

East Bergholt High School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137218
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	386016
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2012
Lead inspector	Mark Phillips HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	912
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Espley
Headteacher	Colin Turner
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Heather Housden

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Cheryl Jackson

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors spent 19 hours observing 37 lessons taught by 37 different teachers, and making tours of classrooms to look at provision for students with special educational needs, and the quality of students' work and marking. Meetings were held with students, staff, members of the governing body and, at the school's request, a representative of the local authority. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, together with the 259 parental, 144 student and 17 staff responses that were made to the inspection questionnaires.

Documentation considered included data on achievement, attendance and exclusions, together with the school's records relating to students' behaviour. The single central record of safeguarding checks was also scrutinised.

Information about the school

East Bergholt High is an average-sized secondary school. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is below average, and the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. Very few students are from minority ethnic heritages or speak English as an additional language. In 2011 the school met the government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

The current headteacher took up post in January 2011. After a short period of consultation, the school converted to academy status in August 2011.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- East Bergholt High is a satisfactory school. It is not a good school (as the school's pre-inspection self-evaluation proposed) because of inconsistencies in achievement, teaching, behaviour and safety, and leadership and management.
- Over the past two years the proportion of students achieving five GCSEs at grade C or above including English and mathematics has been in line with the national average. Students make good progress to achieve high standards in English. However, achievement in mathematics is weaker. Here, standards were below average in 2010; they improved in 2011 but were still not good enough. Examinations already passed by current students support the school's view that the 2012 results will improve further. Progress in mathematics is now satisfactory.
- There are some examples of good and outstanding teaching but there is also too much teaching that is only satisfactory, particularly in mathematics. Most lessons are planned appropriately although not all are robust enough in their promotion of subject knowledge. Moreover, the quality of teachers' marking is very inconsistent.
- Attendance is above average, and there are good arrangements for keeping pupils safe. Behaviour around the school site is generally good. However, a significant number of parents expressed concerns about low-level disruption in lessons, which has a negative effect on learning. Inspectors saw examples of such behaviour, particularly where teaching was weaker. Another indication of students' variable attitudes to learning is in the presentation of their work, with too many books that are untidy and/or contain doodles or graffiti.
- Decisive leadership and management have arrested the decline in students' achievement since 2009, most significantly in mathematics. Senior leaders and governors have overseen the school's successful conversion to academy status. However, while the curriculum provides a good breadth of options, particularly

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in Key Stage 4, the depth of curriculum planning across the school is variable.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise achievement in mathematics so that students achieve standards at GCSE that are consistently above the national average, by
 - ensuring that the thorough revision of the mathematics scheme of work is completed by the start of the Summer Term 2012
 - by the end of the Autumn Term 2012, ensuring that teaching in mathematics is consistently good and outstanding throughout the school.
- Eradicate inconsistencies in teaching, and in students' behaviour in lessons by:
 - ensuring that all lessons are planned and taught with a rigorous focus on developing students' subject knowledge and understanding
 - providing teaching that takes every opportunity to engage students in high-quality active learning, to build increased pride in and ownership of their work and greater engagement in lessons
 - improving assessment throughout the school by ensuring that all work is marked regularly, including precise comments that help students raise the quality of their subject-specific learning and presentation.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Most parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire indicated contentment with their children's overall achievement in school. However, despite consistently good progress in English and well above average numbers gaining five grade C-A* GCSEs overall, data shows clearly that students' achievement in 2010 and 2011 was disappointing, given the standards that these students had attained in their primary schools. In both years, this was largely because of weaker achievement in mathematics. Actions, including engaging external support, were taken after the inadequate mathematics results in 2010; these led to some improvements in 2011. Significant changes in management and a concerted programme of intervention have brought more secure progress since last September. Students told inspectors that mathematics lessons have much improved, and results from the early entry and modular examinations already taken suggest strongly that the 2012 results will reflect the satisfactory progress now being made. The learning and progress seen in lessons and in scrutiny of work during the inspection also suggest that achievement is broadly satisfactory across the school.

The inconsistencies between English and mathematics are reflected across other

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GCSE subjects. Achievement in science improved significantly in 2011, with results above average in the single sciences. At the same time, achievement in design technology was only broadly satisfactory because of weaknesses in students' understanding and use of resistant materials. Although more students take GCSE options in modern languages and history than is typical nationally, achievement in these subjects was also only broadly satisfactory in 2010 and 2011.

While the progress of all groups is satisfactory, some progress at a faster rate than others. In 2011, girls performed much better than boys. In both 2010 and 2011, higher-ability students demonstrated more rapid progress than those of middle ability or the small number who have special educational needs. Eradicating these inconsistencies is key to moving the school's overall effectiveness from satisfactory to good or outstanding.

Quality of teaching

Most parents and students who completed the inspection questionnaires thought that teaching in the school was good. Inspection findings show that there is good and outstanding teaching and that very little is inadequate, but inspectors found the majority of teaching to be only satisfactory. Inconsistencies in achievement are matched by inconsistencies in teaching. In the best lessons, such as a Year 8 English lesson about the novel 'Holes', students of all abilities were thoroughly absorbed in learning because of the teacher's expert questioning and intellectual provocation. In such lessons, students are busy and stimulated and there are no opportunities for their minds to wander off-task. In a Year 7 drama lesson, for example, excellent opportunities were provided for students to develop and demonstrate their understanding of physical theatre conventions through a series of practical activities. However, not enough lessons are of this quality. Most of the teaching observed in mathematics was satisfactory. For standards to improve further, significant improvements in the teaching of mathematics are required.

There are several reasons why teaching is satisfactory. While there is consistent application of the school's expectations for clear lesson structures, there is not always robust enough promotion of high subject-specific expectations. Similar work and standards are set for students of all abilities, with not enough consideration given to students' individual learning needs. Departmental curriculum files sampled by inspectors revealed some well-resourced, detailed plans. However, there are subjects, most notably mathematics, where there is too much dependence on published schemes of work without due consideration given to the school's particular context. While the mathematics scheme of work is currently undergoing a thorough revision, it currently does not promote better than satisfactory progress. In satisfactory lessons too much emphasis is placed on teacher exposition rather than on student participation. While this ensures that subject information is conveyed to students, it does not promote their active or independent learning. Adequate use is made of assessment techniques such as mini-whiteboards to allow every student to give and show their answers. However, these strategies are not always followed through – for example, by following up with students who answer incorrectly so that

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misunderstandings are alleviated. The quality and quantity of marking varies considerably. Outstanding teaching in a Year 10 science lesson was supported by regularly marked books with detailed comments that explained how students could improve further. However, there are other instances of books being marked irregularly, with comments that praise completion of work, but do not question its quality or confront poor presentation.

There are good opportunities provided in lessons for students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. Issues are presented and managed sensitively by teachers, although the extent to which students develop their understanding is again constrained when teacher talk dominates and students are not able to engage in discussion.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Attendance is above average for almost all groups of students and punctuality to lessons is good, too. Reported instances of racist or homophobic behaviour and exclusion are uncommon. A small number of parents raised concerns about bullying and intimidation, particularly of younger students and on the school buses; the school's records show that when the few incidents of bullying have been reported, they have been dealt with appropriately. There are some good student-led anti-bullying strategies, for which the school has won an award from the local authority.

Overall, East Bergholt High is seen by parents and students as a safe environment and there is little major disruption to the day-to-day running of the school. However, four in every ten parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire raised concerns about low-level disruption in lessons. Many of these were articulated through specific examples. Inspectors agree that behaviour in classes is inconsistent. While the majority of students are compliant and follow teachers' instructions, they do not have enough opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning or participate actively in discussions; they are passive for too long, too often. It is in these lessons that low-level disruption most often occurs, and it is in these lessons that students, typically, show much less ownership of their learning and much less pride in their written work and presentation. These are important reasons why achievement is inconsistent and only satisfactory overall, and also why behaviour and safety is judged satisfactory rather than good.

Leadership and management

There have been clear improvements since the new headteacher was appointed. Results in mathematics and science improved in 2011; better strategic organisation of these departments, under the single direction of an assistant headteacher, have brought further improvements. The school's self-evaluation correctly identifies strengths and relative weaknesses in provision and outcomes, but is over-generous in its judgements. For this reason, the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory, rather than good.

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A broad, balanced curriculum is offered across the school; good partnerships with other local providers allow students to choose from a much broader range of options in Key Stage 4 than the school alone could provide. Inconsistencies remain in the quality of middle management which affects the quality of curriculum planning. There is new or temporary leadership in mathematics, design technology and music that has yet to show full impact through good curriculum planning or good students' achievement. There are also inconsistencies in the management of support for disabled students and those with special educational needs, including the use of teaching assistants to support students in lessons.

The leadership and management of teaching are satisfactory. There was general agreement between inspectors and school leaders about the quality of teaching seen in joint observations, although some of the school's own observations placed much more emphasis on generic teaching strategies than on the quality of subject-specific teaching and learning. This was confirmed through scrutiny of the school's records of lesson observation, which record teachers' use of generic teaching strategies but are less effective in their evaluation of the progress made by students.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall but with particular strengths in students' participation in sporting and cultural activities. Provision in physical education was judged outstanding in a subject survey inspection during 2011; above-average numbers continue to study music in Key Stage 4, drama is taught well, and students are currently rehearsing for their next musical theatre production, 'Fiddler on the Roof'. This in turn represents good partnership working as it also involves visiting instrumental teachers and community musicians.

There are good arrangements in place for safeguarding students. Safe recruitment and vetting procedures are followed appropriately; members of the governing body have good understanding of safeguarding and safety matters. There are equally thorough strategies for promoting equalities and tackling discrimination although the inconsistencies in achievement between different groups of students mean that the effectiveness of these strategies remain satisfactory overall.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 February 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of East Bergholt High School, Colchester CO7 6RJ

I am writing to thank you for your help and cooperation during the recent inspection of your school. The school was judged to be satisfactory in all respects.

The reason why the school was judged satisfactory, rather than good, is because there is too much variation in the quality of teaching and the quality of your work. For example, results in English have been very good but, at the same time, results in mathematics have been disappointing. Changes made to the organisation of the mathematics department over the past year have brought some improvements and the results already achieved by the current Year 11 students are better – but there is still some way to go before mathematics results can be considered good.

While recognising that you have some inspiring teachers who make learning active and enjoyable, we also think that there are too many lessons that do not involve or challenge you actively enough. It is to your credit that behaviour around the school is generally good and, for the most part, you are compliant in lessons and complete the tasks asked of you. However, we know from our observations, and the comments made by a significant number of your parents, that occasionally lessons are disrupted by inappropriate off-task behaviour. We have asked your teachers to make sure that you are involved and challenged throughout every lesson, but also ask you all to play your part by staying on-task and sensibly behaved in all classes and by taking better care with the presentation of your work.

There have been some improvements made in the school's performance over the past two years, and particularly since the school converted to an academy. The school has satisfactory capacity to make further improvements, and will be helped by the continued support of you and your parents – including through your continued good attendance at school, which is a very important factor for good achievement in your examinations.

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector

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