

Branston Community Academy

Station Rd, Branston, Lincoln LN4 1LH

Inspection dates

24–25 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Leaders have taken determined action in response to the previous inspection and have successfully brought about improvements to all areas of the school.
- Leaders at all levels have a clear understanding of the school's priorities and are motivated by the challenge of ensuring that all pupils reach consistently outstanding outcomes.
- Governors are highly effective in supporting and challenging school leaders.
- From average starting points, pupils make strong progress to reach levels of attainment that are consistently above national averages.
- The progress of the most able pupils at GCSE level is well above that seen nationally for these pupils. In classes lower down the school, teachers do not consistently ensure that these pupils are fully stretched and challenged.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have risen as a result of a collective focus by leaders, governors and teachers on this group of pupils.
- Teachers enthuse pupils with a love for learning. They use their excellent subject knowledge to ensure that pupils know how to succeed in their subjects.
- A clear set of values underpins the school's work. These are known and understood by all members of the school community and are key to its ongoing success.
- The school makes a significant contribution to the local community. It is well regarded locally.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare reflect the school's motto: kindness or nothing. They understand exactly what these words mean for how they should treat each other.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding extremely well. Teachers make the most of opportunities to encourage pupils to debate, discuss and reflect on issues of interest.
- The sixth form is good. Students in the sixth form are excellent role models for the younger pupils. While their achievement in all qualifications in the sixth form is at least good, too few students achieve the highest grades in their subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the most able pupils in key stages 3 and 5 make the same consistently strong rates of progress as pupils in key stage 4.
- Improve the sixth form by:
 - ensuring that a greater proportion of students achieve the highest grades in their subjects
 - reducing the remaining inconsistencies in students' achievement by ensuring that the quality of teaching at key stage 5 is consistently outstanding.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The school's leaders are a unified and coherent team. Their relentless determination has brought about many improvements to the school, particularly to those areas identified as requiring improvement at the previous inspection.
- The principal is well liked and respected by staff, pupils and parents, who appreciate the efforts he and senior leaders make to know them and their children individually. As one parent wrote, 'His passion and enthusiasm are a joy to behold'.
- A clear set of values informs the school's work. Relationships across the school are positive because they are rooted in a simple motto of 'kindness or nothing'. Pupils are happy to be here, and so are the staff.
- Leaders and governors share a vision for an excellent community school, and this is what they have collectively created. Pupils make a significant contribution to the local community, for example by leading debating workshops and sports activities for pupils from feeder schools. They know their school is well respected locally and are proud of this.
- Leaders set very high standards for the school's performance, and rigorously evaluate how well they are doing against these standards. This ensures that where there are dips, whether in the quality of leadership, teaching or the outcomes pupils achieve, they act quickly and decisively to improve them.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have developed and embedded very effective systems to monitor the progress of groups across the school. This has ensured that leaders at all levels now have a very good understanding of how well different groups are performing, and take action swiftly should any decline.
- Leaders at all levels have a clear sense of the school's priorities and are motivated by the challenge of ensuring that all pupils reach consistently outstanding outcomes. Middle leadership in particular has significantly improved since the previous inspection. Middle leaders now have a very positive impact on the areas they lead. They are very positive about the direction that senior leaders set for them, and enjoy being able to challenge each other, as well as the staff they lead.
- Following the previous inspection, leaders carried out a review of pupil premium spending. They have ensured that actions to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils are based on established research, and on the evidence of what works in school. As result, these pupils are now making strong progress across the school.
- The outstanding leadership of teaching means that teachers receive all the support they need and are held to account well for their work. Teachers work closely together to share best practice and reflect upon one another's teaching. This approach has been a key factor in improving teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- The school is part of a local teaching school alliance and has received support from other schools in the alliance. Leaders from Branston Community Academy have contributed to improving teaching and leadership in other schools, and this has been well received by staff in these schools.
- The curriculum is highly effective in allowing pupils to excel academically, while encouraging them to develop other skills. There is a good range of vocational subjects on offer. The school has kept up links with local businesses and provides a range of opportunities for pupils to develop workplace and entrepreneurial skills.
- Pupils' experiences are enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, activities and trips on offer. Pupils take part in sporting, artistic and cultural activities as well as charity work. These opportunities ensure that they develop into rounded young people who are keen to make a positive contribution to their community and to society.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well provided for. The school's emphasis on developing the whole person helps pupils mature into thoughtful, considerate young people.
- There is a lively debating culture within the school. Members of the debating team described how much they have enjoyed developing their skills and competing against very different types of schools across the country, as well as seeing live debating in the Houses of Parliament. In class, pupils enjoy discussing and debating ideas with each other and their teachers. Such opportunities ensure that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain. As one pupil explained, 'You have to understand different points of view, and respect the fact that people think differently'.

- Staff ensure that all pupils are fully included and have equal opportunities to succeed. There is no discrimination.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have a clear vision for the school and have worked very effectively with leaders to make their vision of an excellent community school a reality.
 - Governors are highly effective in holding leaders to account for the performance of the school. Since the previous inspection, they have ensured that they, as well as the school's leaders, keep a close check on the performance of different groups of pupils in each year group. Through the governor executive reports, leaders provide a detailed and accurate breakdown of the pupils' progress throughout the school.
 - A very close check is kept on how leaders spend and account for the pupil premium funding. Governors have nominated a pupil premium governor, who regularly meets with leaders and reviews the effectiveness of this work. This has led to improved outcomes for pupils eligible for support through the funding.
 - Governors have undergone very thorough training in safeguarding. They use their own expertise in this field to ensure that this aspect of the school's work is effective.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders are well versed in the risks that pupils are vulnerable to, and have been proactive in seeking advice from external agencies when they have had concerns. The school promotes an open culture, where staff and pupils are comfortable in discussing issues and raising concerns. Leaders keep parents informed through the school's website about how to report safeguarding concerns. Staff fully understand their role in recognising and reporting any signs of distress. Although the site is shared with other facilities, there are appropriate risk assessments in place, and timings are carefully coordinated to reduce unnecessary risk. Pupils who spoke with inspectors confirmed that they feel safe at school, a view shared by their parents.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is outstanding**

- Teachers and teaching assistants consistently model the school's values in their classrooms. This contributes to the very strong ethos of respect and encouragement that characterises learning in this school.
- Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge and passion for their subjects to enthuse pupils with a love of learning. They are well motivated and keen for all pupils to succeed.
- Community spirit is at the heart of this school, and shows itself in the excellent and supportive relationships that pupils enjoy with their teachers. One parent commented, 'The teaching staff are supportive and challenging and are really building my daughter's confidence and abilities. She has developed wonderfully at Branston Academy'.
- Learning is consistently well planned to meet pupils' needs. This allows teachers to see at a glance who is making accelerated progress, and who is falling behind. This means that teachers pick up very quickly when pupils have not understood the learning and take swift action to help them catch up.
- Pupils value the feedback, both verbal and written, that their teachers give them. They know what is required to do well in their subjects, because teachers consistently show them what they need to do to succeed.
- Teachers make the most of opportunities to discuss and debate issues with pupils. For example, in a religious studies lesson, pupils discussed their ideas about discrimination confidently and articulately.
- From Year 7 upwards, teachers set high expectations for pupils' behaviour, and what they can achieve. Those who enter the school with low levels of literacy and numeracy receive effective help to catch up, and are set the same challenging targets as others. This accounts for the very fast progress that these pupils make.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive excellent support in class, because teachers and teaching assistants plan their support effectively. Teachers ensure that these pupils receive the right balance of challenge and support, enabling them to make excellent progress.
- The school encourages a love of reading; for example, teachers post what they are reading on their classroom doors. Pupils are quick to pick up on this enthusiasm, and enjoy opportunities to read and to discuss reading in class.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school promotes a 'can do' culture that encourages and celebrates success. For example, pictures of some of the past pupils who have gone on to be successful adorn the walls of the corridors and the dining hall. These posters provide inspiration, as well as careers ideas, to current pupils.
- The school is particularly effective in building resilience and enjoyment in learning. Pupils become skilled in finding the answers for themselves and struggling with more difficult tasks. They enjoy discussing and reflecting on their learning. For example, one pupil explained to an inspector that she sometimes wished that mathematics was easier, before reflecting, 'but life's not like that'.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. They appreciate the opportunities they get in assemblies and form time to learn about and discuss issues such as healthy relationships, 'sexting' and radicalisation.
- All the pupils who spoke with inspectors confirmed that there is very little bullying in the school, and they are very confident that teachers would deal with it instantly and effectively. The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, support this view.
- Pupils, and their parents, greatly appreciate the support they receive from all staff. Many parents wrote to inspectors to thank individual teachers and teaching assistants for their help and encouragement.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The school's values encourage pupils to develop an understanding of the impact of their actions on others. This is effective in preventing problems from occurring and ensuring that pupils treat each other kindly. To visitors, they are polite and cheerful. Many of them stopped to chat with inspectors and wished them a good day.
- Around school and in lessons, pupils' conduct is exemplary. They move around the site in a calm and orderly fashion, and are punctual for their lessons. The school is well maintained, and, even at the end of a busy lunchtime, there is very little litter. Pupils are proud of their school, and wear their uniforms smartly.
- Attitudes to learning are extremely positive. Pupils take interest and pride in their work, and rarely lose focus.
- Pupils support one another extremely well, for example by acting as peer mentors. Older pupils keep a close eye on the younger ones, and help to ensure they settle well.
- The school's highly effective systems ensure that behaviour remains outstanding. All staff consistently apply policies and procedures relating to behaviour.
- Attendance is above the national average, because pupils enjoy coming to school and value their education. The school works effectively to improve the attendance of those pupils who miss significant periods of time from school. The attendance and well-being of pupils who attend alternative provision is carefully monitored by staff, leading to improved attendance and outcomes for these pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Pupils begin the school with levels of prior attainment that are in line with national averages. They make strong progress and achieve levels of attainment that are consistently above average. In 2015, the proportion of pupils who achieved five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics was much higher than the national average. Leaders predict that a similar proportion will achieve this measure this year.
- Across all ability levels, pupils make rates of progress between key stages 2 and 4 that are well above the national averages in English and mathematics. Progress in other subjects shows a similar and consistent pattern. There are few subjects where pupils make less than outstanding progress.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils has risen sharply across the school. The overall progress made by these pupils in 2015 was well above the average for other pupils nationally. In some year groups and in some subjects, these pupils are now surpassing their peers. Where there are gaps, they are quickly closing.

- In a range of subjects, pupils from Year 7 upwards make strong progress. This is because they are set challenging targets and given the right support to achieve these targets.
- The school is particularly successful in raising the achievement of pupils who join the school with low levels of literacy and numeracy. These pupils receive effective support through additional tuition and small teaching sets. As a result of the high-quality interventions provided, they quickly develop the skills they need to be successful learners.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive excellent support. Key to their success, however, is the fact that teachers have the same high expectations for their achievement as they do of others. Consequently, they make the same rates of progress as their peers. In 2015, their overall achievement was significantly above average.
- At key stage 4, the progress of the most able pupils is well above the national rate for this group. In lower years, they are not making the same consistently strong progress as their peers. At key stage 5, too few of them achieve the highest grades in their subjects.
- The very few pupils who attend alternative provision make good progress on their chosen courses and improve their mathematical and literacy skills.
- Pupils are well prepared to leave Branston Community Academy and move on to the next stage of their education, employment or training. In 2015, every pupil who left the school was successful in gaining a place either in the school's sixth form or other sixth-form schools and colleges, or a place on an apprenticeship. This reflects the very effective careers advice and guidance that pupils receive, as well as the high expectations that teachers have for them.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- Students in the sixth form display consistently positive attitudes to learning. They greatly appreciate the opportunities they get to take on leadership positions in the school, for example through acting as peer mentors to younger pupils, and in the community. Students are excellent role models for younger pupils.
- The head of sixth form sets high expectations for attendance and conduct. Her leadership has a positive impact on teaching, personal development and outcomes for students.
- The sixth form is not outstanding because there are some remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. While students on some subjects achieve consistently well, this is not the case across all.
- Students' achievement in vocational subjects has been above national averages for some years and is traditionally higher than on academic courses. This is now changing, and academic outcomes show signs of rising this year.
- The quality of the curriculum in the sixth form meets students' needs well and ensures that they are well prepared for their next steps. A wide range of non-qualification activity contributes to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students enjoy opportunities to further develop their workplace skills and complete work experience in the sixth form. The school's sixth form meets the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes.
- An effective programme of careers advice and guidance ensures that all students are successful in gaining places at university, or in employment and training. The school runs programmes for gifted students and ensures that they are well informed about how to apply to the top universities. Some students have the opportunity to visit Oxbridge colleges, for example. However, too few students achieve the highest grades in their subjects, which limits the choices they are then able to make.
- Students who begin the sixth form without having achieved a grade C in English or mathematics receive excellent support. The success rates on these courses are consistently high.
- Safeguarding in the sixth form is effective. Students are confident to make good, safe choices for themselves, because the school is effective in teaching them their worth as individuals.

School details

Unique reference number	136358
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10011728

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,049
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Norman
Principal	Peter Beighton
Telephone number	01522 880 400
Website	www.branstonca.lincs.sch.uk
Email address	enquiries@branstonca.lincs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 November 2014

Information about this school

- Branston Community Academy is larger than the average secondary school for pupils aged 11 to 18.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with very small numbers from other ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. There are very few pupils who are in the early stages of learning English.
- A very small number of pupils access alternative provision at the Acorn Free School and the Pilgrim School, both of which are in Lincoln.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at key stage 4.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a range of subjects across all key stages. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with school leaders.
- Meetings were held with the school's senior and middle leaders, and with three members of the governing body, including the vice-chair.
- Inspectors spoke formally with groups of pupils from across the school, and informally with others at break- and lunchtime. An inspector listened to younger pupils reading.
- A range of documentation was considered, including the school's self-evaluation and action plans, performance information relating to the progress of current pupils across the school, staff training records, and records of attendance and behaviour. Inspectors took account of the 78 responses to the staff survey, four responses to the pupil survey and 252 responses to Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at the quality of work in pupils' books in a range of subjects across different year groups.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's checks on staff, safeguarding policies and records relating to the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

Deirdre Duignan, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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John Edwards	Ofsted Inspector
Harkireet Sohel	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector

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