

Rushcliffe School

Boundary Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 7BW

Inspection dates

4–5 February 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.

- Students receive an excellent education, both academically and in their personal development. This prepares them exceptionally well for the next stage of their education or for employment.
- Standards are significantly above average by the end of Year 11 in most subjects, including in English and mathematics.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students achieve highly and reach above-average standards because teaching is high quality and the courses and study programmes meet the students' needs and aspirations well.
- Students of all abilities and groups, including those eligible for pupil premium funding, disabled students and those who have special educational needs, make outstanding progress throughout the school.
- Consistently good or outstanding teaching promotes students' excellent attitudes to learning, as does the well judged range of activities matched to their interests and attainment.
- Although some marking of students' work is excellent, this is not consistent across all classes and subjects.
- Students are very proud of their school and the many opportunities it gives them in and out of lessons.
- The school provides a safe, supportive environment in which students thrive.
- Students behave very well in lessons and round the school, displaying very mature attitudes to learning.
- Students' attendance is well-above average.
- Leaders and managers have ensured excellent teaching and achievement. The executive headteacher provides very effective leadership. He is supported well by other leaders, many of who are very effective. However, not all leaders are entirely systematic in checking different aspects of teaching and progress as thoroughly and are not held sufficiently to account for this.
- The governing body's excellent knowledge of the school, including the quality of teaching and students' achievement, and governors' tenacity in questioning its work, are significant factors in the school's success.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 42 lessons, of which nine were observed jointly with the headteacher or with individual members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspectors talked with many students during the two days. They held formal meetings with five groups of students. They observed students at break and lunch times and attended an assembly and form periods.
- The team held meetings with senior and subject leaders, and members of the governing body.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation including information about the progress of different groups of students through the school. They checked the school improvement plan and how it links to the quality of teaching and staff’s performance management targets. They analysed samples of students’ work, checked records of their behaviour and attendance, and examined policies to help keep them safe.
- There were 156 responses on Parent View, the online questionnaire, which the team took into account when conducting the inspection.

Inspection team

Lynne Blakelock, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jane Brown	Additional Inspector
Kim Bower	Additional Inspector
Peter McKenzie	Additional Inspector
Frank Knowles	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Rushcliffe School is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- It converted to become an academy in August 2012. Its predecessor school, of the same name, was judged good at its last inspection in 2009.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of students known to be entitled to support through the pupil premium (additional government funding for children who are looked after by the local authority, those from armed services families and students known to be eligible for free school meals) is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action is below average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well-below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- It uses alternative places for a very few students to learn away from school and presently there is only one student on such a programme.
- The school is led by an executive headteacher, and by a head of school who oversees its day-to-day running.
- The school is supporting another local secondary school, which is in challenging circumstances.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that students are able to move forward even more confidently in their learning by making sure that marking is always consistent within and between subjects in informing students very regularly what they have achieved in lessons, what to do next and that teachers check their advice has been taken.
- Increase the effectiveness of leaders at all levels by making each individually responsible for following the best practice in the school, in checking students' performance and the quality of teaching systematically, in order to sustain and build further on their levels of achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students in Year 11 achieve standards that are well-above average in the proportion attaining five A* to C grades, including in English and mathematics. A greater proportion than nationally reach the highest grades in many subjects, including in science subjects, French, English and mathematics. The school's evidence shows that students in Year 11 are on track to achieve equally well in 2014.
- Outstanding teaching and students' excellent work ethic lead to rapid progress from students' well-above average starting points, throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. They are given equal chances of success because of courses and teaching that meet their individual needs.
- Throughout the school, different groups of students achieve similarly well, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs. These students' GCSE results compare favourably with the overall school figure, and with similar students nationally. Support is planned carefully, including in discrete provision where the staff concentrate on particular academic and personal skills that students need to build on. Boys, girls and those who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as each other. Examples of students' writing in Year 8 show the most-able students achieving very highly for their age in the quality of their descriptive writing and their grammatical skills.
- Students who have not reached the expected levels in English and mathematics when they join Year 7 are given specific and very regular support, through Year 7 catch-up funding, to improve their reading, writing and number skills, in order to reach the required standard. Most students, by the end of Year 7 achieve it. The few who do not make good progress towards it.
- The students supported through pupil premium funding achieve very well compared to those nationally, in both the standards they reach and the progress they make. The gap is narrowing within the school between those students entitled and those not entitled to it, because the money is used effectively, including to provide extra staff, more resources and careers guidance. Although last year there was between three quarters and a grade difference in the GCSE grades achieved in English and mathematics for students supported by pupil premium and others, there is little difference this year. In Key Stage 3, students eligible for the funding make quicker progress than other groups of pupils.
- A few students sit GCSE mathematics early as part of the nature of the course but all study mathematics until the end of Year 11 in order to complete it. There is no negative impact on learning. Last year, a well-above-average proportion of all students achieved A* and A grades by the end of the two-year course.
- Students in Years 12 and 13 achieve outstandingly well in both their academic and personal development, reaching above average standards in most subjects and making outstanding progress. The school is addressing effectively the lower pass rates in information technology and general studies. Most students stay on to Year 13, after which 100% go into further or higher education or training, predominantly to university.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The consistently high-quality teaching throughout the school, including in English and

mathematics, is reflected in students' outstanding examination results and in their rapid progress. The support for students who need additional help or mentoring or counselling is excellent in its relevance to their individual needs.

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which is especially evident in sixth form teaching, and apply it thoughtfully to provide interesting, challenging learning, which helps students of all abilities to achieve as well as they can. Teachers have high expectations of the quality and quantity of students' work and know what they need to do to build on students' knowledge and skills very quickly.
- Teachers plan activities carefully so that students have plenty of time to practise what they have learnt. In the lessons where students made fastest progress, students of all abilities had to really think hard and thus extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson, the most-able students were stretched by the problem-solving tasks set by the teacher. He used information and communication technology well to facilitate their investigation into rewriting equations, and asked probing questions to stimulate their thinking.
- Students have many chances to practise their speaking and listening and evaluative skills. As a result, many students are confident speakers. In modern foreign languages, there is a good balance of speaking in English and the language they are learning and students develop very good skills in the accuracy of their language and enunciation, and the confidence to do so.
- Students benefit greatly from the constant opportunities to work together in pairs or small groups and to discuss and question other students' views. They become very confident in putting their views forward.
- Students' literacy skills are supported in a range of subjects. In lots of classrooms, there are helpful prompts to learning in displays.
- Marking of students' work, while excellent in some instances, is inconsistent in others, with examples of irregular and cursory marking across subjects. These weaker examples neither tell students what they have achieved or what to do next. Teachers do not ensure that any advice they give is taken.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding throughout the three key stages, in lessons and round the school. The students are very proud to be educated at this school and their behaviour and attitudes to school and to learning reflect this. They wear their uniform very smartly, and respect the school's facilities by keeping them tidy and litter-free. They move round the site maturely and calmly.
- Students value learning and most show commitment and determination to producing the best work of which they are capable. They concentrate hard throughout lessons.
- Students appreciate the opportunities that the school gives them to be the best that they can, and they make the most of the opportunities they are given, both in lessons and in after-school activities. This is shown by their above-average attendance. A well-below-average proportion of students is excluded and the number is falling because the staff put effective strategies in place to improve their behaviour.
- There is a great deal going on at this school to promote students' excellent academic and

personal development. Sixth form students, for example, take advantage of tremendous opportunities to develop their personal and inter-personal skills through roles such as liaising with the press and links with feeder schools. They listen to younger students reading.

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is excellent. The students say that they feel safe because the school's systems to keep them safe are very good. The school does not tolerate bullying of any kind and there is very little. Students say that they are well-informed of the risks caused by drugs, the internet and alcohol.
- Throughout the day, the school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in lessons, assemblies, and through their responsibilities and after-school activities. As a result students build up a very good understanding of equality, respect for all and through expressing themselves through, for example, art and texts.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The executive headteacher and the head of school lead the school with great determination. They are supported very well by the senior team. There is a continuous and successful focus on raising achievement throughout the school. This is complemented by an equal emphasis on promoting students' personal development.
- The school's accurate knowledge of the achievement of all students, through its detailed information about their achievement, and regular meetings of students with leaders to check progress towards their goals, is the basis of the school's success.
- Senior leaders have very high expectations of both staff and students, to which both respond very positively. The staff feel well supported by the senior leadership team. They particularly value the very relevant training provided which enables them to improve their teaching and leadership.
- Leaders at all levels have clearly defined roles in checking the effectiveness of their areas, including pastoral as well as subject and faculty leaders. Many are very effective but not all faculty, subject or year heads are systematic in how they check the quality of teaching and learning, and school systems do not hold them sufficiently to account for this. This is illustrated by the variability in the quality of marking.
- The leadership of teaching is well organised to check on strengths and any areas for improvement. Teachers' performance targets are based on these and the school is ensuring that every target is measurable and challenging in order to continue the strong picture of teaching. Inspectors and senior leaders' judgements of the lessons they watched together were the same.
- Activities and courses throughout the three key stages match students' levels and aspirations very closely and are adapted to meet any individual needs. As a result, students of all abilities learn very well. Through special 'Bright' days, students' learning is extended so that they are able to make informed lifestyle choices. Students speak highly of the wide-ranging after-school clubs, visits and visitors, which add to their academic as well as personal skills.
- Independent careers advice and guidance is regularly incorporated into learning from Year 7. This means that students develop the necessary skills and knowledge to, for example, make decisions about careers and apply for jobs through mock interviews and writing letters of application. The sixth form students feel particularly well supported through this process as they apply for university.

- Parents are very happy with the school's work. They feel well-informed about their children's progress and the school communicates very regularly with them about a range of issues, including through the website. Other partnerships, such as with schools that need to improve, enable Rushcliffe staff to share effective practices in teaching and leadership.

- The governance of the school:
 - The governing body is extremely well organised and has a detailed and comprehensive knowledge of the school, including of teaching. It receives a great deal of information from the school but governors also find out a lot for themselves. They meet regularly with individual leaders to discuss pupils' achievement and members attend staff briefings so that they are up-to-date with the school's progress and needs. Governors understand data about the school's performance and how it compares to similar schools nationally. They know how important it is that staff's performance targets are all measurable and challenging. Minutes of their meetings show that they challenge leaders in considerable depth about, for example, any differences in results between subjects and what the school is doing about it. They have a wide range of skills which they put to excellent use in supporting the school, including the overseeing of the budget, which is sound. As a result they are very well placed to ensure the school's continued success.

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	138482
Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	441281

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	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1406
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Jenkins
Head of School	Steve Lewis
Headteacher (Executive)	Philip Crompton
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0115 9744050
Fax number	0115 9744051
Email address	admin@rushcliffe.notts.sch.uk

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