

Stopsley High School

St Thomas's Road, Luton, LU2 7UX

Inspection dates 8–9 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress across year groups and in many subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The proportion of students in Year 11 who achieve five or more good GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, has been average for the past few years. This improved in 2014 because students made much better progress in English than they have in the past.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress because the work set is always at the right level. Those students who are supported in the specially resourced provision also make good progress.
- Disadvantaged students make the same good progress as their classmates in many subjects.
- Teaching is good. Teachers expect students to work hard and they make sure that work is appropriately challenging.
- Behaviour is good. Students are respectful of each other and their teachers. Students feel safe at school and they have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- Leadership and management are good. The school's relatively new leadership team has made sure that teaching, achievement, behaviour and safety are all good because they check these regularly.
- The governing body is appropriately skilled and provides a good level of challenge and support to leaders and to the school as a whole.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students do not always have enough opportunities to develop their writing skills in all subjects. This means that sometimes students do not make as much progress as they should, particularly boys of average ability.
- Teachers do not always insist that some students, particularly boys, produce neat and accurate work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 27 lessons, three of which were jointly observed with senior leaders. The inspection team made several short visits to other lessons, some with senior leaders, to check on the progress and behaviour of different groups of students. Inspectors also looked at a wide range of students' work in their books.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students from all year groups. Other meetings were held with members of the governing body and with senior leaders and staff, including those responsible for leading subjects. The lead inspector held a meeting with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors analysed the 47 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also analysed a questionnaire which the school asks parents to complete.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including those relating to the monitoring of teaching and the targets set for teachers to improve their work. They also looked at records relating to attendance, behaviour, bullying and safeguarding, the school's improvement plan and data on students' progress.

Inspection team

Richard Sutton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jalil Shaikh	Additional Inspector
Sa'ad Khaldi	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Macfarlane	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is above average, as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also average. No students currently have education, health or care plans.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported through the pupil premium, which is additional funding given to schools for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Some students in Years 10 and 11 study vocational courses for one day each week at Barnfield College and Ashcroft High School.
- The school provides specially resourced provision for disabled students and those who special educational needs. This provision currently provides support for eight students who have social and communication difficulties.
- The school works in a partnership with other Luton schools. This is called 'Luton Futures'.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher took up their posts in Spring 2013. Two new assistant headteachers and a new head of English were appointed in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement, particularly for average-ability boys, by making sure that:
 - students have regular opportunities to practise and develop their writing more frequently, and at greater length, in other subjects
 - all teachers always insist on students presenting their work neatly and accurately.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The relatively new headteacher and leadership team have had a significant and highly positive impact on students' achievement. In the past year standards have risen sharply across year groups and subjects. The good impact that all leaders are having places the school in a strong position to continue to improve.
- The strong leadership team has created a school ethos where the majority of staff and students feel valued and supported. As a result, students behave well and have a good level of mutual respect for their classmates and teachers. There is no hint of discrimination anywhere in the school. Students appreciate the school's good leadership because they know that leaders have ensured that they benefit from teaching which is good.
- The leadership of those who are responsible for subjects is good because, with the effective support of senior leaders, they are continually improving teaching, achievement and behaviour by regularly checking these aspects of the work in their subjects. They ensure assessment information is accurate and used effectively to tackle any underperformance quickly. These leaders benefit from regular training in partnership with other 'Luton Futures' schools.
- Leaders make sure that teaching, achievement and behaviour are good at the local college and nearby school, where some students attend for one day per week to study vocational courses. This ensures that these students achieve well and enjoy the same opportunities to succeed as other students.
- The curriculum is well matched to students' interests and abilities. It is made more exciting through, for example, regular additional activities and visits, which help students to learn about other cultures, and develop their understanding of citizenship and life in modern Britain. These activities, as well as the well-planned assembly programme, help students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well. The school is reviewing both its curriculum and assessment arrangements in the light of recent changes to the national curriculum.
- Leaders monitor the progress of all groups of students' regularly. They quickly identify patterns of achievement in, for example, pupils from ethnic minorities, and ensure provision is adapted to meet their needs. More-able students are supported well, both by the work they are set and by the effective setting arrangements the school employs.
- Information about students' progress is shared with parents three times each year. The format of these reports has recently been changed so that they provide parents with more helpful information about their child's progress and the targets they need to achieve.
- The school monitors the effectiveness of its use of the pupil premium funding closely. Consequently, eligible students in this group make good progress and gaps between their attainment and their peers in school are narrowing.
- Students in Years 8 to 11 receive good independent advice and guidance regarding their future careers. Older students benefit from support to help them to make informed decisions about examination subject choices, as well as the opportunities available to them in further and higher education, employment and training.
- The local authority provides a good and appropriately focused level of support to the school. For example, it has provided good support for English during the past year.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. Governors know how the school's results compare with others and are skilled in the interpretation of students' achievement data; consequently, they are able to provide a good level of support and challenge to the school.

- The governing body carries out its statutory duties fully. For example, governors ensure that the school fulfils statutory responsibilities regarding safeguarding: appropriate checks are in place for visitors to the school and all staff have been checked as required and are trained to keep students safe and free from harm.
- The curriculum is monitored by the governing body to ensure that students develop tolerance and respect for people of different cultures and faiths as well as preparing students to take their place in modern Britain.
- Governors know how the additional pupil premium is used and they are aware of the good impact that this funding has on eligible students.
- Governors know about the quality of teaching and the management of staff performance, and they are appropriately involved in making decisions about whether teachers progress towards their targets means they should receive pay rises. Governors have ensured there are appropriate procedures in place to tackle underperformance of staff, should it be necessary.
- The governing body was reorganised when the headteacher took up her appointment. This is a key reason why it has been much more effective in the past eighteen months than previously.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students behave well in lessons and around the school, including students who are supported by the specially resourced provision. The vast majority have good attitudes to learning and are keen to do well and try their best. The students who attend college and the local school to study vocational courses also behave well.
- The vast majority of students are polite, well-mannered and courteous. They dress smartly and wear their uniform with pride. Students show a high level of respect towards each other and staff as well as the school environment; the site is tidy and free from litter.
- The large majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agree that the school makes sure that students behave well.
- Exclusions from school are low and continuing to improve. This reflects the positive attitudes to learning of the vast majority of students.
- Students arrive punctually to lessons and they are well-prepared and come with the appropriate equipment.
- Most students attend regularly and attendance has been above average for the past few years.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students have a strong understanding of safety matters, including how to keep safe when working online.
- The school has good safeguarding systems in place to check the safety of students who attend college and the local school for one day per week. Their attendance is rigorously monitored to check that these students are where they should be.
- Bullying is rare and as a result, students feel safe at school. Students are taught about the different forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying, and they are well equipped to manage such situations should they arise.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has been improving strongly over the past eighteen months and it is now good in both English and mathematics. The teaching of reading is also good. Activities in all subjects are usually well-matched

to students' skills and abilities, and this means that all groups of students make good progress.

- Most teachers have high expectations of the effort and progress required from students and this is an important reason why students show good attitudes to learning. This applies equally to students from different backgrounds, including those who speak English as an additional language. Work is appropriately challenging because teachers skilfully use assessment information to set work at the right level. Disadvantaged students are supported very well by teachers because they make sure that these students receive appropriate levels of support when this is needed.
- Teaching for disabled students and those who have special educational needs, including those who are supported in the specially resourced provision, is good. Teachers and teaching assistants have detailed and accurate information about each student's particular needs and they plan work which helps students to build on their strengths and develop their weaknesses very well, particularly with respect to improving reading. Teaching assistants use questions very effectively to help students to think carefully. Students in the special provision make good progress in coping with the social and communication difficulties they exhibit when first entering the school because of the sensitive and well-informed support they receive.
- The progress that the most-able students make is good because teachers make sure that the work they are set is challenging enough, and expect them to use their initiative and work purposefully at all times. Teachers also make sure that these students are appropriately challenged by the use of effective questions which require them to think hard.
- In subjects other than English, teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for students to develop their writing skills by working on long pieces of writing rather than merely producing short paragraphs. Some teachers do not always insist that students produce neat and accurate work. These aspects of teaching are an important reason why average-ability boys, in particular, do not always make as much progress as they should.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement has improved considerably since the significant changes to the leadership of the school were made in Spring 2013. As a result, almost all groups of students, including those from different backgrounds, those who speak English as an additional language and the most able, make good progress.
- Students make good progress in many subjects including mathematics, modern foreign languages, history and sociology. However, the proportion of students who achieve five or more good GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, has been broadly average in recent years. This is because students have not achieved as well as they should have in the past in English. In 2014, achievement in English was good and, as a result, the proportion of Year 11 students achieving five or more good GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, has improved.
- The proportions of students who make the progress that is expected, as well as more rapid progress in mathematics, by the time they reach Year 11, are consistently above average. In 2014, the proportion of students who made the progress that is expected in English was close to the national average and the proportion who made more rapid progress was above the national average. This is a significant improvement on previous years.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, including those who are supported in the specially resourced provision, make good progress. Teachers accurately assess these student's needs and make sure that students are able to make good progress because work is set at precisely the right level of difficulty.
- The most-able students make good progress and attain high standards. The proportion of students who have achieved three or more A* and A grades at GCSE in Year 11 has been improving for the past three years.

- The school spends the additional pupil premium funding effectively by providing additional staff who offer one-to-one or small group academic or personal support when it is needed. As a result, disadvantaged students of all abilities are making the same good levels of progress as other students in the school, across most year groups and subjects. In 2014, the school's own data show that those in Year 11 achieved results that were, on average, a sixth of a grade lower in English and half a grade lower in mathematics than other students. This is a significant improvement when compared to previous years. Compared to all students nationally in 2013 (no national data for 2014 was available at the time of the inspection), Year 11 students achieved almost a half a grade lower in both English and mathematics. This is also an improvement on previous years.
- Some students are supported by additional Year 7 'catch-up' funding, which helps those who join the school with attainment below the expected level in English and mathematics. The school uses this funding effectively to provide small group reading, spelling and mathematics classes. Students supported through this funding are catching up well as a result.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations. Consequently, students are able to have the full amount of time to study these courses. This contributes to the good progress that students make.
- Students who attend college or the partner school to study vocational courses achieve well. For example, in 2014, three quarters of students passed their courses.
- In recent years boys have not always achieved as well as girls. However, the gap between girls and boys is closing and boys are catching up with girls well, particularly in English. The key reason why boys achieve less well than girls, particularly average-ability boys, is because they do not have enough opportunities to develop long and extended pieces of writing in all subjects.

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	109713
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	449147

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	981
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Kendrick
Headteacher	Karen Johns
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2011
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