

Ofsted inspectors take major local secondary out of special measures

Behaviour, teaching and results have all improved of late at Wheatley Park School. LIAM SLOAN reports

ONE OF Oxfordshire's biggest secondary schools has been taken out of special measures after inspectors said behaviour, teaching and results were improving.

Among new innovations credited with raising standards at Wheatley Park School is a new system of giving shopping vouchers and trips to pupils who do well, but punishing them within hours of misbehaving.

Now the 1,071-pupil school, near Wheatley, has set new targets for 70 per cent of its 16-year-olds to get five A*-to-C grades at GCSE, including English and maths, by 2012, up from 59 per cent last year.

In September 2009, standards watchdog Ofsted said the school was not giving an acceptable standard of education and it required measures to tackle behaviour and the achievement of the least engaged students.

Now inspectors have returned and said Wheatley



Park had made "a great deal of improvement" and the prospects of it getting even better were good. It said the school was now "rightly gaining the confidence of students".

Headteacher Kate Curtis, *pictured*, said: "We have had to very ruthlessly prioritise the key issues we wanted to improve on.

"We now have a very strong focus on planning lessons to meet the needs of every child. We are

making them interesting, absorbing, challenging and active."

She added: "Behaviour was something we worked hard on, and the students were very much with us on that."

Staff now meet daily after school to agree on punishments for all students who have broken school rules during the day.

Ms Curtis said: "Before the sun goes down we will have dealt with every incident of behaviour that day.

"Nothing is allowed to drift and students know their parents will be involved."

Meanwhile, pupils who behave and do well in lessons earn points under a new rewards system, which can be tracked online by parents, through which youngsters can earn shopping vouchers and trips out.

Ms Curtis said: "The biggest thing is that students and parents can see what rewards they have and what they were given for."