

Ralph Allen School

Claverton Down Road, Bath, BA2 7AD

Inspection dates 26–27 February 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.

- Overall, students make good progress. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, is consistently above average. In English, students make outstanding progress.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress because teaching is consistently good and often outstanding. Many students achieve very high A-level grades.
- Teaching is good in most years and subjects, including some that is outstanding. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and promote excellent working relationships with students.
- School leaders have an extremely clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This knowledge has led to well-focused plans that have already made an impact on achievement and learning. The rate of improvement is accelerating.
- Students behave well and feel safe. The school actively promotes excellent attitudes to learning and good working relationships between staff and students.
- Governors know the school well, are proactive in seeking improvement and provide a finely-tuned balance of good support and challenge.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching. Teachers sometimes give work that is too easy or too hard and marking does not always help students to improve their work.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs and those supported through additional funding do not make as much progress as others.

Information about this inspection

- Ralph Allen School converted to become an academy on 1 August 2012. When the predecessor school, of the same name, was previously inspected it was judged to be good.
- Inspectors observed 36 lessons, of which three were observed jointly with senior or middle leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, four groups of students, three governors and an external consultant who advises the school.
- Inspectors took into account 197 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), an analysis of the school's own staff questionnaire responses and two letters from a parent or carer.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at its self-evaluation and planning documents, and examples of students' work.

Inspection team

Allan Barfoot, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Teresa Gilpin	Additional Inspector
Linda Peck	Additional Inspector
Richard Butler	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a larger-than-average-sized secondary school with a sixth form. A new headteacher took up his post in September 2013.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of students supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- About one fifth of students are supported through pupil premium funding, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and other groups.
- The very large majority of students are of White British heritage.
- The school meets the government's current floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for student's attainment and progress.
- A very small number of students receive part of their education at a range of local providers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that all students know how to improve their work when it has been marked and act on the advice given to them by teachers.
- Raise students' achievement to outstanding by:
 - making sure that teachers use the information they have on disabled students and those who have special educational needs, together with those supported through additional funding, to plan tasks that enable them to make rapid progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- On entry to the school, students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics are significantly higher than the national average. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, is consistently above average. In English, standards are consistently high. Standards in mathematics are almost as strong. The progress made by the most able students is also consistently high, with a steady upward trend over the last three years.
- High-quality provision in the sixth form means that students routinely obtain above average results in both Year 12 and Year 13. Students are very appreciative of the overall high quality of teaching and support that enable them to make good progress and thrive. Consequently, a large proportion of students are successful in securing university places at home and abroad, including Oxbridge and American Elite Sport scholarships.
- Achievement is not yet outstanding because achievement in science is broadly average and some groups of students do make slower progress than others. Too few disabled students and those with special educational needs make more than expected progress. However, there is an improving picture in Key Stage 3. Such students are supported well through a wide range of interventions. Here, progress in English and mathematics is now similar to, or exceeds that of, other students.
- Until recently, there was some difference in the rate of progress made by students supported by the pupil premium and others in Year 11. In 2013, students known to be entitled to free school meals attained, on average, over a grade lower in English and mathematics than did other students.
- School information shows that it now uses its pupil premium funding very effectively to support eligible students. It has provided financial support to enable them to participate in out-of-school activities and courses, as well as providing individual help and guidance. This support has effectively reduced the attainment gap between these students and others across all years, so that it is much smaller than that seen nationally.
- The school's much sharper focus on this group through, for example, individual mentoring, is already leading to improved attendance and progress, especially in Key Stage 3.
- Year 11 students took early examinations in mathematics last November. This has been clearly helpful in boosting confidence, but the school is now rightly revising its policy in the light of new government regulations.
- The small number of Year 7 students targeted for extra help with reading under the catch-up scheme also makes good progress.
- The progress made by the small number of students attending part-time provision with local providers is similar to that of other students.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching helps students to achieve well in most subjects. There were examples of outstanding teaching in English, mathematics, drama, music, physics and chemistry. A large proportion of sixth form teaching was also outstanding.
- The most notable strengths of teaching include secure subject knowledge, excellent working relationships with students, well planned lessons that make use of stimulating resources and questioning that is used to check and develop understanding. As a result, students invariably respond well, displaying confidence and maturity.
- The quality of marking and written feedback given to students across subjects and year groups is too variable. There is very good practice in English, science and history. Here, teachers often give specific guidance on how to improve. Students confirm that this approach is very helpful in helping them to make better progress. In some other subjects, marking is not regular and

feedback is brief and frequently too general. Teachers do not always make sure that students follow up this advice by applying it and showing their teachers that they have understood.

- In the very few lessons requiring improvement, work was not stimulating enough, leading to some students becoming bored and indulging in low-level chatter.
- Both students and parents endorse the typically good quality of teaching and the amount of support given. The overwhelming majority of parents say their children are taught well and make good progress.
- Teaching is not outstanding because some teachers do not give suitable tasks to disabled students, those who have special educational needs and those supported through additional funding to ensure they make rapid progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. They behave well in lessons and around the school and are polite and cooperative. Students have good attitudes to learning and often display high levels of motivation and interest in lessons. Movement around the school is very calm and orderly.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students unreservedly say that they feel safe and are aware of the different kinds of bullying, including cyber and homophobic bullying. Instances of bullying are rare and the school deals with them effectively.
- Students confirm that behaviour is generally good. A very large majority of parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire said that behaviour was typically good and well managed by the school.
- The rewards system works well because it provides incentives that are highly valued by students.
- Absence rates have dropped markedly over the last year as a result of strong leadership and rigorous monitoring. Attendance now almost matches the national average and is set to improve further. The attendance of groups, such as those supported through extra funding, is also rising. The school's robust zero-tolerance approach to behaviour explains why the overall number of fixed-term exclusions has not yet reduced significantly.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because, in a few instances, inspectors noted that attitudes to learning in some lower sets are less positive.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong and incisive leadership. Areas for improvement have been quickly identified and actions identified, with many changes being implemented at the time of the inspection. He is ably supported by a team of enthusiastic and effective senior leaders. Audits and plans are accurate and sharply focused.
- Middle leaders make a strong contribution to the leadership of teaching and also demonstrate great clarity about their roles. Parents strongly agree that the school is led and managed well.
- A very high proportion of the school staff confirms their support for the school's vision and the quality of the headteacher's leadership. A typical sentiment was 'proud to be a member of this school'.
- Teaching is checked closely and school leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching is accurate. School leaders use frequent and well-planned training to give a higher priority to improving further the quality of teaching.
- The school acknowledges that some of the changes have not had time to bear fruit. For example, the use of assessment information is inconsistent and not widely spread among all teachers. The tracking of students' progress, particularly those supported by additional funding, is therefore not yet precise enough to ensure all groups of students receive the help they need in order to make faster progress.
- The way subjects and courses are organised has many strengths that contribute to good

learning and achievement. The subjects on offer are finely tuned to the needs of students. GCSE students take one of three pathways. Whilst most take the academic route, other programmes include vocational subjects, where appropriate, and a small number follows alternative programmes. Enrichment is provided through the fortnightly 'Wednesday Windows'. Examples from the menu include photography, debating and additional sports. A high number is enrolled on the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

■ The school actively and successfully promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the curriculum. An outstanding example is participation in the international Lego Robotics competition, where the school's team became world champions. Inspectors noted the many fine examples of students' artwork on display throughout the school.

■ An external consultant has provided valuable support for the school. Leaders have made effective use of this advice in making the necessary changes.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is well organised and highly effective in providing support and the necessary level of challenge. The governors are very well informed by the recently appointed headteacher and are influential, not least in overseeing the new arrangements for managing staff performance and the links between pay and students' achievement. These are robust.
- Governors are very closely involved in all aspects of the school's work and have a good working knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They recognise, for example, that pupils supported by the pupil premium do not make sufficient progress and are aware of steps undertaken by the school to improve this aspect.
- They ensure that all aspects of safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- The governors' proactive involvement in various projects, such as the continuing Robotics technology competition and a more recent Girls into Engineering initiative, are fine examples of excellent practice.

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	138522
Local authority	Bath & North East Somerset
Inspection number	441150

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Academy Converter
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	1,093
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julia Garratt
Headteacher	Tim Withers
Date of previous school inspection	June 2011
Telephone number	01225 832936
Fax number	01225 832338
Email address	enquiries@ralphallenschool.com

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

