carefully targeted teaching develops their skills so they rapidly become fluent readers.
- Teaching in science is less consistent than in other subjects because not all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Teaching assistants provide useful support for pupils' learning. They work with teachers to plan and provide help for pupils who need support.
- Homework is generally useful and appropriate. Pupils rightly point out that a timetable would help to ensure their homework can be distributed evenly throughout the week.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils develop confidence and independence through their learning and the way in which they are supported.
- Pupils work well in groups, listening respectfully to each other's ideas. They demonstrate the same respect towards adults in the school.
- Pupils are involved in aspects of school management, such as selecting meals for the new canteen. Leaders are keen to develop these types of opportunities further. In the sixth form, students undertake community service and take on responsibilities, such as head boy and girl. They provide role models for other pupils and represent the school well.
- Pupils learn how to keep safe and about cyber bullying. This has been a priority recently. Pupils learn about the dangers of drug abuse and how to manage peer relationships. When pupils are worried, they are confident that they can talk to staff and that they will receive the support they need.
- Pupils' personal, social, health and economic understanding are developed well. Pupils

reflect on the impact of national disasters, such as the Nepal earthquake and develop empathy through historical topics, such as the first world war.

- Pupils learn about being healthy and fit through science, food technology and assemblies.
- Careers guidance is a strength of the school. Pupils and students receive high-quality and timely information to support their choices and enable them to plan appropriately for the future.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well in lessons and around the school. Effective teaching ensures that pupils demonstrate positive learning behaviours; they concentrate well, share their ideas and question appropriately.
- Recent changes to the management of behaviour are positive. Staff have higher expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves and are more confident about managing incidents themselves, knowing they have support from leaders if needed. However, while these processes are being embedded, there are slight inconsistencies in staff expectations.
- The new rewards and sanctions are known and understood by pupils. As a result of the more systematic approach, fixed-term exclusions are reducing and the behaviour of specific pupils is improving.
- Bullying is rare and pupils say that staff sort it out. Leaders acknowledge that a few members of staff do not have quite the same high expectations of behaviour so, on occasion, some things are not dealt with quite as consistently. Pupils acknowledge that behaviour is much better than it was.
- Persistent absence is higher than in other schools nationally. Leaders have taken action to improve attendance of groups but there is more to do.
- Staff and pupils say it is positive that leaders are more visible around the school. Pupils comment that they appreciate when staff eat with them at lunchtime or stop and chat during breaks.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- National test results for Year 11 show that pupils typically achieve well and make good progress. In 2016, in English and mathematics, pupils made more than expected progress and the proportion of pupils who achieve more than five GCSE A* to C grades was above the national average.
- In 2016, at the end of the Year 13, students achieved well and the majority made expected progress. Current students are on track to achieve the same or better this year.
- Information on pupils' progress across the school indicates that almost all pupils are making expected progress and many are making more than expected progress. Leaders' and teachers' recent focus on improving achievement further is in the early stages but work in pupils' books shows that there are already signs of accelerated

learning across some subjects.

- In the past, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have not made as much progress as they should. The recent changes to provision, so that these pupils are primarily taught alongside other pupils, have resulted in them making more progress than they were. They are now moving forward more rapidly than their peers, and catching up on lost ground.
- Disadvantaged pupils generally make the same or better progress than their peers as a result of the effective use of pupil premium funding. Careful tracking of these pupils' progress ensures that they do at least as well as other pupils nationally, and often better.
- In English, effective teaching ensures that pupils do well across the school. Pupils' work in books shows that all pupils make at least expected progress and many make more. No classes or groups of pupils show weak progress in this subject. Reading is developed very effectively. Pupils who were reading below the expected standard when they arrived in September have all made rapid progress and are now fluent readers.
- Progress in history and design and technology is similarly good. Books show that pupils are making good and often better progress in these subjects. Pupils do very well in art; the quality of the work around the school is impressive, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of, and progress in, the subject.
- In some subjects, such as mathematics and modern foreign languages, some pupils' books show that they are being challenged at exactly the right level and consequently making good progress. However, because of vacancies for either leadership or teaching staff, a few pupils are not getting such as good deal and are making slower progress.
- The most able pupils do well, but leaders and teachers rightly recognise that some of them could do even better. They are rightly ambitious for what can be achieved and their raised aspirations are beginning to be seen in pupils' work.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership of the sixth form is effective. Leaders know the priorities for improvement and take effective action to improve weaker areas. For example, girls did not previously do as well in end-of-year results; this has now been tackled so boys and girls achieve as well as each other.
- Although students' achievements are broadly in line with other schools and colleges nationally, there have been slight variances in students' progress in some subjects. Leaders' work to tackle this is helping to make teaching across all subjects and courses more consistent. School information and students' work indicates that students are on track to make good progress this year in almost all subjects.
- The most able students' needs are met well. High-quality questions and opportunities to discuss activities enable learners to explore their thinking and deepen their understanding. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels is in line with, or above, that in other schools.
- Teaching meets students' needs well. Students show high levels of engagement in lessons. They share their ideas confidently and articulately.

- Students appreciate the wide range of additional opportunities provided. For example, organising and participating in social activities and fundraising events and listening to external speakers broaden students' experiences and help to prepare them for their next steps.
- Students speak particularly positively about careers guidance and vocational advice. They are rightly confident that they receive appropriate information and support to choose courses and careers which suit their strengths and interests. Leaders check students' destinations when they leave. Typically, just over half of students move onto higher education.
- Work-experience opportunities are relevant and well planned. Students are well supported to find appropriate roles and activities.
- Retention rates are high. The proportion of pupils who stay on in the sixth form is larger than is typical. Students say that they continue their studies at The Emmbrook School because they like the school and staff, and know they will receive useful support to do well.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 110060 |
| Local authority | Wokingham |
| Inspection number | 10024799 |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 985 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 217 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | David Whiting |
| Headteacher | Paul O'Neill |
| Telephone number | 01189 784406 |
| Website | www.emmbrook.wokingham.sch.uk |
| Email address | enquiries@emmbrook.wokingham.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 6–7 March 2013 |

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The Emmbrook School is an average-sized, mixed, 11 to 18 school.
- Slightly more pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities than is typically the case.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.

- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum levels expected for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher joined the school in June 2016; the two deputy headteachers have also been appointed since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out over three days. It began as a section 8 short inspection, carried out by two inspectors. In order to gather further evidence, the lead inspector converted to a section 5 inspection. On day two, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors arrived on site, taking over as lead inspector. A telephone conversation was held between her and the previous lead inspector, to enable a handover of evidence from day one. The headteacher was present during the conversation. On day three, five team inspectors worked with the lead inspector to complete the inspection.
- Inspectors observed 30 lessons and carried out a number of brief visits to lessons, almost all of which were with leaders. Leaders and inspectors scrutinised pupils' work to consider progress in books. Behaviour and conduct in and around the school was also observed, including at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteachers and other leaders from across the school. The chair of the governing body met with one of the inspectors and two other governors joined the meeting by telephone. Inspectors also had a telephone conversation with an adviser from Wokingham school improvement team.
- Pupils' views were gathered through the online survey and through meetings with groups of pupils from Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and the sixth form.
- Parents gave their views through the 162 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Staff views were collected through the staff survey and a number of meetings with groups of staff. A 'drop-in' session was held so that any member of staff who wanted to talk to inspectors was able to do so.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness, the school improvement plan, information about pupils' progress and attainment, minutes of governors' meetings, evidence of teaching over time and records relating to behaviour and safeguarding.

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Louise Adams, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Susan Derrick | Ofsted Inspector |
| Steve Baker | Ofsted Inspector |
| Anne Lewell | Ofsted Inspector |
| Anna Lawrence | Ofsted Inspector |
| Caroline Walshe | Ofsted Inspector |
| Beverley Murtagh, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Susan Derrick | Ofsted Inspector |

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