

Farmor's School

The Park, Fairford, Gloucestershire, GL7 4JQ

Inspection dates 26–27 June 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

- Students' attainment is rising and is above average in the majority of subjects, including English and mathematics. Progress is good because the majority of lessons promote good learning.
- Teachers deliver interesting lessons, usually at a good pace that keeps concentration high. They have strong subject understanding and are always ready and willing to help students should they run into difficulties.
- The sixth form is good. It is very well organised and teaching is better than in the rest of the school. Students' progress is strong and the students reach well above average levels of attainment.
- Behaviour is good. Students are mature and usually enthusiastic to learn. They relate well to their teachers and one another and correctly report that the school is a safe environment. Bullying is virtually unknown and, as one student reported, teachers 'nip in the bud' any potential incidents.
- Leaders and managers are quick to identify key areas for improvement and act on them. They have worked successfully together this year to raise achievement still further, across Years 7 to 11.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a small minority of lessons, teaching does not fully challenge all students. Questioning can lack rigour and some marking is not informative enough.
- The checks the school makes on teaching are not always sufficiently rigorous.
- The governing body provides strong ongoing support but does not always have sufficient information or experience to provide consistently rigorous challenge to the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 30 lessons taught by 29 teachers and undertook eight joint observations with senior staff.
- Inspectors held discussions with students, teachers, the headteacher and other senior managers, representatives of the governing body and a local authority officer.
- Inspectors examined numerous school documents including policies, assessment information, planning documents and records of all kinds.
- The views of 104 parents were analysed through the Parent View website.

Inspection team

John Carnaghan, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Anne Barrett	Additional Inspector
Glenn Mayoh	Additional Inspector
Louise Sharples	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Farmor's is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for looked after children, students known to be eligible for free school meals and students who have a parent in the armed forces) is below average. Currently, 22 students have parents in the armed forces.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school receives Year 7 catch up programme funding for 16 students who did not attain Level 4 in reading and/or mathematics at the end of primary school.
- The school uses alternative, off-site provision at Cirencester and Swindon Colleges for a very small number of Year 10 students.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school became an academy in August 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further by:
 - making sure that all lessons consistently provide the correct level of challenge and support to keep all groups of students working at full stretch
 - ensuring that all teachers use high quality questioning to allow students to think in greater depth in order to enhance their understanding
 - developing the marking of students' work so all teachers consistently provide relevant advice to help students understand how to raise their standards
 - consistently applying greater rigour to the checks made on teaching so that they are always linked to the school's aims and areas of concern are systematically addressed.
- Further develop the ability of the governing body to challenge the school by improving members' capabilities to analyse assessment data and give them confidence to ask probing questions.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' achievement has moved up sharply in the last year because teaching and the quality of support for individuals has markedly improved. Variations in attainment, such as that in mathematics being slightly lower than English, have been thoroughly addressed so that there is now much greater consistency in attainment levels reached by students. Attainment at the end of Year 11 is above average.
- Students enter the school in Year 7 with just above average levels of attainment; they leave Year 11 with above average attainment, and Year 13 at even higher levels. Achievement is good across the school because teaching promotes good progress over time and students are generally very keen to learn.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good. This is because strong links with local primary schools and good assessment procedures enable students' needs to be identified accurately and early. The school then puts in place the correct type of support, including from well-qualified teaching assistants. This support helps to ensure that there is equal opportunity for all students and that there is no discrimination.
- GCSE examination results in English and mathematics for students in receipt of pupil premium funding are closer to the results for all students in the school than the national gap, and the gap has closed for current students in the last year. The school uses its assessment data well to keep a close check on this group to ensure the additional funds are being spent wisely. Assessment data used to track students also indicate that the very small number of students receiving alternative provision at both Cirencester and Swindon College do as well as their peers.
- A small group of students take the GCSE mathematics examination early. The needs of the year group are fully considered when decisions are made about early entry. The school plans the mathematics curriculum well, providing additional opportunities for early entrants, for example extending opportunities for the more able to developing their mathematical skills further.
- Students in the sixth form build on the good start to their education in Years 7 to 11. Attainment is consistently good across most of the subjects studied and, in the majority, is well above national averages. Progress is also consistently strong across most subjects and the proportion of students who exceed the expected rate of progress is above average. Achievement in the sixth form is good.

The quality of teaching is good

- Lessons where students are motivated and enjoy learning are typical. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this gives them, and their students, confidence. For example, in numerous lessons, teachers provide good guidance on the best ways to tackle examination questions and what is expected of a good answer at both GCSE and A level.
- Teaching in most subjects, particularly English and mathematics, is usually good. English teaching is particularly effective, with examples of outstanding practice promoting strong progress. Very good marking in English plays a positive role in assisting students to learn well and overcome difficulties. One outcome of the good teaching in this area is that almost all students are fluent, capable readers; those few who were behind their peers in reading on entry to the school benefit from well-targeted support that helps most of them to catch up quickly. This catch up funding is also effective in boosting mathematics progress.
- Some teaching is inspiring. A Year 10 English revision lesson, for example, was far from routine. Detailed planning provided the Year 10 students with a number of short interesting activities. Each activity was followed by perceptive questioning. Where the teacher was not satisfied with incomplete answers she probed and waited while students thought and, in due course, answered in greater detail and depth. They had no option but to make excellent progress because the teacher's expectations were so high.

- Teachers usually manage students' behaviour skilfully. Staff foster good relationships, are invariably courteous and provide good role models that students strive to emulate.
- Students enjoy working together and show good independence. Sometimes, however, they have to sit passively while teachers talk for too long and this reduces the pace of their learning.
- The additional support given to students having difficulties with their learning is well judged and thoroughly planned. Well-trained teaching assistants make a real difference, helping students in whole-class groups and one-to-one sessions.
- Teaching in the sixth form shows consistently high expectations and students in this age range are particularly receptive to their teachers. These students' studies, both in lessons and independently, benefit from a good range of stimulating resources.
- Where teaching is less effective, questioning can be too vague and rushed. In some lessons more able students do not get the right work to stretch their abilities because planning does not take full account of their need for greater challenge. Marking is variable across the school, so while students receive generally helpful guidance in some subjects, like mathematics, elsewhere they only receive limited advice.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' behaviour around the school is good. Students are mature, orderly and calm during lesson changes, at break and lunchtimes, and treat all adults with respect and courtesy.
- Incidents of bullying of any kind are very rare and students are pleased that the school takes any hint of victimisation with great seriousness.
- There is strong support for the few students who find good behaviour difficult to maintain. The school's non-confrontational approach has done much to minimise disruption to school life and has successfully promoted a very low rate of exclusions.
- Most students invariably behave well in lessons. They listen well and are generally enthusiastic about learning. When teaching very occasionally fails to engage them, for example where tasks are either too simple or too hard, they can become chatty and do not listen well enough to staff.
- Students are well aware of potential dangers in everyday life. They are well briefed about potential pitfalls of internet use and know about the possibility of cyber bullying through mobile phones and what to do about it.

The leadership and management are good

- School leaders reacted with energy and commitment to lower-than-usual Year 11 examination results in 2012. Increased training opportunities for staff and a more rigorous use of performance management to hold individual teachers to account have raised expectations for staff and have quickly had a significant impact on achievement. This quick rate of improvement demonstrates that the school has the capacity for continuing improvement.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this academy.
- Leaders and managers make regular checks on the quality of teaching and use the information to promote best practice. Some checks are informal and sometimes the comments made are insufficiently analytical. At times, senior and middle leaders do not rigorously follow up on areas for improvement. The school's priorities are not routinely emphasised in lesson observations and other checks that are made. This means that, while there are considerable strengths, there remains some inconsistency in teaching, for example in marking in some subjects such as geography and history.
- Assessment information on each student is carefully gathered and recorded. It is increasingly well used to track progress and to trigger interventions with individual students as needed. The use of mentors with Year 11 students to help and encourage them during a challenging year has helped to boost individual students' confidence and to raise attainment.
- The range of subjects the school provides offers a broad and balanced variety of learning

experiences. A flexible approach ensures all students' needs are met. For example, a small group of Year 9 students who were having difficulties with the work schemes now follow alternative arrangements that place greater emphasis on developing their skills through practical activities. An effective programme of personal, social and health education provides valuable experiences in citizenship and promotes students' understanding of health and safety. It also contributes to thorough planning of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The sixth form enjoy extensive enrichment opportunities and strong support in their transition to universities or other opportunities when they leave.

- Students show a generally mature response to moral dilemmas and appreciate the way the school uses rewards and sanctions to encourage them to make the right choices in their daily lives. Social development is strong, students show respect and empathy for one another and school staff, many identifying the friendly, supportive atmosphere of the school as a key strength. The vast majority of students have good insights into their own and other cultures and appreciate the opportunities they are given to mix with others from different backgrounds.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is most supportive of the school and undertakes its safeguarding role extremely thoroughly. As a result, the school fully meets all safeguarding requirements.
 - Governors are aware in broad terms of the quality of teaching through the links individual governors have with subject leaders; however, some do not always grasp how the performance management of staff can drive improvements.
 - The governing body receives regular reports from school leaders on achievement. It recognised that members were not fully aware of how students' attainment related to national benchmarks; however, recent training in interpreting such data has started to address this issue and improve the governing body's capacity to hold the school to account.
 - Governors understand that a range of interventions are in place to support the learning of those pupils eligible for pupil premium. However, they have not fully analysed the impact of these initiatives on this group of students.

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	137097
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	411803

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
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	974
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Bridges
Headteacher	Anne Stokes
Date of previous school inspection	not previously inspected
Telephone number	01285 712302
Fax number	01285 713504
Email address	office@farmors.gloucs.sch.uk

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