

The Blandford School

Milldown Road, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 7SQ

Inspection dates

17–18 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' progress in mathematics, in 2016 and 2017, was below the national average. While the school is now addressing this issue, there remains a legacy of underachievement in mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils underachieve relative to others nationally and have done so over time. Leaders have not tackled this weakness successfully in the main school. However, they have improved disadvantaged students' progress in the sixth form.
- Leaders, including governors, have not ensured that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who need to catch up in English or mathematics has sufficient impact on their progress.
- Teaching requires improvement because it is not of a consistently high standard across all subject areas.
- Pupils' progress is variable because too often teachers do not match work to the needs of their pupils. They do not have high enough expectations, particularly of the most able pupils.
- Pupils do not develop positive attitudes to learning consistently. When teachers do not set high expectations, some pupils do not take pride in their work and become disengaged from learning.
- Most middle leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses in their departments. However, some are recently appointed and have not yet had time to make the improvements required.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school site. They are polite and cooperative with each other and adults.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils' attendance and punctuality are good. Leaders have tackled attendance issues, particularly for pupils who have, historically, had poor attendance.
- The sixth form is well led. Teaching in the sixth form is planned effectively and students make good progress.
- Leaders have addressed underachievement in science effectively. Outcomes have improved and are now in line with the national average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers should:
 - ensure that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who need to catch up in English and mathematics is used more effectively and its impact on outcomes is analysed more precisely
 - increase the pace of change in developing the quality of teaching and learning
 - ensure that middle leaders have more opportunity to share best practice across departments, and from the sixth form
 - continue to support the developments in mathematics to ensure that pupils make at least good progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school to a consistently high standard by:
 - ensuring that teachers have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly for the disadvantaged and the most able
 - developing positive attitudes to learning by having high expectations of pupils' behaviour.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that pupil premium funding is spent effectively. Plans and strategies to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils have not been monitored or evaluated sufficiently. As a result, disadvantaged pupils did not make as much progress as other pupils nationally at GCSE in 2017 or previously. The progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in school is variable across subjects and year groups. Leaders' assessments indicate that, while improving, the progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school is still well below that of other pupils nationally.
- Senior leaders' monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment has not always been effective in the past. The new system for monitoring the quality of teaching, and linking it to teachers' professional development, has been successful in tackling weaknesses in some areas, for example in science and mathematics. However, it has not yet had as much impact on teaching in other areas, such as languages and geography.
- Middle leadership is inconsistent. While most subject areas are now well led and managed, there is still too much variability in the experience of pupils across the school. Recent changes to strengthen middle leadership are yet to have significant impact on pupils' outcomes. The lessons learned from better-quality middle leadership have not been shared more widely across all subject areas.
- Leadership of the sixth form is strong. High expectations of what students can achieve and effective monitoring and evaluation of progress are evident in the quality of students' work. As a result, standards in the sixth form are rising. Students move on to higher education, training or employment appropriate for their ability and aspirations.
- The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. Leaders have made well-considered adjustments to the curriculum. Some of these changes have not yet had the desired impact on pupils' attitudes, learning and progress because of the time required to implement them.
- Leaders use the funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities effectively. Staff know these pupils well and ensure that they are well supported in lessons. Adjustments to the curriculum to support their progress in basic skills have been effective, and so they develop the skills and attributes required for the future.
- The headteacher and senior leaders are ambitious for their pupils and keen that they are equipped to make a positive contribution to society. They have ensured that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well planned and effective. The curriculum allows good opportunities for many aspects of pupils' personal development. A well-developed programme gives pupils opportunities to discuss moral issues and prepares them well for life in modern Britain. Leaders have ensured that there is a broad range of extra-curricular opportunities to support and enhance pupils' development.

Governance of the school

- Governors have not held school leaders to account. As a result, they have allowed some aspects of the school's underperformance to go unchecked, for example the performance of disadvantaged pupils. Governors have not analysed the information provided to them sufficiently to pick out the potential areas of concern.
- Governors know the school's context and the community within which it sits very well. They are committed to the school's ethos and values. They are justly proud of the school's reputation in the community for the care of vulnerable children. However, they have not ensured that additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils has been used effectively. It is a similar picture with the Year 7 catch-up funding.
- Governors commissioned an external review of their work last year. Following this review, governors are making more systematic and structured visits to the school. As a result, they are providing more challenge to school leaders. However, the recommendations of the review have not been implemented quickly enough for rapid progress to take place.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Staff are trained appropriately in safeguarding and take their responsibilities seriously. All staff understand the procedures required if they have any concerns about the welfare of pupils in the school. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are knowledgeable; they maintain good records to ensure that any issues are followed up effectively.
- Governors oversee safeguarding highly effectively. They work with school staff to make sure that safeguarding arrangements are in place and up to date. They undertake regular reviews of the school's records and procedures to ensure that there are no weak points in the system.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They know whom to go to if they have any concerns. They are confident that they will be taken seriously. They know how to keep themselves safe online. The vast majority of pupils feel safe at school. The majority of parents stated that they feel their children are safe at school and that teachers will intervene effectively when concerns are reported.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable. Historically, there has been weak progress for pupils over time in some core subjects due to poor teaching. Leaders have addressed this in most areas but there are still pockets of weaker practice. In mathematics, for example, the legacy of some poor teaching in previous years is still evident in the achievement of pupils in the school. In geography and languages, low teacher expectations lead to a lack of challenge.
- Teachers' planning for learning is, too often, not based on the needs of the pupils. In too many cases, teachers do not take into account pupils' prior knowledge or what they

can do, know or understand. As a result, the most able pupils are not challenged and the least able are unable to access the learning effectively. Where teachers give appropriate opportunities, pupils rise to the challenge and produce a high standard of work.

- Teachers' management of pupils' behaviour is inconsistent. A significant number of pupils and parents feel that too much learning is disrupted by poor behaviour. While the majority of learning observed was purposeful, a minority was affected by low-level disruption or off-task behaviour. This was usually in areas where lower expectations of learning and progress were evident.
- Teachers do not develop reading, writing and numeracy consistently across the curriculum. Senior leaders have plans to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. However, they are not fully implemented by staff.
- When learning is founded on suitably challenging and engaging activities, pupils work well and their behaviour is exemplary. Where teaching is good, pupils are engaged and make rapid progress with the challenging tasks presented. In Year 9 history, for example, pupils were able to write extensively and with insight about life in the trenches during the First World War. In mathematics, pupils' mastery of algebra was extended by increasingly complex and challenging questions.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form is far more consistent than in the rest of the school. Teachers have high expectations of students' achievement and behaviour. Students have responded to this and are making good progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote personal development and welfare requires improvement. A number of pupils have not developed positive attitudes to learning. Where teaching is weaker, pupils do not routinely take pride in their work.
- The school's work to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. Pupils can discuss the ethical implications of genetic engineering and embryo screening in science and the morality of personal responsibility in English.
- Pupils receive a comprehensive programme of careers advice and guidance from Year 7 through to the sixth form. Pupils are given opportunities to develop employability skills and financial planning to equip themselves for life beyond school. They receive good information about further and higher education. As a result, few pupils leave school without a sustained placement in education, training or employment. Where, in rare cases, a pupil does not sustain their placement, the school continues to track and support them.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. The importance of democracy and the rule of law are promoted effectively. The school models this through the school parliament. While pupils stated that they feel confident that the school supports their physical health, the support for mental health is less well appreciated or understood.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well when moving around the school site during social times. They show respect and courtesy for one another and adults. As a result, the atmosphere in school is calm and orderly.
- Pupils value their education, and attendance has improved steadily over the past few years to be in line with, or better than, national averages. Pupils' punctuality is good. Leaders have worked effectively to improve the attendance of pupils whose attendance was previously poor.
- Pupils take pride in their appearance. They wear their uniform well and look smart. Pupils respect the environment. Their care for their surroundings is evident in the absence of litter or graffiti.
- Leaders have been effective in improving pupils' behaviour. As a result, there are fewer incidents of repeated poor behaviour, particularly for pupils who had previously found it hard to live up to the school's expectations.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016 and 2017, outcomes at GCSE for mathematics were significantly below national expectations. In 2017, pupils' progress in English, languages and humanities fell below the national average.
- The weak achievement in GCSE mathematics is being addressed by the school and the progress of current pupils is improving. Pupils' progress in English was a strength of the school prior to the 2017 GCSE results. The issues which led to poorer results in 2017 are well understood by the school and the progress of current pupils in English is strong.
- Historically, the progress of disadvantaged pupils has been weak. The progress of this group is improving compared to previous years. However, it continues to be below that of other pupils nationally. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is variable between subjects and year groups in the school.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make progress from their starting points that is broadly in line with other pupils nationally. Pupils who have an education, health and care plan are receiving effective support from teachers and leaders. This enables them to access mainstream lessons and proceed to sustained placements in education or training after Year 11.
- The school has addressed the previously poor progress in science. GCSE science results have improved consistently over the last three years. Pupils now make at least average progress compared to their peers nationally. The work of groups currently in the school reflects this improved standard.
- Students' progress in the sixth form is in line with national average. The school has been successful in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form and, as a result, students' achievement has steadily improved.

- Pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their education through a well-planned programme of advice and guidance. As a result, the vast majority of pupils go on to sustained placements in further education or training after Year 11 and higher education, training or employment after Year 13.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Senior leaders have set higher expectations of students' academic standards and behaviour in the sixth form than they have of pupils in the main school. Senior leaders monitor and evaluate the progress of students on 16 to 19 study programmes closely; they ensure that students are given extra help when they appear to be falling behind. As a result, progress and attainment in the vast majority of A-level and applied subjects are at least in line with national averages and are improving.
- Disadvantaged students make good progress in the sixth form. Their achievement is at least in line with that of other learners nationally and often better. Well-structured programmes, higher expectations and more individual attention from their teachers supports these students effectively.
- The success of students retaking level 2 qualifications in English and/or mathematics is a strength. Students make rapid progress to achieve improved outcomes in both English and mathematics.
- Teaching and learning in the sixth form is effective because teachers plan for the individual needs of students and provide challenging work. Learning is well structured to develop and extend understanding at an appropriately high level. Relationships between teachers and their students are good. Students spoke highly of the support, advice and feedback that their teachers give them.
- Attendance and punctuality are good in the sixth form. Students conduct themselves well and participate in the life of the school. They organise charity events and are engaged with the school council.
- High-quality impartial careers guidance, combined with well-supported and relevant work experience opportunities, enables students to choose appropriate courses which lead to higher education, training or employment. Therefore, retention rates are good. Enrichment programmes are used to ensure that students develop strong employability and personal skills.

School details

Unique reference number	113888
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10037866

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,006
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	141
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Sue Hough
Headteacher	Sally Wilson
Telephone number	01258 451121
Website	www.blandfordschool.org.uk
Email address	office@blandford.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 October 2012

Information about this school

- Blandford School is an average-sized school, with a sixth form.
- Most pupils are of a White British heritage and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is in line with the national average, and the proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school is slightly above average. The proportion of pupils who have support for SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.

- Attainment on entry to the school is, typically, slightly below average. The school roll has been increasing over the past few years and the proportion of boys is higher than national averages in most year groups.
- The school uses alternative provision at AFC Bournemouth Academy.
- The school meets the government's floor standards. This sets the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning and behaviour, reviewed pupils' work and talked to pupils about their work. Samples of work across a range of subjects and year groups were analysed.
- Meetings were held with different groups of pupils to discuss their experiences of the school and listen to their views.
- Pupils were observed in lessons, and at break and lunchtimes. Inspectors talked with pupils formally and informally.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, middle leaders and governors and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the development plan and pupil premium and catch-up reports. Inspectors looked at documents related to safeguarding, records of behaviour and attendance and information on pupils' achievement, including the school's current assessment information. Governor minutes and records of governor visits to the school were reviewed.
- Inspectors took account of the 143 responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, including the written comments. They considered the 103 responses to the online pupil survey and 77 responses to the staff survey. Inspectors considered also the parent and pupil surveys carried out by the school.

Inspection team

David New, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Butler	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Colledge	Ofsted Inspector
John Laver	Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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