

Newstead Wood School

Avebury Road, Orpington, Kent, BR6 9SA

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Newstead Wood School provides an outstanding education which promotes students' academic achievement and personal development exceptionally well.
- All groups of students make rapid progress from their starting points when they join the school. Attainment in GCSE is high so that students are equipped very well for the next stages of their education.
- The sixth form is outstanding. The excellent opportunities for enrichment develop students' personal and leadership skills and contribute to their excellent academic achievement. Almost all move on to universities of their choice.
- Students are enthusiastic and curious learners, resulting in an exceptionally positive learning atmosphere across the whole school. They work together extremely well, and learning is enhanced by the maturity of their discussions which deepen their understanding.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is impeccable which makes learning and socialising together very enjoyable. Students develop into mature young adults with an acute understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers have very high expectations and make lessons interesting and relevant to students' own experiences. Very occasionally, teachers' marking does not always help students to improve their work.
- The wide range of courses on offer, including those for students in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, gives them choice and meets their interests and needs exceptionally well.
- Outstanding leadership and management over time have ensured the maintenance of high standards through a period of change at headteacher level and within the governing body. Nevertheless, there has been some delay in keeping parents fully informed about whole school developments.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 43 lessons, some of which were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. They also visited a number of tutorial sessions.
- Meetings were held with three student groups including a sixth form group, school leaders and staff, and representatives of the governing body, including members of the academy trust.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including those that show how the school checks on how well it is doing and plans for the future. They scrutinised students' work development and progress data, information about how the school cares for and protects students, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and minutes of recent governing body meetings.
- The inspection took account of 174 responses to the online Parent View survey, additional comments made by a few parents and questionnaires completed by 57 staff.

Inspection team

Helen Hutchings, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Steve Nelson

Additional Inspector

Kanwaljit Singh

Additional Inspector

Anne Turner

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Newstead Wood School converted to become an academy school in April 2011. When its predecessor school, Newstead Wood School for Girls, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding. An academy trust has overall responsibility for the school, with the governing body reporting directly to it. Previously, the school had specialisms in engineering and languages.
- It is an average-sized selective girls' school which admits male students into the sixth form.
- The majority of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with the predominant groups being African, Indian and Chinese. Many other backgrounds are represented in smaller numbers.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is higher than found in most schools. The vast majority of students join the school as fluent English speakers.
- The proportion of students supported through additional funding known as the pupil premium is low. This is additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- No students in Years 7 and 8 require support through the nationally-funded catch-up programme.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is low, as is the proportion supported at school action.
- The school does not enter students for GCSE examinations before the end of Year 11, apart from a few language courses which some students follow out of normal lesson time in addition to their other GCSE options.
- As part of their option choices, some students in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form attend part of their engineering courses at Bromley College.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- There has been a change in the leadership of the school over the last year, with a new headteacher taking up her post in January 2014. This was initially on an interim basis, but has since become the substantive appointment. The headteacher is a National Leader of Education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of all teachers' written feedback so that all students have a clear understanding of how to develop their work and are able to demonstrate to their teachers that they have understood and acted on the advice given.
- Implement the plans to ensure that parents are kept fully informed by the governing body of work of the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students in all years make rapid progress across a very wide range of GCSE, AS and A-level subjects. The progress students make is faster than is the case nationally, and shows a steady year-on-year increase. For the last two years, students' overall progress as measured across a range of eight subjects has been in the top 10% of schools nationally.
- When they join the school in Year 7, students' attainment is already high, being around two years above that of their peers nationally. Students relish the academic challenge of learning alongside their peers and successfully follow a wider range of courses than in most schools.
- Students' overall GCSE attainment, including the proportion achieving the highest A* and A grades, is high in comparison with national averages. Three quarters of GCSE results are either A* or A grades and in many subjects, including English, mathematics and science, most grades are at these levels.
- Students' strong literacy and numeracy skills on entry continue to develop well through the school. They are evident in their work in other subjects and in the students' ability to research and develop their own learning. Students are highly articulate, shown in the sensitive way they listen and share their views in lessons, and have excellent written communication skills. They apply their numeracy skills very confidently when required in other subjects.
- Similarly, students' progress in the sixth form is outstanding when taking account of their starting points at the beginning of their courses. Results in AS, A level and the International Baccalaureate are well above national averages and give students the qualifications they need for their chosen university courses. A few students gain scholarships for further study each year, including for study in the United States of America.
- The school's emphasis on engineering and languages is reflected in the high quality results in these subjects. The school shares the teaching of engineering with Bromley College. It monitors students' progress closely to ensure that any potential difficulties are picked up and dealt with quickly. Students have opportunities to study from a wide range of European and Asian languages, including Japanese and Mandarin.
- The school's tracking systems show that academic outcomes are being maintained at similarly high levels throughout the school as in previous years. The school sets very demanding targets for students' achievement and monitors their progress towards these regularly. Action is taken swiftly if there is any slippage against these targets, so that students are brought back on course to maintain the highest possible levels of achievement.
- The school uses additional funding very well to support the few students eligible for support in each year group. Consequently, although there are minor differences from year to year, when taken together there is no difference in the performance of this group and their peers.
- Similarly, students who speak English as an additional language, those who are disabled or have special educational needs achieve in line with others. The school's caring ethos, combined with high expectations, results in the attainment of students who have any form of additional need being high in all subjects, and similar to and sometimes higher than their peers. This is because initial assessments are robust. The support students are given is evaluated regularly to ensure that it has a positive impact on students' learning. The even progress made by all groups of students, including those from the wide range of minority ethnic groups, shows the school's commitment to, and success in, ensuring equality of opportunity.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teachers are well qualified and use their strong subject knowledge to make learning intellectually challenging. They plan lessons thoughtfully to make them exciting and engaging for students. As a result, teaching is rarely less than inspiring and leads to all groups of students making outstanding progress.

- Teachers explain new ideas and exemplify learning very well, so that students develop their new thinking by relating it to earlier knowledge and understanding. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, students consolidated their logical thinking by considering the 'paper, scissors, rock' game before applying a logic loop to a more complicated version of the game to write a computer programme. Teachers regularly use everyday examples as the basis for students to develop their higher order thinking skills by having to work out solutions to complex situations.
- Teachers regularly ask thought-provoking questions, and then expect students to justify their responses so that their understanding is probed in detail. This ensures that students fully understand the issue being considered and strengthens students' confidence and communication skills. This was seen to good effect in a lesson when Year 7 students simulated a public meeting consulting on the use of National Parks. Students showed their highly perceptive understanding of the issues facing the range of users, including conservationists, local residents and tourists.
- Students eagerly grasp all opportunities to work according to any methods adopted by teachers, or by themselves, and relish sharing information and helping each other to learn. Teaching gives students good opportunities to learn, by working together in pairs and groups to consolidate their thinking, by sharing ideas and developing good teamwork.
- In many lessons, students evaluate their own success or that of their peers against clear criteria. Consequently, they have a very good understanding of the quality and level of their work and what they have to do to improve. There is much detailed teacher marking in students' books and teachers know their students and their abilities very well. Students are confident to question when there is anything they do not understand. Not all teachers provide clear enough advice for students about how to improve their work further. Teachers do not always make sure that students follow up this advice by applying it and showing their teachers that they have understood.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. In lessons and around the school their behaviour is consistently exemplary. The expectation that students will work hard throughout the lesson is the norm.
- Students say that behaviour is always calm, kind and supportive. They thoroughly enjoy school life and value that they are trusted to manage their own behaviour and school facilities. The school runs extremely well as a harmonious community.
- Students show their passion for learning in their punctuality to lessons and the way they manage their own work. Most books are neat and well organised. Students have strong self-awareness, promoted by the school's 'engagement with learning' framework and initiatives to support their understanding of social and emotional health. Such activities help them to manage the stress of examinations very effectively.
- Students value the feedback they have from regular academic tracking. As some remarked, 'They pick up if you are falling behind really quickly.' Interventions, when students seem to falter, are incisive and are highly effective in supporting them to get back on track quickly. Sixth form students were particularly positive about the increased emphasis on monitoring their progress this year.
- Relationships are very supportive. Students of all ages say that staff are always on hand to help if they have any difficulties, either academically or personally.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students are encouraged to adopt safe behaviour in relation to travel. They understand different types of bullying, including cyber bullying and prejudice-based bullying. Such incidents are extremely rare and students have few concerns, saying that they are capable of dealing with most disagreements effectively without the need to involve an adult.
- There have been not been any exclusions since the school gained academy status. Students know that any form of harassment would not be tolerated in the school.
- Attendance is above the national average, and improving.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- There is a strong staff team with a shared sense of purpose and direction. Staff across the school are united in their view that improving the school for the benefit of students is at the core of their work. The staff team works very effectively together to ensure that students achieve exceptionally well in a challenging, but supportive, atmosphere.
- The headteacher, very ably supported by other senior leaders, has quickly grasped the school's many strengths and has ensured that there has been no loss of momentum because of leadership changes. Leaders have also recognised where further improvements can be made. For example, a staff 'enquiry group' is researching the most effective assessment practices nationally and how these can be introduced into the school. Teachers are positive about a renewed focus on sharing expertise and opportunities to observe one another's lessons.
- The management of teachers' work is robust and is seen to be fair. The system is underpinned by personalised and whole school professional development and has clear lines of accountability. Teachers new to the school say that they have been welcomed into the school community and given all the support they needed to settle quickly.
- The curriculum enables students to choose from an exceptionally wide range of subjects and is flexible over the combinations chosen. High quality careers advice supports subject choice and gives students very effective guidance about future education and training. Enrichment activities are outstanding and are enjoyed by most students. Visits, exchanges and work experience take place across a number of continents.
- Students have an active interest in global issues because their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is strongly promoted in lessons and extra-curricular activities.
- The headteacher, in her role as a National Leader of Education, joined the school as the interim headteacher. During the short time she has been in the school, it has not been possible to provide additional support for other schools.
- The large majority of parental responses to the inspection questionnaire are positive about most aspects of the school's work.
- Systems to safeguard students meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There have been significant changes in governance in recent years, including a number of new governors and a new Chair and Vice-Chair of Governors appointed within this academic year. Since then, the governing body has evaluated the effectiveness of its work and is implementing an action plan to strengthen its role in challenging and supporting the school. Governors seek parental views at events such as parent consultation evenings. They are aware that parents have not always had up-to-date information of its work, for example through the publication of governing body meetings on the school website. This is now being remedied. Governors know the strengths of the school very well and how its performance compares with that of other schools nationally, for example through scrutiny of nationally published achievement information. They understand the quality of teaching and how the performance of teachers is managed, so that salaries and promotion are linked to students' achievement. Governors monitor the school's financial resources, including additional funding, closely to ensure outstanding value for money.

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	136551
Local authority	Bromley
Inspection number	444506

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.

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,040
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	340
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Penny
Headteacher	Alison Ross
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01689 853262
Fax number	01689 853315
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