

Ickniel High School

Riddy Lane, Luton, LU3 2AH

Inspection dates 23–24 January 2013

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.

- Overall students make good progress. The proportion of students achieving five GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is above average. In mathematics, students make outstanding progress.
- Teaching is good in most subjects. Teachers plan a wide range of interesting activities in lessons. There are examples of outstanding teaching in mathematics, English and art.
- The school's focus on traditional values ensures that behaviour is good. Attendance is above the national average. Students from different backgrounds get on well with each other.
- Deaf students in the specially resourced department are supported by experienced staff and integrate fully into the life of the school.
- The school's visual arts specialism makes an exceptional contribution to students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- Senior leaders focus relentlessly on improving students' achievement. As a result, standards have risen steadily over recent years and are now above average.
- Governors hold senior leaders to account through a good balance of challenge and support. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Boys' achievement is good but has not been as high as that of girls.
- Students who are supported by additional funding, and disabled students and those who have special educational needs, do not make the same accelerated progress as other groups. Senior leaders recognise this but the actions they have taken have not yet had the desired impact.
- A minority of teaching still requires improvement. In a small number of lessons, the quality of teachers' marking means that students are not always clear about how to improve their work. Teachers do not always match work to students' individual needs.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 51 lessons, seven of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, groups of students, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the views of the 38 parents who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire, and the results from the school's own survey of parents and carers. They analysed the results of the staff questionnaire to which 131 replies were received.
- Inspectors analysed the 2012 examination results and the published results for previous years. They looked at the school's data on students' progress, lesson plans, minutes of meetings and records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance. They also reviewed the academy's self-evaluation and improvement plans.

Inspection team

Lisa Fraser, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Alan Jones	Additional Inspector
Rosemarie McCarthy	Additional Inspector
Paul Burton	Additional Inspector
Christopher Christofides	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than most 11–16 secondary schools.
- The largest ethnic group is White British; Pakistani and Bangladeshi students are the largest other ethnic groups.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, from Forces families, and for students known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have educational needs is average as is the proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of educational needs.
- The school has specially resourced provision for seventeen deaf students from across Luton. Students use British sign language (BSL) to communicate.
- The school has a visual arts specialism.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Icknield High School converted to become an academy school in December 2011. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school works in a partnership with eight secondary schools called 'Luton Futures'.
- Five students attend off-site alternative provision which includes the Eden project, Luton Town academy and the DJ academy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding by:
 - making sure that all teachers mark students' work regularly
 - ensuring that teachers mark work in sufficient detail so that students know exactly what they need to do to achieve a better grade.
- Ensure that the achievement of all groups is outstanding by:
 - matching work closely to students' individual needs, and in particular, making sure that more-able students are given tasks which are more demanding so that they can achieve the very highest grades
 - improving the academic support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs
 - developing the independent learning skills of students eligible for the pupil premium, so that these students make the same accelerated progress as other groups.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average for their age when they join the school. In recent years, the proportion of students gaining five A* to C GCSEs, including English and mathematics, has steadily improved. By the time they reach the end of Year 11, standards in both English and mathematics are now above average. Students also make above-average progress in humanities, German and physical education. In contrast, students' results in religious education are low.
- In mathematics, standards are well above average and students make outstanding progress. This is a result of the good senior leadership focus on improvement in mathematics and the high expectations of the new subject leader. Selective use of early entry GCSE mathematics in November of Year 11 has been effective in improving the achievement of middle-ability students. More-able students make better progress than that expected nationally as they do not sit their examination early.
- Students attain more A* and A grades than average in German. Some more-able students in other subjects, however, do not all attain the higher grades that they should. For example, the proportion of students achieving an A* or A grade in English literature is significantly below average.
- The overall progress of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi students is significantly above average. Girls achieve higher standards than boys. Senior leaders are aware of the gender gap and teachers' training has recently focused on developing strategies to improve boys' achievement. This has been effective: inspectors observed good rates of progress by boys in lessons.
- Almost all students progress to college or further education with a tiny percentage opting for employment with training. Students' good achievement means they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Communicators working with deaf students are highly skilled in supporting their progress in lessons. Deaf students enjoy their learning and participate fully in mainstream classes. They make good progress across different subjects, although their progress is better in mathematics than in English. Students say this is a result of the more complex communication required in English lessons.
- Other disabled students and those who have special educational needs make progress in line with that expected nationally but they do not make the same good rates of progress as other groups. The school has a track record of support for the development of these students' social skills. The new leadership of the special needs department recognises that the school has been less effective in supporting these students' academic achievement and it has taken steps to remedy this. Students' current work in lessons shows that their achievement is improving.
- The average points gained for students eligible for the pupil premium are better than similar students nationally. Even so, these students are not making the same accelerated rates of progress as other groups in the school. The school uses the additional funding to provide a range of support, which includes extra tuition, one-to-one mentoring and study visits to universities, including Bedford and Cambridge, in order to raise students' aspirations. Students speak very positively about the extra support they receive. They have interesting ideas about

how it could be even more effectively utilised to support their learning outside the classroom.

- Five students attend alternative off-site provision. These students achieve well. Their attendance and progress are monitored closely by the school.

The quality of teaching is good

- The great majority of the teaching observed during the inspection was good or outstanding. This closely matched the school's own view of teaching.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan lessons with a range of imaginative activities which engage and motivate students. Teachers' explanations of tasks are very clear. This helps students to know exactly what is expected of them. In the best lessons, teachers use questioning well to probe students for more detailed answers and to check their understanding. Recent improvements in science teaching are providing more suitable and stimulating learning. For example, students in a Year 10 science lesson on sustainable energy made outstanding progress as a result of the teacher's inspired planning and creative resources.
- Students say that teachers make learning fun. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. Older students value the extra support that teachers give them in additional classes at break-time and after school. Students speak appreciatively about the outstanding website resource developed by the subject leader in history to support students' independent learning.
- Proactive and responsive teaching assistants make a strong contribution to the progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs in lessons. Teaching assistants have established a good balance of helping students who are struggling whilst encouraging them to do the work for themselves. Students need support to become even more independent so that they make better progress in examinations.
- Teaching in several subjects makes an outstanding contribution to students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. For example, in a lower-school music lesson on the classical music of northern India, the teacher's excellent subject knowledge and planning enabled students to develop their own thoughtful compositions in the style of a raga. In a Year 8 history class, the teacher's good use of questioning prompted students to reflect on the morality of Tudor England where so many people were poor. In a Year 11 photography class, the teacher's expert guidance encouraged highly artistic student responses.
- The quality of marking across subjects is too variable. Students do not always know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work. In a few subjects, marking is not regular enough.
- In a small number of lessons where teaching requires improvement, teachers do not effectively manage students' behaviour, resulting in low-level chatter and students losing concentration. Teachers do not always plan work to meet the needs of all abilities. In these lessons, the work is generally too easy for the more able.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Students in every year group are motivated by the outstanding system of rewards which has a positive impact on their learning and progress. Online surveys confirm that parents feel their child is happy at school.

- Attendance is improving and is above average. Good links with parents ensure that students are generally punctual to school. Permanent exclusions are very rare.
- Students in all year groups say they feel safe at school. They have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying. Where bullying occurs, students are confident the school takes appropriate action. Older students are ready to intervene if they think someone is being treated unfairly.
- In assemblies, students' behaviour is exemplary. Older students often act as role models and former students who are now sixth formers return to mentor younger students to help improve their achievement. There are a good many opportunities for students to get involved with the running of the school and to make contributions to the local community. Most recently, students have taken responsibility for fundraising for victims of Gaza and organising events to celebrate Black History month and the Harvest festival.
- Students are proud of their school community, where those from a range of ethnic backgrounds get on well together and show respect for beliefs different to their own. They value the extra support the school offers if students have any learning or social difficulties.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong leadership. He is ably supported by an experienced senior leadership team. Together they have brought about good improvement in raising overall standards in English and mathematics.
- Highly effective use of data is made to track students' achievement. This ensures that senior leaders have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, leading to well-focused plans for improvement which have resulted in most groups of students making good progress. Senior leaders are now rightly focusing on raising the attainment of students funded by the pupil premium, and disabled students and those who have special educational needs, so that they achieve as well as their peers.
- Senior leaders hold staff to account for the quality of teaching. Performance management systems are robust and supported by good-quality training which focuses on both individual and whole-school needs. Teachers have had the opportunity to learn from the good practice which exists in the school through the coaching programme.
- Senior leaders make good use of support from the local authority to validate their judgements.
- The range of subjects is good and meets students' needs. At Key Stage 4, students mainly study GCSEs which prepare them well for the next stage in their education. Students can also choose from some work-related courses when selecting their options. The school does all it can to ensure that the very small number of students at risk of exclusion make good progress on appropriate courses. Older students say they have developed good communication and social skills as the school, 'Doesn't teach you to just pass exams, it teaches you to go further in life'.
- Leadership of the provision for deaf students is good. These students are well supported across all subjects and strong established partnerships help them to make a successful transition to local sixth form colleges. New leadership of the special educational needs department is now focusing more on the academic achievement of other disabled students and those who have special educational needs in addition to their social development.

- Provision for students outside the routine school day is impressive, with an extensive list of sports fixtures, clubs and study visits. A recent trip by Year 11 to CERN in Switzerland helped to improve students' knowledge and understanding in science.

- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported by the school's strong moral ethos and the outstanding contribution of the school's visual arts specialism. Students are proud of their artwork exhibited in the school's Red Dot Gallery. All students study an art-related subject at GCSE. Students greatly benefit from the professional advice of artists in residence. This builds their confidence and creativity in other subjects, as well as art. The gallery is a valuable resource and has enabled the school to maintain good links with the community and local primary schools.

- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body provides a good level of challenge to the school. Governors meet frequently with school leaders to monitor the performance of all areas of the school's work. By instigating improvements in the system of tracking students' attainment and the introduction of 'accelerated reader' to target students' literacy development, governors can give examples of how they have contributed to raising standards. The governing body is involved in performance management and is confident that the school intervenes to address any underperformance so ensuring that teachers' pay rises are closely matched to students' good achievement. The governing body is aware of the performance of different groups of students and understands that there is an achievement gap for students supported by the pupil premium. Governors ensure that statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding students, are met and seek to update their knowledge and skills through appropriate training.

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	137679
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	403710

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1440
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Blake
Headteacher	Christopher Dean
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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