

Eaton Bank School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132747
Local Authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	341333
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Sue Harrison HMI

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	969
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Professor D Parsons
Headteacher	Mr Paul Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2006
School address	Jackson Road Congleton Cheshire CW12 1NT
Telephone number	01260 273000
Fax number	01260 297352
Email address	head@eatonbank.cheshire.sch.uk

Age group	11–18
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2010
Inspection number	341333

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 43 lessons taught by 45 teachers, and held meetings with groups of students, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, scrutinised students' books and looked at documentation, including progress tracking systems, the school's development plan and 268 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether the school's judgement on the quality of its teaching is accurate
- the quality of provision in the sixth form
- whether there is significant difference in the progress made by boys and girls in the sixth form.

Information about the school

Eaton Bank serves a wide and socio-economically diverse catchment area in the town of Congleton and surrounding rural areas. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is increasing and is slightly above average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is also increasing but remains below average. The vast majority of students are White British. Eaton Bank is designated as a specialist school for mathematics and computing.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Eaton Bank is a good and improving school. It provides a good quality of education in Years 7 to 11 and satisfactory provision in the sixth form. Students enjoy coming to school and make good progress in the majority of lessons. Behaviour is good. The majority of students have very positive attitudes to learning; they work well with each other and have respect for other people. They develop a good range of skills to help them when they leave school. Levels of attainment are above average by the end of Year 11; achievement is satisfactory and improving in the sixth form.

Students enjoy most of their lessons as a result of work by the school to make teaching interesting and challenging. The quality of teaching is good across the whole school, including the sixth form. Assessment of students' work is good in class but the quality of marking varies too much across the school.

Students benefit from a curriculum which meets their needs well in the main school; the curriculum in the sixth form is satisfactory. The quality of pastoral support is good across the whole school. Systems to track student progress have been improved and are now very effective in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. Students receive helpful guidance to choose options for Year 10. In the sixth form some students with minimum entry qualifications have struggled to cope with advanced work, leading to problems with attendance and retention.

Leadership and management are good. The school has improved in a number of ways since the last inspection. Self-assessment is thorough and honest. The school sets itself challenging targets for improvement and meets many of them. Training for leaders across the school is effective and the school has good capacity to make further improvements. Management of the sixth form has been strengthened and inspectors saw the positive effect this is beginning to have. The governing body and staff give high priority to safeguarding the welfare of students and promotion of equality of opportunity is good. Parents and carers are very positive about the quality of education the school provides but some would like to have more opportunity to support their children's learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for students in the sixth form by ensuring they are on the right course and that they attend regularly.
- Improve the standard of marking across the school by spreading good practice amongst teachers.
- Develop further the school's systems to involve parents and carers in supporting

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

their children's learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students are very attentive in the majority of lessons. They listen carefully and apply themselves with enthusiasm to the tasks set. They show a real willingness to learn and to produce good work. In most lessons, they enjoy their work and participate well in class discussions and group work. As a result they develop genuine understanding of work covered and make good progress in most subjects. Progress in some lessons is very good, for example, in science where students develop impressive critical thinking skills. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well integrated in classes and make good progress. Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are broadly average; levels of attainment by the end of Year 11 have been rising and are now above average. For example, in 2009, the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was above the national average. Outcomes for students in the sixth form are satisfactory; data for previous years indicate girls were making better progress than boys but current data from the school and inspectors' observations of lessons found the gap has been narrowed substantially.

Across the whole school, students work well together in class and show good levels of respect for others. They have a good understanding of different groups in society and contribute well to help others within school and their local community, as well as internationally. Students develop a good range of skills, such as problem solving and teamwork, to help them in their future careers. Behaviour in the school is good and students feel safe. They have a clear understanding of healthy lifestyles and many choose healthy options at lunchtime and participate in sporting or other opportunities to take exercise outside the main curriculum.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good in the main school and in the sixth form. In the majority of lessons, teachers plan carefully to address the needs of different groups of students. They are skilful at making subjects interesting by good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enliven lessons and by using a range of techniques that encourage active participation in the lesson. Inspectors found this in lessons across most areas of the curriculum. They also found effective use of questioning and group work to check students' understanding. In lessons that are satisfactory teachers are less successful at engaging students' interest or helping them to understand work. In these lessons, the focus is too much on the teacher input rather than whether the students are actually learning. Assessment is used well in many lessons to monitor students' learning and to guide them on how to improve further. However, there is a lack of consistency in the quality of marking that takes place outside lessons.

The curriculum meets the needs of students well in the main school. In Years 7 to 9 the school has introduced programmes that develop thinking skills and problem solving, which help students in all their subjects. The range of options available in Years 10 and 11 is good. Courses in subjects such as catering meet the needs of students less suited to academic qualifications. The school works well with other providers to broaden the range of vocational options, and offers diplomas in engineering, health and development, and land based studies, as well as an NVQ qualification in salon services delivered in partnership with a local college. The sixth-form provision meets the needs of most, but not all students, who choose to stay on at the school. There is an effective programme across the whole school to develop moral, social and cultural awareness and a good range of enrichment activities.

Pastoral support is good across the whole school, including the sixth form. The house system in Years 7 to 11 helps students to settle quickly into the school and contributes well to the good relationships that exist across the school. Effective systems exist to identify problems and there are good links with external agencies to provide help, for example, counselling and mental health support is readily available to students. Good arrangements are in place to support vulnerable learners, including at break and lunchtimes, and there is very good support for students with a physical disability as they move around the school. Efforts to improve attendance since the last inspection have been successful in the main school, leading to a significant reduction in the number of

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

persistent absentees. In the sixth form, this has been less successful, though attendance is now satisfactory. Improved systems for monitoring students' progress are very effective in the main school and are beginning to improve progress in the sixth form. Students welcome the 'learning conversations' where they have individual time with their tutor to discuss progress. Students receive helpful guidance to make decisions on options at the end of Year 9.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior team is successful at driving an agenda of continuous improvement within the main school. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching and learning has been sustained and improved further across the whole school. The school monitors classroom practice well and leaders have an accurate view on the quality of teaching. The use of data to set challenging targets has improved. There is effective training for middle managers and stronger systems to monitor student progress. All of this has led to better outcomes for students in the main school. Management arrangements in the sixth form have been strengthened and this is starting to have a positive effect.

The governing body provides a good level of support and challenge for the school and carries out its statutory responsibilities effectively. The school is working hard to develop its communication with parents and carers and a large majority are very positive about the progress their children make. The school has used its specialism well to enhance teaching, in particular by investment in computers and training for staff to enable them to make effective use of ICT in lessons. Specialist resources have also been used to strengthen links with partners, including primary schools. Partnership work is a strong feature of the school and has led to significant development of the curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 4, and good links with external agencies for pastoral support. Safeguarding procedures are given a high priority and are very effective. Equality of opportunity is promoted in many ways, including the successful integration of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities within the school and the attention given to meeting the needs of different groups within the classroom. The school promotes community cohesion well. Harmonious relationships exist across the school and effective work takes place to develop students' awareness and understanding of other cultures, for example, visits to a large city in the Midlands, and international links. The school is well placed to make further improvement. Leaders and managers have a

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

clear understanding of areas for further development. Having tackled successfully a significant deficit that arose when the school was created as a result of mergers, it is now able to invest greater resource in the quality of provision. The school delivers good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Teaching in the sixth form is good. Students enjoy their work and some make good progress. They make an excellent contribution to the main school, for example, their work as peer mentors is valued highly by other students. Almost all students who complete their course and apply to university are successful in gaining a place. However, data for recent years show that retention in the sixth form has been below average. Although the school provides impartial guidance via its links with Connexions, some students who chose to stay in the sixth form subsequently struggled to cope with the demands of advanced level work. The curriculum on offer is largely GCE AS and A levels and this has not met the needs of some students. Tracking of student progress has not been as successful in raising attainment in the sixth form as in the main school. Data for previous years shows overall levels of attainment to be broadly average, with girls doing better than boys, and most students making satisfactory progress. The school has taken action to address these issues and this is starting to show results. Actions include revised entry criteria, work with partners to review the curriculum on offer and tighter monitoring of attendance and progress. Inspectors found satisfactory attendance at lessons and evidence to support the school's view that progress is now better for the current cohort of students, particularly boys.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

A large majority of parents and carers are very positive about the school. Their experience is that teaching and support systems are good, that their children enjoy school and make good progress. The most commonly identified area they would like to see improved is the ways in which the school helps them to support their children's learning. In addition, a small number of parents feel the behaviour of some students could be improved.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Eaton Bank School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 268 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 911 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	103	38	152	57	9	3	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	118	44	144	54	4	1	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	115	43	131	49	16	6	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	101	38	141	53	20	7	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	105	39	145	54	11	4	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	77	29	144	54	39	15	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	71	26	170	63	21	8	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	95	35	135	50	15	6	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	95	35	151	56	18	7	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	84	31	151	56	18	7	6	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	68	25	161	60	18	7	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	112	42	134	50	10	4	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	123	46	128	48	13	5	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



1 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Eaton Bank School, Congleton, CW12 1NT

I am writing to tell you the findings of our recent inspection of your school. We very much enjoyed visiting Eaton Bank and talking to you about your views of the school. Thank you for helping us to find our way around.

We think Eaton Bank is a good school. It was pleasing to see how many of you enjoy school and make good progress in most subjects. You participated well in many of the lessons we visited and showed a good understanding of the work. We think teachers work hard to make the majority of lessons interesting. We were also impressed by the range of skills you are developing that will help you in your future life, and by your generosity in helping out in school and your local community. It was good to see the visits some of you undertake to broaden your studies and your awareness of other groups in society, both in this country and abroad. We think the school has developed the curriculum well, especially the range of choices you have in Years 10 and 11. We found the behaviour of the majority of students to be good in class and around school and could sense the 'family' feel of the school that some of you mentioned. We were pleased to hear you feel safe in school and that you receive good support from teachers and other staff.

Students who completed their studies in the sixth form in recent years achieved results that are broadly in line with the national average and almost all who wanted to go to university were successful in gaining a place. However, too many students left before the end of their course.

In order to develop the school even further we have asked the headteacher to:

- improve outcomes in the sixth form by ensuring students are on the right course and that they attend regularly
- improve the standard of marking by spreading good practice among teachers
- develop further the school's systems to involve parents and carers in supporting your learning.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Sue Harrison

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.