

Blenheim High School

Longmead Road, Epsom, Surrey, KT19 9BH

Inspection dates

6–7 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- As a result of the effective leadership of the headteacher, her determination for all students to attain high standards is shared by staff and governors.
- By the end of Year 11, students have made good progress to achieve standards above the national average across a range of subjects.
- The vast majority of teaching is good and some is outstanding. It is improving rapidly as a result of effective training and strong systems to hold teachers to account for students' progress.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and relationships between students and teachers are positive.
- Students' attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average.
- Students behave very well. They are polite and courteous to each other, to staff and to visitors. Their attitudes to learning are good and can be exemplary.
- As a consequence of better teaching and good support systems, exclusions have reduced and are now below the national average.
- Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is supported very well by the extensive range of extra-curricular activities.
- Governors share the headteacher's drive for continued improvement. They effectively support school leaders in their efforts to ensure high quality teaching and higher standards.
- The sixth form is good and is well led and managed. The range of courses on offer effectively meets the needs of students so that all make good progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding. As a consequence students do not all make better than expected progress.
- Lesson activities and teachers' questioning do not always challenge students or allow them to develop as independent learners.
- Marking and feedback do not consistently provide students with clear and detailed information about how they can improve their work, particularly in mathematics.
- Students do not always have the opportunity to respond to the advice given by teachers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 51 lessons of which eight were joint observations with senior leaders. They attended assemblies and observed tutorial sessions.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, staff, groups of students, and representatives of the governing body and the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's own self-evaluation and development plans, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and data on students' current attainment and progress.
- Inspectors took account of the 52 responses to the staff survey, the 312 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and three written comments from parents.
- Inspectors also looked at documentation relating to performance targets for staff, the school's monitoring of teaching and evidence of support for students identified as needing extra help.

Inspection team

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Full report

- The school converted to become an academy school in March 2012. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory with good capacity for further improvement.
- The school is larger than the average secondary school.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, students known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs who receive support through school action is below the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage, with approximately one in seven from minority ethnic groups. A low proportion speaks English as an additional language.
- A very small number of Key Stage 4 students attend alternative provision on-site. A 'construction bus' visits the school on a weekly basis and students who attend are taught the skills of construction trades leading to accredited qualifications.
- The proportion of Blenheim students staying on in the sixth form is above average. Some students in the sixth form are from other schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of teaching that is outstanding, so that all groups of students make better than expected progress, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - make better use of marking and feedback so that students always understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work, particularly in mathematics
 - make sure that students have opportunities to respond to the advice given when teachers mark their work
 - plan lessons that are sufficiently challenging for all groups of students, including those who are more able, and which extend the opportunities for students to build independence, show initiative and research information for themselves
 - make better use of questioning to involve all students, extend learning and address misunderstandings.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students join the school in Year 7 with broadly average attainment and make good progress to attain above average standards at GCSE, based on five or more grades A* to C including English and mathematics. Students make outstanding progress in English.
- In 2012 the proportion of students attaining GCSE grades A* to C in mathematics was in line with the national average. However, the number making the expected progress was below average. Information provided by the school, which is based on results from examinations taken early, indicates that the number of students both making and exceeding the expected progress will be above the national average in 2013. The proportion expected to attain GCSE grades A* to C in mathematics is also likely to be above the national average.
- At the end of Key Stage 4, the average point scores in English and mathematics of those students eligible for the pupil premium are lower than those for other students but higher than those for eligible students nationally. In 2012 these students achieved approximately one grade lower than their school peers in English and two grades lower in mathematics. Gaps in standards are closing rapidly because of good teaching and the effective use of the additional funding to provide targeted support.
- The needs of disabled students and those with special educational needs are very well known. As a consequence they are very well supported to make good progress and achieve well.
- Students of minority ethnic heritage or who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to other students in the school. There is no difference in the attainment of these students and their school peers.
- Students following alternative provision in Key Stage 4 make good progress and achieve well.
- Year 7 students in need of catch-up work are already benefiting from additional time with specialist literacy and numeracy learning support assistants.
- Students who meet or exceed their target grade following early for GCSE mathematics and then receive additional support to help them achieve high grades in other subjects. This includes the provision of additional courses in food and nutrition and equality and diversity. The most-able students are not entered early for GCSE mathematics, however, allowing them to concentrate on the subject and providing good preparation for their sixth-form studies where mathematics at AS and A level is an increasingly popular choice.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Students make good progress from below average starting points to achieve grades at AS and A level at least in line with national averages across a range of subjects.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good with examples of outstanding practice in a range of subjects including English and mathematics.
- The school's focus on improving the quality of teaching is having an impact and is supported by very good systems to monitor students' progress. As a consequence, interventions to address underachievement are timely, personalised and help students to improve their work.
- Teachers use a variety of activities to challenge students' thinking, to reinforce and consolidate learning and to engage and motivate students. For example, in a Year 8 mathematics lesson, the highly effective development of students' numeracy skills enabled them to manipulate complex algebraic expressions. However, some teachers miss opportunities to develop students' initiative and independence, for example by requiring them to research information for themselves or by providing answers to questions either too quickly or as simple explanations.
- Teachers regularly promote students' understanding of unfamiliar vocabulary. Specialist technical words are explored in detail and, where possible, related to everyday use. Group discussions and designated roles contribute very well to developing students' communication skills and make a

significant impact on the achievement and confidence of students. For example, in a Year 10 history lesson, students made outstanding progress in learning about Russia in 1924 because teaching was extremely well resourced, students were engaged in tasks which challenged their higher order thinking skills and very good use was made of assessment throughout the lesson.

- Students benefit from high quality adult support and working in small groups with specialist staff. Tailor-made work programmes help to close gaps in students' knowledge: for example, those who join the school with poor literacy or numeracy skills work with specialist learning support assistants to boost their progress. Reflection time at the end of the school day provides students with support for homework or with revision prior to examinations.
- Written work is marked well using the school's 'What went well; even better if' policy which helps students to understand the quality and level of their work alongside how to improve. For example, in English, all teachers routinely give students specific and personalised guidance about how to improve their work and provide time during lessons for them to question or respond to the advice given. However, not all teachers ask students to follow up on the advice given or check that it has been understood, particularly in mathematics.
- The majority of teachers plan well for the needs of different groups of students including those who find learning difficult. For example, in a Year 8 drama lesson, students with special educational needs were extremely well engaged, developed confidence and made outstanding progress because the teaching was vibrant and exceptional use was made of ongoing assessment. However, not all lessons sufficiently challenge the most-able students and consequently a small minority of teaching requires improvement.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Students are well known by their teachers and benefit from small class sizes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students around the school and in lessons is good. Students are polite and courteous to one another, to staff and to visitors.
- In lessons students have very good, and sometimes exemplary, attitudes towards learning, although when teaching is less engaging or the pace of learning slows there can be some low-level disruption. A significant strength of lessons is the good relationships between teachers and students and between different groups of students who support each other in small-group and pair work.
- There is high take up of an extensive range of extra-curricular activities which supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. For example, school productions involve students from across the age and ability range and promote a strong sense of community.
- Students from all year groups reported that incidents of bullying are rare and, when they do occur are almost always name-calling. Once reported to school staff, incidents or disputes are quickly and appropriately resolved. Racial incidents are rare and students report that discrimination is not tolerated.
- Students feel very safe in school and this view is shared by parents.
- Students are made aware of the different forms of bullying and potentially unsafe situations such as social networking through assemblies and personal development lessons. A group of students in Year 10 have made a DVD for use in all Surrey schools to teach other students about the consequences of drug or alcohol use.
- The exclusion rate is dropping, as is the number of incidents of repeat offending. The large majority of reported incidents concern a very small minority of students. The school's behaviour management policy which focuses on rewarding positive behaviours has had good impact on improving behaviour.
- Attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average.
- The small numbers of students who attend alternative provision are well supervised by the

school, feel safe and make good progress. Opportunities for them to take up apprenticeships meet their needs very well.

- Behaviour in the sixth form, including behaviour that supports learning, is excellent. Many sixth-form students work in lessons with those from younger year groups to support and develop their learning. This is especially evident in drama, where sixth-form students act as highly positive role models.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides very good leadership and is ably supported by her senior leadership team who have an equally clear vision and sense of direction for the school. In the 18 months since her appointment, the headteacher has successfully accomplished improvements in students' achievement and in the quality of teaching. The leadership and management of the school are not outstanding because students are not doing as well in mathematics as they are in English.
- Senior leaders know the school well and are accurate in judging its strengths and weaknesses. Systems for monitoring and evaluating students' progress and achievement have been strengthened and as a result all teachers are held to account for the progress made by the students they teach.
- Subject leaders are continuously making improvements to their departments. Where weaknesses have been identified in the quality of teaching, or where students' work shows that they are underachieving, these issues are being tackled through changes of leadership, departmental reviews and specific professional development. For example, the 'Satisfactory to good' programme has been used to very good effect to drive up standards of teaching.
- Pastoral leaders are highly effective in monitoring students' progress and achievement. They co-ordinate interventions across the curriculum and are effective in involving parents in the education of their children.
- The school's system for managing teachers' performance is strong with targets clearly linked to the school's development priorities.
- The pupil premium has been successfully spent on support to ensure that the gap between eligible students and their school peers is closing rapidly.
- The curriculum, including the sixth-form curriculum, is well matched to the needs of students and of the local community. The range of courses on offer ensures equality of opportunity for all students. As a consequence, all students progress to education, training or employment when they leave at the end of Years 11 and 13. Students value and highly praise the support they receive when making option choices for Key Stage 4, post-16 or post-18.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Students are supported very well to make good progress and achieve well. For example, as one parent commented, 'A special thank-you for your support of our son throughout the sixth form. Please keep up the good work to make truly amazing, intelligent and great individuals.'
- All safeguarding and child protection procedures are rigorous. Detailed records are maintained and kept up to date.
- The vast majority of staff who responded to the survey and parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire said that the leadership and management of the school are good. For example, as one member of staff commented, 'The sense of team here is very strong and the management structure seems to be positive and aspirational.'
- Effective support from the local authority for this good and rapidly improving school has included promoting school development priorities and improving the overall quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has recently been restructured to provide effective support for the school. Key priorities for school development are clearly assigned to governors' committees, enabling governors to track and monitor progress accurately and to hold school leaders to account for

the quality of teaching and students' achievement. Governors receive detailed information from the senior leaders and attend regular review meetings with middle leaders so that they have a good understanding of how the school compares to other schools. They also understand the teacher appraisal system and what is done to tackle any underperformance, making sure that teachers' pay progression is closely matched to their performance. The governing body is taking strategic responsibility for ensuring that current funding, including the pupil premium, is used to enhance the quality of provision for students presently in the school.

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	137906
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	402776

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Maintained
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	1355
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	253
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Kitley
Headteacher	Tracey Fantham
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01372 745333
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