

The Weald School

Upper Station Road, Billingshurst, West Sussex, RH16 9RY

Inspection dates 23–24 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governing body have extremely high expectations for the school. Their clear and ambitious vision of excellence is shared by all staff and students. As a result of strong leadership and teamwork, standards of teaching and achievement have improved and are high.
- Achievement is outstanding across all key stages. All groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, make rapid and sustained progress. The percentage of students attaining five A* to C grades including English and mathematics is above the national average.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding across the school, including in the sixth form. Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to support learning very well and have the highest expectations of what their students will achieve. In a number of subjects students are given good guidance about how to improve their work.
- The school's highly effective curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs, interests and aspirations of all groups of students extremely well, contributing to their success.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes are outstanding. They have a thirst and enthusiasm for learning and are keen to do their best in lessons and all other aspects of school life. Relationships are excellent and students overwhelmingly agree that the school is a safe and happy place to be in.
- The school offers students an extensive range of extra-curricular activities which they greatly appreciate and which extend and enrich their experiences both within and beyond the school day. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported exceptionally well.
- The popular and successful sixth form is outstanding. Teaching is strong and as a consequence, students achieve very well with the vast majority going on to study at the university of their choice. They receive outstanding care, guidance and support and are well equipped to take the next steps in their educational or working lives.
- The governing body is well informed about all aspects of the school and is highly effective in supporting the headteacher and senior leaders in their pursuit of continual improvement and excellence.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 60 part-lessons, seven of which were jointly observed with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also attended a number of tutor group sessions and an assembly.
- Inspectors held meetings with several groups of students, members of the senior leadership team, leaders in charge of subjects and other aspects of the school’s work, other staff with positions of responsibility and two governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors discussed lessons they had seen with teaching staff and examined a range of documents including the school’s own evaluation of its work, improvement plans and data about progress, standards, exclusions, attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors looked at a range of students’ work in lessons.
- Inspectors took into account of 498 parents’ responses to Ofsted’s on-line Parent View questionnaire and questionnaires completed by 67 members of staff.

Inspection team

Heather Leatt, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Howard Dodd	Additional Inspector
Clare Gillies	Additional Inspector
Ogugua Okolo-Angus	Additional Inspector
Carolyn Steer	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Weald School is a larger than average-sized 11 to 18 mixed comprehensive school, with a specialism in sport.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for specific groups including looked after children, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families, is lower than average.
- The school has a small number of looked after children.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is in line with the national average. However, the proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than average.
- The number of students who join or leave the school part way through their education is below the national average.
- Most students in the school are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is very low compared to the national average.
- There are 61 students eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding, which is for students who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- A small number of Key Stage 4 students receive part of their education off site at either Brinsbury College in Pulborough or at Central Sussex College in Crawley.
- The school exceeds 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 proportion of outstanding teaching further across all key stages by ensuring that:
 - assessment and marking are thorough in every subject and are clearly linked to targets that are both shared with, and fully explained to, all students
 - students are always given clear and regular guidance on how best to improve their work and are given opportunities to respond to the comments they receive.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students join the school with attainment in English and mathematics that is above the national average. They go on to achieve exceptionally well across all subjects because of the school's culture of high expectations and their own desire to do their best and succeed. As a result, by the end of Year 11 attainment is higher than national figures for all groups of students. For the past three years the proportion of students gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics has been significantly higher than average.
- The school's continuous drive for improvement in teaching and its tight tracking and monitoring of students' progress have had a significant impact on results in all subject areas over the past three years. Results in mathematics have risen rapidly and are now in line with those of English, which have been significantly higher than average for a number of years.
- Students' achievement in the sixth form is high across a range of measures including average point scores and the proportion of students gaining A* to B grades at A level. Those that need extra support are quickly identified to ensure they do their very best and steps taken by the school to improve attendance have also had a significant impact on achievement. Students in receipt of the bursary also make outstanding progress.
- Pupil premium funding has been used very successfully to provide extra help for those students supported by it and as a result, their levels of attainment and progress have improved year-on-year. Data show that gaps have narrowed rapidly between these students and those who do not receive the pupil premium. In 2013, they were around three quarters of a GCSE grade behind their classmates in English and mathematics, which is an improvement of one GCSE grade from 2012.
- Students supported by the Year 7 catch-up premium have benefited greatly from targeted teaching which has raised their levels of literacy and numeracy rapidly, with reading ages rising considerably.
- All groups of students, including those who are disabled and have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, make outstanding progress. This is because teachers plan work that matches their needs very well and also track and monitor their progress carefully.
- The school does not have a policy of entering students early for GCSE English or mathematics.. A small number of Key Stage 4 students attend one of two colleges locally, studying for a range of vocational courses. Data show that this group also achieves well and in 2013, all who left the school had a place in further education or training.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The school's checks on the quality of teaching show that teaching has improved year on year since the last inspection, including in English and mathematics. As a result, teaching in the vast majority of lessons across all subjects is at least good and very often outstanding, including in the sixth form. Students respond extremely well to their teachers and also to each other, with notable impact on their learning.
- A strong feature of lessons is the positive climate for learning that is fostered through very good relationships between staff and students, which contributes to promoting their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Inspectors saw students working diligently and with enthusiasm. More than once they were reluctant to stop working on tasks set when the lesson ended.
- Literacy has a very high profile across the school. In all subjects and key stages, teachers are aware of the need to develop students' ability to read, write and speak well. There has been a particular emphasis on developing good reading skills and the success of this was evident in a range of lessons, where inspectors observed students reading confidently and fluently.

- In the most successful lessons, teachers use excellent subject knowledge and skilful questioning to allow all students to make good or outstanding progress. Teachers have very high expectations of what students will achieve and plan lessons that both challenge and engage them, with notable impact on their learning and progress. For example, in a Year 8 English class, all students were keen to read aloud from the class novel and the lesson ended with everyone singing a song together that was related to aspects of the text. The atmosphere in the class was joyful.
- While many teachers assess and mark students' written work regularly and thoroughly, giving them constructive feedback on their achievement, this is not seen consistently in all subjects. As a result, students do not always know what they need to do to improve their work and they are not in the habit of responding to what their teachers have written, which is important if they are to achieve the highest grades.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They are polite, courteous and respectful and thrive in the school's culture of high expectations and mutual respect.
- Students in all years relish the many opportunities the school offers them to take on positions of leadership and responsibility. For example, they run their own radio station, organise popular weekly cultural events and provide valuable assistance in many areas of school life. Year 7 students are involved in a project to improve mathematics in local primary schools and return to their old schools to help teach Year 6 pupils.
- Attendance is higher than the national average and together with students' enthusiasm for learning, makes a key contribution to the rapid progress they make at school, including in the sixth form.
- Teachers manage students' behaviour very effectively and with a light-touch. As a result, exclusions, which are rare, have fallen significantly in recent years and are below average for all groups of students.
- Students at all key stages say they feel happy and safe at school and believe that being in mixed-age tutor groups contributes greatly to this. They are fully aware of many different types of bullying, including cyber, racist and homophobic bullying. They say that bullying is rare but when it does occur, it is dealt with quickly and effectively. They describe the school as a tolerant, friendly community, where discrimination is unacceptable.
- The vast majority of parents and staff believe that behaviour in the school is outstanding.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is an outstanding leader. Together with a highly able senior leadership team, he has driven improvement across all areas of the school over the past four years and has a determination to ensure that the very highest standards of achievement are reached for every student.
- The leadership team's ambitious vision for the school is shared by the governors, managers and staff. They have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and tackle these with determination and energy, striving for excellence in everything they do.
- There is an unrelenting focus on improving teaching and learning, which is linked to a personalised professional development programme which teachers appreciate, and robust performance management. The headteacher with the support of the governors has not been afraid to tackle underperformance where it has occurred and has not hesitated to take firm action to ensure required improvements.
- The highly successful curriculum is broad and balanced and designed to meet the needs of all students, who achieve extremely well. The wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities available to support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is impressive. As a result, they are very well prepared to take the next steps in their education,

training or employment.

- The school is a highly cohesive community, which has equality of opportunity for all students at its heart. Leaders and staff at all levels promote good relationships and ensure that discrimination is never tolerated. As a result, all groups of students thrive and achieve well, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, together with those in receipt of the pupil premium.
- The local authority believes the management of the school is not only outstanding but has the capacity to drive further improvements and continue to raise standards further and provides light touch support when required.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students are exemplary and meet statutory requirements. The behaviour and safety of the small number of students who attend off-site provision are monitored closely.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance of the school is outstanding. The governing body is both knowledgeable and highly effective and is very well equipped to undertake its responsibilities and carry out its statutory duties. Governors have an accurate insight into the school's strengths and areas for improvement and hold the headteacher and senior leaders fully to account for all aspects of the school's performance.
- Through reports and regular meetings, governors have an in-depth knowledge of the strengths in teaching and in different subjects. They support what has been done to tackle underperformance and they share the headteacher's vision of continual improvement. They monitor the school's performance management systems carefully and ensure teachers' progression relates directly to the quality of teaching and their contribution to wider school life. They are able to compare the school's performance to that of other schools accurately through the use of a range of data, including RAISEonline and the data dashboard.
- Governors oversee the school's finances closely and ensure that all resources are well managed. They know exactly how the school has spent its pupil premium funding and have monitored the impact of this on raising standards and narrowing the gap. They ensure that safeguarding meets all requirements fully.

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	126068
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	429624
Type of school	Comprehensive
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	1552
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	295
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Parr
Headteacher	Peter Woodman
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2009
Telephone number	01403 787200
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