

Eaton Bank Academy

Jackson Road, Congleton, Cheshire, CW12 1NT

Inspection dates 7–8 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Outstanding leadership and management, along with very effective governance, have resulted in a rapid improvement in the school's effectiveness since the previous inspection.
- In Key Stages 3 and 4, all groups of students now achieve well across a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Standards of attainment have risen rapidly and continue to do so.
- As a result of highly effective leadership, provision in the sixth form has improved and is now consistently good. Sixth-form students enjoy their education, are well taught and achieve well.
- Leaders have strengthened the quality of teaching successfully. Teaching is consistently good and there is some outstanding practice.
- Expectations of students are high. Activities capture students' interest and provide effective challenge.
- Students show great pride in the school. Their excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning reflect this.
- Students feel very safe and secure. They are cared for and supported extremely well and are happy at school.
- The curriculum is innovative and closely matched to the needs of students, who have excellent experiences at school. Students are extremely well prepared for their next phase of education, training or employment.
- Parents, students and staff have extremely positive views of the school; they appreciate the rapid improvement it has made and the quality of education it provides.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teachers ensure that students respond fully and swiftly to all written feedback in marking. Students do not show that they have used this feedback to accelerate their learning further.
- Although improving, the attainment and progress of disadvantaged students remain behind those of other students in the school. This gap is yet to be closed fully.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons, of which two were observed jointly with senior leaders. A series of shorter observations was undertaken around the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders, staff and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors spoke with students in lessons and around the school, including at break and lunchtimes. They also spoke formally with four groups of students about their experience in school and the quality of education they receive.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and reviewed policies, in particular the school's evaluation of its own performance, school improvement planning, monitoring and performance documentation, safeguarding information, minutes of governing body meetings, information about students' progress and samples of their work.
- Inspectors took account of the 110 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the school's own parental survey, as well as 43 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Edwin de Middelaer, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kathleen Harris	Additional Inspector
Pamela Hemphill	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Kelly	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Eaton Bank Academy is a smaller than average-sized secondary school with a sixth form. It converted to become an academy in September 2012.
- Most students are White British.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported by pupil premium funding is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- There is no off-site provision for students. In the sixth form, students undertake work experience.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school is a member of the Chimney House Group and the Congleton Education Community Partnership, which involves local primary and secondary schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching still further so that it is outstanding by making sure that all teachers ensure that students respond fully and swiftly to all written feedback.
- Further improve the achievement of disadvantaged students, so that the gap in their attainment compared to other students in the school is closed fully, by checking on their understanding and application of skills even more frequently.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Governors and senior leaders, supported by inspirational leadership from the headteacher, have a very clear sense of purpose and vision for the school, which is now embedded in the school's culture. Expectations and aspirations for all students are very high. Leaders are strongly and relentlessly focused on continually improving the quality of teaching and learning so that students reach their full potential. There is an exceptional ethos and climate for learning within the school. As a result, students are now taught well, achieve well across the school and their behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent.
- Senior leaders have a deep and accurate understanding of the school, due to rigorous self-evaluation which leads to focussed and highly effective action plans for improvement. As a result, there has been a rapid rise in standards across the school since the last inspection. Leaders are highly skilled at working with staff to improve teaching, so that it captures the interests of students and engages them in their learning, thus accelerating progress. Leaders monitor and scrutinise effectively the performance of teachers who are held very successfully to account for their teaching and progress of their students.
- The leadership of teaching is outstanding. The rigour of monitoring teacher performance leads to bespoke professional development for staff and effective sharing of best teaching practice, the impact of which leaders check closely. Staff are very appreciative of the professional development offered to them and are also fully committed to the school's vision. Performance management is now rigorous, with clear objectives set for teachers, and appropriate development to support them in achieving these objectives. There is a clear understanding that pay progression is linked to improved teaching, leadership and achievement.
- Middle leaders are focused on improving the quality of provision and are strategic in their thinking. They are clear about their roles and responsibilities and model the high standards set by senior leaders. They take full responsibility for leading learning in their teams and have the highest aspirations for the school and its students. Their leadership increases the school's ability to carry on making improvements.
- The curriculum is innovative and designed to meet the needs of all students. While providing a thorough grounding in core skills and subjects, it provides flexibility for students to study a wide range of other courses, such as astronomy or the Duke of Edinburgh Award. It also uses that flexibility to ensure effective provision for students' personal well-being and development, tolerance and other British values. This prepares them exceptionally well for life in modern Britain and the next phase of their education, training or employment. It provides students with opportunities to study and develop academic, technical or sporting skills and excellence. The range of extra-curricular activities is also wide ranging and adds to students' experiences which the school provides.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are a strong feature of the school and provision is audited carefully to ensure that it gives students comprehensive opportunities and experiences to develop these aspects fully. This plays an important role in the exceptionally positive ethos of the school. It supports the school's promotion of equality of opportunity, tolerance for others and good relations and so actively prevents any discrimination.
- Careers education and advice is independent and the guidance offered supports students' career choices and highlights the range of options available to them at 16 and 19. Students spoke highly of the guidance they receive and the value it has proven to them.
- The views of all stakeholders in the school are very positive and leaders use them to influence their action plans for the school. Parents, staff and students have extremely positive opinions about the school. 'In this school, all teachers think about us kids first and every one of them will go that extra mile to help you' was a typical comment from students.
- Leaders and staff track students' performance rigorously and intervene quickly if any student starts to fall behind. Leaders scrutinise their performance skilfully to spot any variances in the achievement of different groups of students and to narrow any gaps. Recently, previous gaps in the achievement of boys compared to girls have been addressed successfully.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding well and monitor its impact well. It is used to support the learning and progress of disadvantaged students, to raise their attendance, involve their parents in schooling and also to enhance their opportunities and provision. Leaders monitor its continued impact on their progress and attendance carefully. Leaders know that their next steps are to ensure that students' understanding and application of their skills are checked on even more frequently.
- Leaders provide support to other nearby schools, including chairing a local school committee. They use the support from external advisers well to improve the school further.

- Leaders have established highly effective safeguarding procedures and systems which protect and ensure the safety of students. These meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have an appropriate structure and organisation, are clear about their role and are involved in the creation and maintenance of the school's ethos. They are very effective in their remit and work closely with the senior leaders to drive rapid improvement across the school.
 - They are very clear about the school's strengths and areas for further development, and are focused on the continuous improvement of the school. They ask astute questions, support leaders well, but also hold them to account rigorously. They are fully trained in the use of school data, and use these effectively with senior leaders to set clear improvement plans. They have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching, and oversee performance robustly, rewarding those who achieve objectives set and have been involved with senior leaders in addressing any underperformance.
 - They manage the school's finances exceptionally well; they have excellent controls and procedures in place to ensure that best value principles are applied constantly. This results in very effective use of resources linked to school improvement, and financial sustainability is monitored regularly. They check regularly on the impact of spending of funds, including that of pupil premium funding and Year 7 catch-up funding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. It has improved rapidly since the last inspection, due to excellent leadership.
- Students have very positive attitudes to learning, are keen to do well and want to achieve. Staff have very high expectations of students, to which students respond well. Students are very aware of the school's vision and have adopted it readily. They settle into lessons very quickly and co-operate eagerly with teachers when asked to perform learning activities.
- Behaviour around school is exemplary, calm and purposeful. Students are very polite, courteous and at ease with each other and adults. There is an established culture of very positive relationships, and students speak very highly of the school and the educational experiences it provides for them. Staff provide excellent support for students, care deeply about them and are good role models. Students respond quickly to any instructions or guidance given by staff.
- Students who are disabled or who have special educational needs are supported very well by the school's specialist support team, who work closely with them and their parents to ensure that they make good progress. They are well prepared for their next phase in education.
- Students, staff and parents all have very positive views about the school and the rapid improvement they have seen in students' behaviour. The management of students' behaviour is excellent and highly effective. There is very little bullying or discrimination and on the rare occasion it does happen, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Low-level disruption is also extremely rare, with any incidents being managed consistently well to ensure any interruption to learning is minimised. This makes a marked contribution to students' learning and progress.
- There are many opportunities for students to adopt leadership roles in the school, from within their form or year group to student ambassadors, as well as supporting other students and the school community.
- Attendance has improved rapidly over the last two years and is now in line with national averages. Inspection evidence shows this trend is set to continue.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding.
- The school has excellent systems and structures in place and it takes the safety of students extremely seriously. There is a meticulous assessment of risk around the site and a very strong emphasis on safeguarding.
- All staff are trained appropriately in safeguarding issues and in identifying students at risk. The school engages with other agencies and partners about any potential risk and takes positive steps in educating students and parents about risk and how to manage it.
- Students feel extremely safe and secure as a result. They clearly understand what constitutes unsafe situations and are very aware of how to keep themselves and others safe, including with regard to e-safety and the misuse of substances.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved rapidly since the last inspection and is now consistently good across a wide range of subjects. Teachers have high expectations of students, and students themselves demonstrate sustained engagement in their learning. They make good progress. There is an increasing amount of outstanding practice, which is a result of the school's drive to improve teaching constantly.
- There has been a strategic and concerted approach to improve teaching. Staff training and development are targeted clearly to do so and best teaching practice is shared effectively. Support for newly qualified teachers is also of high quality and helps them hone their skills. As a result, lessons are enjoyable, involve students in their learning and challenge them to make good or better progress. In a Year 9 history lesson, students demonstrated a sustained focus on tasks set by the teacher. They worked individually and with peers very productively, and support each other's learning extremely well. The teacher facilitated this through ensuring that students explained issues in detail to each other, shared their knowledge and reasoning, which deepened understanding as a result.
- Lessons are well planned and based upon students' prior learning and assessment information, with activities that capture students' interest and provide appropriate challenge for them. Teachers' excellent relationships with students help to provide a very positive environment in which students learn well. Students speak with enthusiasm about the teaching they receive. Teachers question students skilfully, check on their understanding regularly and give good feedback to them. Students therefore know what they have to do to improve and act upon this. Written feedback is informative, but not all teachers ensure students respond swiftly or fully enough to this to show they have applied this feedback effectively.
- An increasing focus on developing literacy across the curriculum ensures that students have high levels of literacy overall. Carefully targeted support in developing weaker readers through accelerated reading and writing programmes has a significant impact on their progress. Students have opportunities to read widely and often in class. Numeracy skills are also high, due in the main to effective teaching of mathematics throughout the school.
- Homework is set regularly and provides appropriate challenge. It consolidates as well as extends learning and makes a positive contribution to student progress.
- Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to the learning and progress of students they support. They help create a positive climate for learning for students and support them in gaining understanding and applying that in lessons.
- Overall, disadvantaged students are taught well. However, there remains scope to check on the understanding of disadvantaged students even more frequently in order to accelerate their learning further.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The outstanding leadership of the school has driven a rapid improvement in achievement during the last two years. In all key stages, students now make good progress across a wide range of subjects, including in English and mathematics. School data and a review of students' current work show that this picture of rapid improvement across the school is being sustained.
- Most students start Year 7 with typically average standards. Most make good rates of progress and attain above average standards by the end of Year 11.
- Students achieve well in English and mathematics. Effective teaching of literacy and numeracy across the school supports students' progress well in, for example, in oracy and reading, number and graphs.
- In 2014, the school entered some students early for their GCSE in English Language. This did not limit the potential of the most able or other students. However, the school no longer enters students early for GCSE examinations.
- The most able students make the same good, and improving, progress as other students. They are constantly challenged to reach their potential. As a result, many achieve the highest grades in GSCE examinations across a wide range of subjects.
- From their different starting points, disadvantaged students are achieving increasingly well. In Year 11 in 2014, in English, disadvantaged students attained around one grade lower than other students at the school and other students nationally. In mathematics, their attainment was almost two grades lower than other students in the school and nationally. Although the gap in attainment narrowed in English, in mathematics the gap widened. Nevertheless, there has been a rapid rise in the progress of disadvantaged students across a wide range of subjects and as a result, gaps in attainment across the school are closing.

In mathematics, school's data for current Year 11 students indicate that the gap in mathematics is now around one grade, rather than two. Even so, gaps have yet to be closed fully.

- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress across the school. Inspection evidence shows that their progress is accelerating even further, particularly in the lower school. Good quality teaching, along with highly effective care and additional support provided, ensures they do well.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used effectively to support those students who are working at levels of attainment in their literacy and numeracy that are behind those expected. These students are making good progress as a result of the additional reading, writing and mathematics support programmes in place.

The sixth form provision

is good

- There has been significant improvement in the sixth form since the last inspection and provision is now consistently good and improving even further.
- All groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, the most able and disadvantaged students, make good progress in a wide range of subjects. Achievement, retention and success rates have improved significantly over the last two years. Inspection evidence suggests they are set to rise further. Students who do not achieve a C grade in GCSE English and/or mathematics successfully gain a C or above on re-taking the examination in the sixth form.
- Courses of study are designed specifically to meet the needs of students, based upon their prior attainment and career choices. A large majority of students go on to study in higher education.
- Students speak very highly of the opportunities on offer and the quality of teaching they receive. They take a full and active part in the school, and have many opportunities to develop their leadership and social skills, such as taking on roles as school ambassadors who support younger students or representing the school at functions and events. This prepares students particularly well for the next phase in their education, training or employment and to take their place in modern British society.
- Teaching is consistently good overall, with some of it outstanding. As a result, learning and progress are good and improving. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge is used to plan lessons that challenge and deepen students' understanding of key concepts. Questioning is skilled and targeted to ensure that students can apply their understanding to problems and explain their reasoning to solving them. Teachers check regularly on students' understanding in this way. They provide effective and focused feedback so that students are clear what they have to do to improve further. In a Year 12 art lesson for example, students were given choices for their learning objectives so that they can 'personalise' the lesson to ensure they all make rapid progress. All were engaged and took full responsibility for their learning.
- Students feel very safe and are very aware of any risk to them and how to manage it. They appreciate fully all the advice and guidance given to them. Equally, they speak highly about the effectiveness of the impartial careers advice and guidance they receive, as well as the encouragement staff give them to achieve well.
- Leadership of the sixth form is highly effective. Leaders have made a significant impact on sixth-form provision and achievement, and are focused on continuing this drive.

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	138662
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	462342

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	739
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Smith
Headteacher	Ann Webb
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2013
Telephone number	01260 273000
Fax number	01260 297352
Email address	a.webb@eatonbank.org

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