

Blackheath Bluecoat Church of England Secondary School

Old Dover Road, London, SE3 8SY

Inspection dates 8–9 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Students are thriving because they are well known as individuals and given the right amount of support they need to achieve well.
- Since the previous inspection, students' GCSE attainment has improved significantly each year because of the increasingly rapid progress they make, including in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is good, and lessons are varied with activities which students find interesting. Students often work collaboratively, deepening their understanding very effectively through high-quality discussion.
- Students behave well in lessons and they are very considerate of others around the school.
- The strong promotion of students' personal development results in a cohesive school community in which students enjoy learning and are keen to succeed.
- The curriculum in the main school and the sixth form includes academic and vocational choices which meet students' needs and interests well.
- The good sixth form assists students in preparing well for their future.
- The school is well led. Senior leaders and the governing body have ensured that all within the school remain sharply focused on improving students' achievement so that results have continued to rise as numbers fall and the school moves to closure in 2014.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- There is room for teachers to require students to follow up on the written advice included in the marking of their work.
- Occasionally, students are overly dependent on the teacher and show a lack of initiative in finding things out for themselves.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 lessons of which five were observed jointly with the headteacher and senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, staff, groups of students, representatives of the governing body and the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and attended assemblies and tutorial sessions. They scrutinised students’ work, progress data, evaluation and development documents, information about how the school cares for and protects students and staff, and records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- There were insufficient responses from parents and carers to the online Parent View survey to be considered as representative. Parents’ and carers’ responses to the school’s own recent surveys and written comments made while attending parents’ evenings were considered. Inspectors also analysed 33 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Helen Hutchings, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael Elson

Additional Inspector

Angela Podmore

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Blackheath Bluecoat Church of England Secondary School is much smaller than most secondary schools. The local authority is closing the school in August 2014. As part of the closure arrangements, the school currently does not have any students in Years 7 and 12 and next year will have students in Years 9 and 11 only.
- At around seven in eight, the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is high. The large majority are of Black African or Caribbean backgrounds, with other heritages represented in small numbers.
- Around half of the students speak English as an additional language, which is much higher than found nationally.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and children of service families), at around a half, is well above the national average. There are currently no students of service families in the school.
- A high number of students join or leave the school part-way through their secondary education.
- An above average proportion of students are disabled or have special educational needs supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. The proportion supported through school action is broadly average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school holds specialist status for mathematics and computing.
- Each year the school uses alternative providers, usually specialist day or residential provision, for a very few students who require additional emotional support beyond that available in the school.
- For over three years until the beginning of this academic year, the school worked in federation with another Church of England school in South London.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that more teaching matches that of the best in the school so that students make faster progress and take more responsibility for their own learning, by:
 - making sure that students have opportunities to follow up and test out the advice given when teachers mark their work
 - extending the opportunities for students to build independence, show initiative and research information for themselves by making greater use of mobile technologies.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students' attainment, such as the proportion of students achieving five or more good GCSE grades including English and mathematics, has risen steadily since the school's previous inspection when it was below average. It has been in line with the national average for the last two years. This represents good progress for students from their below average starting points when they join the school, either in Year 7 or later. Students currently in Years 10 and 11 are working at levels which indicate that this rising trend is set to continue.
- The key reasons why achievement has improved are the improvements in teaching and the accuracy and regularity of the monitoring of students' progress towards challenging targets. Staff use this information well to make sure that individual students receive the academic and emotional support they need if they are not making the progress expected of them.
- Students make particularly rapid progress throughout Key Stage 4 as they gain confidence and respond positively to the school's strategies that remove some of the earlier barriers to their learning, such as poor reading and communication skills. Students' needs are identified closely on entry to the school and the success of the personalised support they receive is seen in the rapid gain in students' reading levels and improved attitudes to learning, especially for those who find learning difficult. The whole school approach to improving students' literacy skills helps students to progress well in the subjects they study.
- Students' achievement in the school's specialist subjects of mathematics and computing is good, and students use these skills effectively when needed in other subjects. Early GCSE entry is confined to mathematics and students only take the examination when they are working securely at target levels. Students then have the opportunity to study statistics or additional mathematics, or to strengthen their English.
- All groups of students, including those who are disabled or who have special educational needs and those receiving support through the pupil premium, do well, showing how the school successfully promotes equality of opportunity. The gap in attainment for students supported by pupil premium funding is reducing over time. The grades of students who were eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority were half a grade lower in English and a grade lower in mathematics than for other students in 2012, where the national differences were over a grade and a grade and a quarter lower respectively.
- A very small number of students require specialist emotional support and receive some of their education in alternative specialist institutions. The school works extremely closely with specialist staff to check on students' progress, set work and ensure their behaviour and safety, so that there is minimal disruption to their learning. Consequently, these students make good progress and are cared for well.
- Since its previous inspection, the school has strengthened the advice given to sixth form students to make sure that they follow academic or vocational programmes which closely meet their needs and aptitudes. Consequently, students about to take their final A-level examinations have made good progress from their below average starting points and their current attainment levels are close to national levels. Students' individualised learning plans have proved to be a powerful tool in helping them to focus precisely on what they have to do to reach the grades necessary for their chosen pathways after leaving school.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Much of the teaching throughout the school is good with some that is outstanding. Teachers regularly reflect on the impact of the approaches they use on the quality of learning. This has led to students achieving well in English and mathematics plus a range of other subjects over time.
- Teachers are aspirational for their students and have high expectations that they should settle

quickly to learning and work together collaboratively in lessons. For example, in a geography lesson, Year 8 students used the instructions on the board to organise themselves into groups with minimal intervention from the teacher. They then shared their earlier knowledge about rivers to develop their mapping skills while identifying potential areas of pollution on a local ordnance survey map. This is just one example of how teachers effectively make sure that students have good quality resources that enhance their learning.

- The variety of activities used by teachers effectively reinforce and consolidate learning. These include problem-solving tasks where students develop their analytical and critical thinking skills. When given the opportunity, students use computers and computer programs effectively. However, some teachers miss opportunities to develop students' initiative and independence, for example by requiring them to research information for themselves.
- Teachers regularly promote students' understanding of unfamiliar vocabulary. Specialist technical words are explored in detail and, where possible, related to everyday use. Group discussions and designated roles, for example chairing a session, contribute very well to developing students' communication skills and make a significant impact on the achievement and confidence of students who speak English as an additional language.
- Students benefit from high levels of adult support and working in small groups as the school roll declines. Tailor-made work programmes help to close gaps in students' knowledge, for example those who join the school part-way through their secondary education, and this boosts their progress. Teachers run many additional catch-up lessons at the end of the day and provide students with support for homework or with revision prior to examinations.
- Questioning is used well during lessons to check up on students' knowledge and understanding. Written work is marked well using the school's 'box and bubble' policy which helps students to understand the quality and level of their work alongside how to improve. However, teachers do not always ask students to follow up on this advice immediately to check that the advice has been understood.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students comment favourably on the improvement in behaviour in lessons and around the school since the previous inspection. Their positive attitudes to school are reflected in the rapid improvement in attendance which is now above average and in the sharp reduction in the rates of exclusion. Students behave well and enjoy the many extra-curricular clubs and informal social activities, such as playing games together after school, in a calm, friendly environment.
- Many opportunities are provided for students to take responsibility, for example within the house system and participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme or in inter-school competitions including debating.
- Occasionally in lessons, students use limited initiative because the activities are too narrowly designed and time is wasted as they wait for the teacher to show them the next step in their learning.
- Students feel safe and happy in school, largely as a result of good, mutually respectful relationships with one another and with staff who provide good quality care for students from all backgrounds and circumstances.
- Discrimination is not tolerated. Students respond well to the school's rewards for good behaviour and 'doing the right thing'. The school works well with external agencies to ensure that students with emotional and behavioural difficulties are given the support they need to work successfully with others.
- Bullying and incidents of racist or homophobic language are rare and students know that staff will help to resolve any concerns they may have. Students understand how to avoid risks through their learning in assemblies, tutorial sessions and whole-school events. They know about different forms of bullying and how to avoid it, including how to minimise cyber-bullying.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has led the school with drive and determination to eradicate weaknesses and bring about improvement. Together with senior leaders, he has established a climate where success is identified and shared. Staff attribute the brisk rate of improvement to the opportunities they have to work with others from beyond the school. They are now confident to develop their skills with less formalised external support. Teamwork has been key in maintaining morale among staff, students, parents and carers during a time of considerable challenge.
 - The school has strong procedures for checking its own performance. Students' progress is monitored regularly and accurately, and the information is used to adjust practice quickly when something is seen not to be effective.
 - Teaching is well led and managed. Teachers have constructive feedback from lesson observations, and training is planned carefully to give individual support and development at a whole-school level. Staff regard the performance management system, with clear targets for students' performance, as challenging but critical in fulfilling the high aspirations held for students.
 - Effective support by the local authority has included promoting school development priorities, for example in developing literacy across the curriculum, and validating the school's self-evaluation. Currently, the school is working closely with local authority officers on a strategic planning group to secure a smooth transition for students into other schools, for example in choosing GCSE subject options.
 - The courses offered, including vocational and academic options, meet the wide variety of students' needs within the main school and sixth form. The school has sharpened the advice available for students about their future education to ensure that it is clear and unbiased, and that students embark on programmes which will be of value to them in the future. More students are now following the English Baccalaureate range of subjects than has been the case in the past, giving them a secure academic basis for further study.
 - The school's Christian ethos underpins its promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The chaplain and a range of welfare staff give good support to students in times of need. The school ensures all students have equal access to all activities.
 - The school's parent survey responses show that most are positive about the school's work and care of students.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body gives good support and challenge to the school. Governors receive detailed information from the headteacher and attend regular review meetings with middle leaders so that they have a good understanding of how achievement compares with that of other schools. They make sure that teachers' pay progression is closely matched to their performance. The governing body is taking strategic responsibility for ensuring that current funding is used to enhance the quality of provision for students presently in the school. For example, pupil premium funding is targeted to remove the barriers to learning of individual students, whether academic, social or emotional. Spending has supported a range of provision, including mentoring and school activities, and is making a positive difference to individual lives as reflected in the narrowing achievement gap. Procedures for safeguarding students and staff meet requirements.
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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	100195
Local authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	400398

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	12–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	301
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Prescott
Headteacher	Barnaby Ash
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 June 2010
Telephone number	020 82694300
Fax number	020 88535978
Email address	headteacher@bbcs.greenwich.sch.uk

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