

Northampton School for Boys

Billing Road, Northampton, NN1 5RT

Inspection dates 12–13 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Outstanding 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Students make outstanding progress across a range of subjects. They make exceptional progress in mathematics, where standards are particularly high.
- Students enjoy outstanding opportunities to take part in numerous clubs and activities at lunchtimes and after school. This helps to build the excellent relationships between students and staff which are at the heart of students' highly successful learning.
- There is a strong focus throughout the school on promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This develops students' leadership skills, teamwork and creativity outstandingly well.
- Students are set ambitious targets to achieve. School leaders carefully track the progress of individual students and provide rapid support for them when it is required. Leaders' frequent checks on the quality of teaching ensure it remains high.
- Students are considerate and respectful towards staff, visitors and each other. They behave exceptionally well around the school, feel very safe and know how to keep themselves safe.
- Students are highly motivated in lessons. They have a thirst for knowledge and a love of learning so they work very hard and are keen to succeed. They say how much they appreciate their teachers' willingness to give them extra help when it is needed, and to help them prepare for their examinations.
- The sixth form is outstanding because students make excellent progress. A high proportion of students gains places at top universities.
- Any gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged students and others are closing rapidly. In 2014, these students achieved high standards which were very similar to those of their classmates.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour, effort and standards. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subjects. They benefit from outstanding opportunities for training and development.
- The school is significantly oversubscribed. Parents are highly positive about the school's work.
- The outstanding curriculum enables students to achieve highly and develop the personal skills they will need in the next stage of their lives.
- The new headteacher is building on the many existing strengths of the school, while bringing a new approach to improving certain aspects of the school's work.
- Governors are highly knowledgeable about the school's performance and they play a very effective role in shaping future strategic developments so the school continues to improve.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 61 lessons. Seven of these were jointly observed with school leaders.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, teachers in charge of subjects and with governors. Inspectors met with five groups of students. They also spoke to students informally and observed them around the school at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors took account of several parental communications and the 141 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also considered the 46 questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including information about students' achievement, records of their attendance and behaviour, documents related to safeguarding and the school plans for improvement.

Inspection team

Michael Phipps, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Heather Housden	Additional Inspector
Marc Feeley	Additional Inspector
Ahmed Marikar	Additional Inspector
Carol Worthington	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Northampton School for Boys converted to become an academy school in September 2010. When its predecessor school, also called Northampton School for Boys, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- This school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school is a nationally designated teaching school.
- The school has specialist status for technology.
- The large majority of students are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, at just over one fifth of students, is higher than average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, at around one in eight, is lower than average. The pupil premium is the additional funding provided by the government to support students who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- A very small number of students in Key Stage 4 attend work-related courses at Moulton College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop students' literacy skills to support even higher achievement in English by:
 - raising the profile of literacy across the school so that all students are aware of its importance
 - making sure that all subjects make a positive planned contribution to developing students' skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing
 - making sure that teachers consistently encourage students to respond to the advice given in marking on how to improve their written work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- School leaders strive for excellence and set the very highest expectations for students' learning, behaviour and achievement. Leaders at all levels rigorously check all aspects of the school's work and identify where teachers' performance or students' outcomes could be further improved.
- Teachers' performance is managed very well. Expectations are high, and procedures are rigorous. Teachers are set targets which are based on students making very challenging rates of progress. Any underperformance in teaching is robustly tackled. Teachers benefit from an outstanding programme of training and development available through the school's status as a national teaching school.
- School leaders make very frequent checks on the quality of teaching, and provide teachers with regular feedback on how they can improve. This ensures the quality of teaching remains high.
- Students' progress towards their ambitious targets is checked carefully. School leaders have made sure that teachers' assessment of students' attainment are frequent and accurate. Teachers are held to account for the progress of the students they teach. Extra help is readily available for students who need it, with a wealth of opportunities for students to receive additional support from their teachers.
- Subject leaders are very effective. They observe teaching in their departments, and analyse the progress made by students in their subjects. This enables them to make a very positive impact on the quality of teaching and on students' learning.
- School leaders have a very accurate view of the strengths of the school and the areas it needs to develop further. Plans for improvement are detailed and focus on exactly the right areas.
- School leaders spend the additional funding from the pupil premium on one-to-one support in English and mathematics, on individual mentoring, and on subsidies for these supported students to take part in music tuition, residential trips and other visits. As a result, gaps in attainment between disadvantaged students and others are closing rapidly.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school and its leaders, with the very large majority feeling their children make good progress and that the school is well led and managed. The school is heavily oversubscribed. Information to parents about their child's progress is regular and detailed. One parent, speaking for many, wrote: 'We are elated and excited about the present and the future opportunities for our son.'
- The development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students enjoy school and almost all take part with much enthusiasm in a huge range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. Over 200 such activities are available each week, including many dance, drama and musical groups; sports, including rugby, soccer, basketball, Gaelic football, karate and badminton; and other clubs, including debating, French cinema, sewing and chess. A large number of sports teams compete against other schools, and the school organises many visits abroad, including those for sports teams and music groups. Students have won many national awards for sporting, music and dance success, including State School of the Year for Sport 2013 and World Street Dance Champions at U14 level in 2014. These opportunities develop students' leadership skills, teamwork and creativity outstandingly well, and help to forge the positive attitudes to school and excellent relationships between students and teachers that make learning so successful.
- The school fosters excellent relationships and behaviour, and tackles discrimination exceptionally well. School leaders make sure that students of all backgrounds and abilities have an equal chance to succeed. British values are well developed: students explore the diversity of faiths and cultures in modern Britain, and have made a valuable link with a school in Malawi, which students have the chance to visit.
- The school's curriculum is outstanding. It offers a wide range of academic subjects. This suits the interests and abilities of students, meets the aspirations of parents, and enables students to achieve very well. The

curriculum for lower-attaining students is modified by replacing languages with additional support for students' literacy. Many additional study sessions help students to maximise their potential in academic subjects. Students receive high-quality independent careers advice and guidance from a specialist careers adviser. This helps them to make informed choices about subjects, qualifications and their future options.

- The new headteacher is successfully maintaining and building on the many existing strengths of the school, such as the focus on academic excellence. At the same time, he is bringing a new approach to improving aspects of the school's work, such as more rigorous and regular assessment of students' progress and the very close analysis of data on students' performance to identify areas for improvement.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have a very clear idea of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have a detailed understanding of what the data on students' performance tells them about how well the school is doing. They are able to offer effective support and challenge to school leaders.
- Governors are regular visitors to the school. They are linked with subject departments and meet regularly with subject leaders. Many governors attend extra-curricular events and activities. Governors often see for themselves various aspects of the life of the school. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching, how underperformance is tackled, and how good performance is rewarded.
- Governors are aware of how well different groups of students are performing, and of the impact of additional funding, such as the pupil premium, on the achievement of eligible students.
- Governors undergo regular training to enhance their skills further. They oversee the school's finances very well and make sure that school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet all statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. They are highly motivated and work very hard in lessons. They cooperate well with other students in lessons and help each other. They understand the importance of working hard and behaving well, and are keen to succeed.
- Students are very proud of their school. They treat their excellent facilities with respect: there is no graffiti and almost no litter around the school site. Students behave exceptionally well around the school, and are considerate and respectful towards staff, visitors and each other.
- Attendance is well above average. Students not only arrive on time but attend after the end of the school day to study further and to take part in many extra-curricular activities. Exclusions from school are very rare.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. The school site is well maintained and safe. Excellent site security keeps students safe during the school day.
- Students say they feel very safe and know how to keep themselves safe. The very large majority of parents say that their children are happy in school and are kept safe.
- Students told inspectors that bullying is very rare, and would be tackled firmly by staff if it did take place. They are taught well about different types of bullying, such as name-calling and cyber-bullying. Students said that the school has high expectations of them in ensuring zero tolerance of bullying or racism. They told inspectors they have recently been taught about homophobic bullying.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Relationships between teachers and students across the school are excellent. These are often fostered in the extra-curricular activities that teachers run. Teachers have high expectations of students and set them challenging targets.

- Teachers have a strong knowledge of their subjects. Their enthusiasm for their subjects is infectious and they model a love of learning for their students. They plan interesting lessons which are at the right level for students to achieve well.
- Teachers know students well as individuals and track their progress in their subjects carefully. If any students fall behind, there are many chances for them to get extra help to catch up.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are taught in small groups in some subjects in Key Stage 3. They are supported additionally through very specific and individualised intervention sessions which are run outside lesson time. As a result of this effective support, these students make excellent progress which is in line with that of their classmates.
- Homework supports students' learning well and often gives them the chance to undertake independent research. Teachers enhance this through subject-specific school clubs and study support, which are very well attended.
- School leaders are aware that in order to improve teaching further some inconsistencies need to be tackled. Although teachers' marking of students' work is detailed and helpful, teachers do not always encourage students to respond to the advice in this marking, especially suggestions on how to improve further the quality of their written work.
- Students do not always attach as much importance to improving their literacy skills as they do to skills in other areas. Plans for teachers in all subjects to help to improve students' literacy skills are not yet fully in place.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students join the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment which are above average. Their attainment by the end of Year 11 has been well above average on all measures for a number of years. For example, in 2014, 74% of students gained five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics, and 47% gained the EBACC combination of qualifications, which adds good grades in science, languages and humanities subjects. Both of these figures are well above average.
- Students achieve exceptionally well in mathematics. The proportions making and exceeding the progress expected of them has been well above national figures for some years. Students enjoy many chances to apply their mathematical skills in problem-solving activities. They respond well to frequent assessments in mathematics and the feedback they get in tracking their progress towards their target grades.
- All groups of students, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds and the few who speak English as an additional language, make similarly outstanding progress.
- The school's most-able students achieve very well. The proportion who gain the highest A* and A grades at GCSE is consistently high.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make outstanding progress across the full range of subjects.
- The Year 7 'catch up' funding is used very well to provide a literacy summer school, support for students' reading and on line support for mathematics. These supported students catch up quickly and make excellent progress.
- In 2014, disadvantaged students achieved results in English and mathematics that were around one quarter of a GCSE grade behind other students in the school. This is much smaller than the gap nationally. These students performed on average slightly better in English than all students nationally; in mathematics, the results attained by disadvantaged students were on average three quarters of a GCSE

grade higher than all students nationally.

- The school does not enter students early for any examinations.
- Students achieve high standards in subjects within the school's technology specialism. Innovative uses of information and communications technology and of data on students' performance, which started in the technology area, are now used widely across the school.
- The very small number of students who attend work-related courses achieve well because their courses are well matched to the students' interests and abilities, and school leaders make appropriate checks on their attendance, behaviour and progress. The school is proud that, in 2014, no student leavers ended up not being in education, employment or training.
- School leaders are aware that there are some minor variations in achievement between subjects. They have taken robust action to address any issues. School data indicates that students' attainment is set to rise further in 2015.
- Students' standards in English, although high, are not yet at the levels achieved in mathematics. School leaders have recently drawn up plans to raise students' awareness of the importance of literacy to support their achievement in English. These plans have not yet had time to make an impact.

The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- Achievement in the sixth form is outstanding. Attainment is high and meets the 16-19 interim minimum standards specified by the Department for Education. A-level results are much higher than national average figures. In 2014, all students who entered the sixth form without grade C in English successfully achieved this grade by the end of Year 13.
- The attainment and progress of all groups of students, including the most able, disadvantaged students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs are above national average levels. Girls who join the school in the sixth form achieve just as well as boys. The school's own figures indicate that students' standards are on course to rise further in 2015.
- Teaching in the sixth form is outstanding. Students speak very highly of teachers' commitment, their passion for their subjects and the extra help they provide when students need it.
- An above-average proportion of students stay on and complete the courses they start. An excellent programme of information, advice and guidance, and a pre-university course for all students prepare them very well for the next stage of their lives, whether in education or in work. In 2014, 80% of students who left Year 13 gained a place at university, half of these at the most prestigious UK universities, including Oxford and Cambridge.
- Students' behaviour and safety in the sixth form are outstanding. Attendance rates are high, and students behave exceptionally well, work very hard and feel safe. The curriculum is broad, with a wide range of academic AS and A-level courses, which are well suited to the interests and abilities of students. The extended curriculum includes a course in personal, social and health education which aims to foster students' understanding of British values, and includes participation in the local community as well as the chance to act as mentors for younger students.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. Leaders of the sixth form have put in place very effective procedures to track the progress of students. This data is analysed regularly to identify where extra support may be needed. When such needs are identified, students receive mentoring from senior staff or attend extra study support sessions at lunchtime or after school. This helps them to catch up. Leaders check the quality of teaching very regularly to make sure that it is always of the highest quality.

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	136299
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	449420

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	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1515
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	418
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Bason
Headteacher	Richard Bernard
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01604 230240
Fax number	01604 258659
Email address	nsb@nsb.northants.sch.uk

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