

Tring School

Mortimer Hill, Tring, HP23 5JD

Inspection dates 23–24 January 2014

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.

- Achievement is good and standards are well-above average at GCSE. Students of all abilities make good progress in a wide range of subjects.
- Standards in mathematics are very high. More-able students do particularly well and achievement overall is outstanding.
- Students' progress in English is above average and less-able students make good progress in their literacy skills.
- The sixth form is outstanding and very highly regarded by students, staff and parents alike. The study programmes are very well matched to students' needs and interests.
- The provision for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is very well managed and these students make good progress.
- Teaching is good overall. The great majority of lessons are planned well with clear objectives matched to the prior learning of the students.
- Students are very attentive and behave well in lessons. They learn at a good pace, using their very strong speaking and listening skills to contribute confidently to class discussion.
- Behaviour around the school is good and students report that they feel very safe. The management of these aspects of school life is outstanding.
- The headteacher has a very good grasp of the development priorities needed to raise standards still further. Senior leaders' and governors' strong capacity to take effective action is shown by the continuing improvements in teaching and students' achievement.
- The governing body is well organised and well trained. They use their expertise very effectively to check on developments in the school and help shape its future direction.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The pace of learning is too slow in some science lessons.
- Targets are not high enough for middle and higher attaining students in English.
- Teachers' marking is not consistently frequent or detailed enough to ensure students know what they need to do to improve.
- Some teachers feel they need more opportunities to develop their teaching skills.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 46 lessons, including 14 joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors made short visits to other lessons, tutor periods and assemblies. They looked at samples of students' work and interviewed groups of students across the age range.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team, heads of subject departments, teachers, and members of the governing body. A representative of the local authority was contacted by telephone.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of school documents, including: the school's self-evaluation; school-development plans; behaviour records; safeguarding records; governing body documents; and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- Inspectors also considered the views expressed in 126 questionnaires returned by school staff, together with the 269 responses submitted by parents to the on-line survey, Parent View. A small number of written and telephone comments were made about aspects of school management and these were considered together with the other evidence gathered by the team.

Inspection team

Roger Waddingham, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Janet Allcorn	Additional Inspector
Rosemary Barnfield	Additional Inspector
Rachel Bendefy	Additional Inspector
Angela Skinner	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Tring School is an above-average sized school. It converted to academy status in July 2012. When its predecessor school, Tring School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is well below average. This is additional funding allocated by the government for groups of pupils, including those looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is much lower than in most schools of this size and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils receiving extra support through school action is average; the proportion at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 11.
- The school offers work-related training for ten Year 10 and five Year 11 students through provision from West Herts College.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently give feedback to students concerning their written work in all subjects to help them improve further
 - teachers are given opportunities to develop their teaching skills through a well-planned programme of professional development.
- Further raise achievement by:
 - making sure that students learn at a greater pace in science lessons
 - setting higher target expectations for middle and higher attaining students in English.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards are well-above average at GCSE, and this represents good progress for students from their starting points on entry to the school. Students of all abilities show high achievement in a wide range of subjects, with consistently high results over the past two years in history, geography, French and physical education. Most-able students make good progress.
- Students achieve well in English. The majority of students make expected progress, and progress in lessons is good because students use their speaking and listening skills confidently. Middle and higher attaining students are not always set challenging enough targets so that they do not make the same above-average progress seen in mathematics.
- Standards in mathematics are very high and achievement overall is outstanding in this subject. The proportion of students making more than expected progress is well-above average. Most-able students do particularly well with over a quarter of all entries graded at A* or A. Students who are eligible for the pupil premium have done less well in the past, but their progress seen in lessons was in line with that of their peers.
- Early entry has been used for a limited number of students in mathematics. This has not affected their results as the school made sure the students achieved their expected target grades.
- Students make average progress overall in science. Results in the three separate sciences are consistently high. However, results in the core and additional science examinations are broadly average and students are not always encouraged to work at a sufficient pace in lessons or given enough help on what they need to do to achieve higher examination grades.
- Achievement in the sixth form is outstanding. Standards are well above average, and the proportion of higher grade passes is high. Success rates and retention rates are above the national figures in the great majority of subjects. Students make rapid progress in a wide range of examination courses at both AS and A level. They also make very good progress in a number of applied courses. Students speak highly of the excellent support they receive in choosing subjects and in keeping track of their own progress.
- Students supported by the pupil premium have narrowed the gap in their attainment and progress compared to their peers. In English, Year 11 students were less than one half of a GCSE grade behind in 2013, while in mathematics, the gap is now less than one grade.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress in lessons through the well-directed support now provided for them. Younger students make good progress in their literacy skills, working in small groups with specialist staff who know them well.
- Year 7 students who have fallen behind make good progress because the 'catch-up' funding to support them has been used well. They are well supported through regular monitoring of reading by trained support staff, 'booster' sessions in numeracy and literacy, and extra help with personal and social development.
- The progress of students who speak English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average, and they achieve well.

- Students develop their literacy skills well across a range of subjects. Most write accurately and neatly, and read with confidence. Students develop their numeracy skills well because of the good attention to their progress they receive in mathematics lessons.
- The progress of students educated off-site for part of the week is monitored carefully by the school and they show good motivation and attendance. They make good progress in both their work-related courses and their GCSE work in English and mathematics.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good overall with several outstanding features. Teaching is outstanding in the sixth form, where staff plan tasks to build on students' prior learning very well and explain carefully what students need to do to meet higher level examination requirements.
- Teachers plan lessons in very good detail. They use the school format for planning consistently to make sure that they have clear expectations for the progress of students of different abilities, matching activities well to the lesson aims.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge effectively to devise interesting and suitably challenging tasks, which involve students well in their learning. Most lessons have a good pace because teachers give regular time reminders, students settle readily to their tasks and time is rarely wasted through off-task behaviour.
- Questioning is often used skilfully to involve students in thinking about the key ideas in a lesson. Students respond well to teachers' high expectations for detail in their answers, so that they know to give explanations for their answers without being prompted. Students show exceptional fluency and confidence in their spoken answers where teaching is outstanding; for example, when discussing a poem they justified their viewpoint by reference to other work by the same author.
- Where learning is most successful, there is a real climate of collaboration between teachers and students, who show a high degree of maturity in their attitudes as learners. For example, students clearly valued the opportunities they were given to reflect on their own progress in a German lesson.
- Visual resources are used well to illustrate key points in lessons and written materials are often well targeted to ensure all students can accomplish particular tasks. Teaching assistants are effective in helping weaker students to understand what they need to do and in giving them explanations about the steps they need to take to make progress.
- Homework is set regularly and students say that they find it useful in helping them make progress in English and mathematics in particular.
- Teachers monitor students' general progress appropriately through assessments each term. However, feedback to students on their written work is not consistently good. There is too much variation within and between departments in the frequency and detail of written marking, so that students are not always clear about what they are getting wrong and what they need to do to improve in the future. The presentation of written work was also seen to decline where books were not marked regularly.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. The great majority of parents, students and staff alike say that they feel behaviour is good and has improved in recent years. Both students and staff report that students enjoy being at the school.
- Behaviour in lessons is good overall and often outstanding. Students are punctual to lessons, arriving well-equipped and ready to learn. They listen well to each other and to the class teacher, following instructions carefully. They organise themselves well when working in groups and show good independence in accessing resources. Sixth form students show excellent maturity in their attitudes to learning and in their independent learning skills.
- Students say that bullying incidents are very rare, and they have great confidence in the school's procedures to deal with any that do occur. Incidents of a racial nature are also very uncommon and students feel very safe in the school, with those from all backgrounds working well together. The house system offers students good support for their personal development, and the management of behaviour is a strength of the school. The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding.
- Attendance is improving and has been above the national averages for the past two years. The low level of persistent absence has been maintained through regular monitoring and rapid follow up of causes of concern. The school has worked well with students to make them aware of the impact of poor attendance on their progress. Exclusions are very low and the school offers very good support to pupils who have behavioural difficulties so that there have been no permanent exclusions in the past two years.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors show a strong capacity to improve the school further. They share a clear vision to continue raising standards through the setting of high expectations for students' progress and the rigorous checking of teaching and learning. They were already aware of the concerns raised by some staff and parents contacting the inspection team and recognise the importance of good communication with staff, students and parents in the context of the pace of recent changes. Improved communication has been identified for action in the new school plan.
- The evaluation of teaching has been developed well. Senior staff have a good understanding of the key features of outstanding teaching, shown by the accurate and effective feedback they gave to staff during the inspection. Heads of department report that they have also been given good opportunities to develop their lesson monitoring skills, with regular joint observation work with senior colleagues.
- The tracking of students' progress is well organised. Assessments of progress and effort are made each term in all subjects, and the analysis of these results is used appropriately to identify both students needing further support and possible weaknesses in teaching. This progress information is being increasingly well used by middle leaders in the house system and in subject departments, although there is not yet a consistent approach to the setting of high targets in all subjects.
- In the sixth form, procedures for evaluating teaching and students' learning are very well established, together with the highly effective personal support offered to students. Leadership and management are exemplary in this aspect of the school.

- The school uses a good range of information to evaluate teachers' performance and has developed appropriate criteria to hold staff to account for their effectiveness, especially for the higher pay scales. This range of performance evidence is not currently held centrally, which means that the overall school provision of training opportunities is not as well matched to staff needs as it could be. As a result, some staff feel that their overall professional development needs are not met well enough.
- The effectiveness of school monitoring procedures is well illustrated by the clarity of the school's self-evaluation summary, which identifies key development points concisely and accurately.
- The headteacher has a very good grasp of the development priorities needed to raise standards still further and the resulting actions required. These are set out clearly in the school development plan. The school is developing the use of measures to test the impact of its work on students' achievement as part of the criteria for evaluating the success of its plan, particularly with reference to the progress of students eligible for pupil premium funding.
- Students are offered a wide range of academic subjects at GCSE and at A level. Recent developments in vocational and work-related subjects at GCSE and in sixth form study programmes mean that the needs of students are met well overall. The outstanding provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development results in very positive outcomes for their safety and well-being. Students feel the guidance they receive both from the school and from outside agencies on future career and education opportunities is very helpful. Students, including those in the sixth form, are well prepared for the next stages in their education. The school is working to ensure that the provision for personal and social education in tutor periods is consistently good for all classes.
- The new coordinator has improved the arrangements for meeting the needs of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and their progress is now good. There is an effective combination of individual and group support from specialist staff together with support in class. Younger students benefit from learning in smaller groups with fewer teachers, who know the students' needs very well through their regular contact with them.
- The arrangements for safeguarding meet all national requirements and are highly effective. Staff are kept up to date well on safeguarding practices, record keeping is detailed and the complaints policy is implemented consistently.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well organised and governors are experienced in offering school leaders both support and challenge.
 - Governors take an active part in monitoring developments in the school through regular visits to subject departments and well-written monitoring reports. They use data on students' performance well to evaluate the success of the school compared to other schools nationally.
 - They are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the school and take an active part in planning for development priorities and shaping the school's future direction.
 - Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching through the regular receipt of school review documents and they know the expectations for higher grade teachers.
 - They use their good financial expertise to monitor expenditure in the school rigorously. They hold the school to account well for the use of pupil premium funding and for the allocation of salary increments within the performance management policy.
 - Governors use support from the local authority effectively to give external advice on the headteacher's performance review and to assist with monitoring and review activities.

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	138352
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	428926

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1505
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	300
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janis Donald
Headteacher	Susanna Collings
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01442 822303
Fax number	01442 890409
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