

The Beaconsfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110505
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	356762
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2010
Reporting inspector	John Daniell HMI

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Community
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	869
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	127
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Amanda Slayton-Joslin
Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Fletcher
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2010
School address	Wattleton Road Beaconsfield HP9 1SJ
Telephone number	01494 673450
Fax number	01494 676404
Email address	office@beaconsfield.bucks.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors saw 37 lessons taught by 36 teachers and held meetings with the governing body, key members of staff and students. Discussions also took place with the school improvement partner and other schools with which the school works in partnership. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including policies, self-evaluation information, performance data, school improvement plans and reports and reviews from the local authority. The inspection team scrutinised 245 questionnaires from parents and carers, as well as 118 from students and 32 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How well students achieve, particularly in English and mathematics.
- How consistent is the quality of teaching and learning across age groups and subject areas?
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels in driving forward sustained improvement.
- The effectiveness of provision in meeting students' needs in the sixth form.

Information about the school

The Beaconsfield School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school and has specialist arts status. It serves the town of Beaconsfield and surrounding areas in a local authority which retains selection. The headteacher has been in post since September 2010.

The school has more girls than boys and the number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below the national average as is the percentage of students who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average but the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is just above average.

The school holds awards for Investors in People and Investors in Families and enjoys Artsmark Gold and Sportsmark status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The Beaconsfield School provides a satisfactory standard of education for its students and some important features of the school are good. The school provides a safe environment and this, coupled with good behaviour and effective care and support, creates a welcoming school where students feel happy and in which they take pride. The school's specialist arts status complements the provision and these popular subjects enhance the students' learning experience.

Attendance has been a cause for concern in the past and the proportion of students who are persistently absent, although decreasing, is still too high. The school is addressing this through targeted support and has appointed an attendance officer but the proportion of students who are persistently absent remains above the national average.

Although attainment has been rising over recent years, students' progress has been stalled by lower attainment in English and mathematics. This matter is now being effectively addressed and achievement is now satisfactory overall. Achievement is better in the specialist subjects and in modern foreign languages where students greatly appreciate the opportunity to study French, German and Spanish during their first two years at school. Satisfactory teaching and learning mean students make only satisfactory progress overall. Inconsistent use of assessment information in the planning and delivery of lessons hinders the school's ability to promote good achievement.

The school has experienced several changes in leadership over a short period of time. Nevertheless, recent senior leadership appointments, and the restructuring of the leadership team, which plays to strengths and which has the confidence of the staff, are set to secure school improvement. The quality of leadership and management below senior level is sometimes weak and has affected student outcomes in the past. However, senior leaders are aware of what needs to be done to strengthen leadership at this level and support mechanisms are in place to do this. Capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

The sixth form provision is currently satisfactory and around 60% of Year 11 students choose to continue their studies in the school. Teaching observed in the sixth form is of the same standard as that observed elsewhere in the school. Sixth form students are positive about their school and make a positive contribution to school life.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rate of attendance by:
 - reducing the number of students who are persistently absent.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:

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- encouraging teachers to be more creative in the classroom, including in sixth form lessons
- providing greater challenge for the more-able students
- making the daily mentoring period in Years 7 to 11 a more positive experience for the students
- ensuring that the classroom learning environment encourages learning that is more active.
- Improve the rate of students' progress by:
 - making better use of assessment data when planning lessons
 - testing students' knowledge by better use of questioning in the classroom.
- Strengthen leadership and capacity to improve by:
 - ensuring the quality of leadership and management at middle level is consistently good.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

In lessons, progress ranged from inadequate to outstanding. Some good examples of effective learning were seen in a small number of subjects including English, modern foreign languages, geography and business studies. In an outstanding French lesson students made very good progress because the teacher had planned the lesson to allow for their needs by making good use of data available. Students knew what skills they needed to use, how well they were doing and what they needed to do to improve. However, in the many satisfactory lessons seen, insufficient use of available data resulted in students not having high enough expectations of themselves because they were unaware of their own potential. Recent initiatives centred on 'building learning power' are having an impact in some lessons but are not yet being consistently applied across all subject areas.

The proportion of students achieving five or more good GCSE grades has increased from 2008 where it was in line with the national average at 64% to above the national average at 84% in 2010. However, because attainment in both English and mathematics has been below the national average over the same period, the percentage of students gaining five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics, although increasing, has remained well below the national average. Current available data indicate that results in 2011 are set to rise significantly, including in English and mathematics to above the national average. Achievement in some of the specialist subjects is better than most. As there are more girls on roll than boys, the school is aware of the need to implement strategies to ensure they achieve to the standard of the boys. Students with a statement of special educational needs and less-able boys make better progress. More-able students perform less well than they should.

Students say they feel safe and secure in school and they adopt safe practices in the classroom. Systems and procedures for dealing with students who experience problems are effective and made known to all. Students behave well both in lessons and around the school and they respond well to the school's effective behaviour management strategies with the result that any student who is temporarily excluded from the school rarely offends a second time. The school encourages students to lead a healthy lifestyle and

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participation in the wide choice of after-school activities is high. Students make a positive contribution to the school and wider community through an active school council. Events produced by the specialist subjects bring all the students together and the specialism also helps to foster links with local primary and secondary schools. There is a strong sense of the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and they demonstrate a good understanding of the issues and challenges they will encounter in the future. For example, they displayed sensitivity and a strong sense of moral purpose during a Remembrance Day assembly led by the headteacher. The school works hard to raise the students' self-esteem and belief in themselves. Improving standards in both English and mathematics prepare them satisfactorily for the world of work.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is predominantly satisfactory and although there is some good or better practice, there remains some inconsistency in the quality of teaching overall. In the better lessons, teachers' good subject and planning skills and their positive relationships with students result in exciting lessons where the students are fully engaged. Good use of questioning is made to challenge these students' ideas and perceptions. In a Year 11 business studies lesson where students were researching competitor companies, the teacher made excellent use of information and communication technology and checked regularly for students' understanding. However, too many lessons lack the creativity required to

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motivate the students to maintain an interest and follow up things on their own. The lack of challenge, especially for those students who are gifted or talented, is often a missed opportunity in the classroom. In an otherwise satisfactory lesson, the pace was too slow and there was insufficient focus on learning. Teachers do not consistently use assessment information effectively to plan or deliver their lessons, which affects the rate of progress for individual students. As a result, instead of providing a range of activities of varying difficulty to meet each student's individual needs, all do the same work.

The satisfactory curriculum is beginning to have a positive impact on students' progress, particularly for those students who are more vulnerable. These students benefit from the school's Lemon Wedge Arts Learning Centre which develops their creative and social skills and has improved student outcomes, for example, through improved attendance. Different curriculum pathways at Key Stage 4 offer some variation in courses but the curriculum does not yet meet the needs of the more-able students. It also does not meet the necessary requirements for citizenship, and progress in this subject is not reported to parents and carers. The wide choice of enrichment activities is appreciated by students. The daily mentoring period for the mixed-year form groups in Years 7 to 11 is not productive and represents a missed opportunity to target different groups of students appropriately.

Good arrangements are made for the care, guidance and support of students. Students say they feel well supported in school and guidance in subject choices for those entering Year 10 and the sixth form helps them make informed decisions. Smooth transition for vulnerable students entering Year 7 is facilitated through the work of the Lemon Wedge Arts Learning Centre.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The strategic senior leadership of the school has a revised structure with a new headteacher and recently created assistant headteacher role with responsibility for tracking students' progress. The senior leaders demonstrate an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for development. A culture of monitoring exists but self-evaluation documentation does not yet fully assess the impact of the school's actions on learning and progress. Leadership at middle level which includes subject leaders and year mentors is not yet consistently good. Many of these leaders are new to post and require support and others have not previously been held sufficiently accountable for the performance of their areas. The headteacher's decision to line-manage the heads of English and mathematics himself indicates a determination to see the school succeed. The

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management of teaching and learning has not yet had an impact on the students' experience in the classroom as teaching and learning is only satisfactory overall. However, recent improvements to data management are set to increase both student and teacher awareness of the role of data in raising standards.

The governing body is passionate about raising standards and is aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. They now hold the school to account through support and challenge and play a full part in determining the strategic direction of the school. The Chair of the Governing Body said, 'My vision for this school is for it to be as good as any other in the local authority so that the 11-plus exam becomes irrelevant.' The governing body fulfils its statutory duties in relation to the safeguarding of children.

The school successfully engages parents and carers in their children's education and has also established some useful links with partners, often through its specialist arts status. However, partnership links outside the specialism areas to improve outcomes for students are less well developed. The school actively promotes community cohesion not only within the school but also locally, where Beaconsfield students have helped in care homes, and internationally, where links have been made with a school in Sierra Leone. Plans are also in place to work with a home in India for abandoned girls. An evaluation of the impact of these initiatives on student outcomes is yet to take place.

The school places great importance on equality of opportunity and is taking concerted action to narrow any remaining gaps in achievement between different groups of students. While its equal opportunities policy contributes towards addressing variation in student outcomes, there is not yet an action plan in place to implement the policy effectively and monitor its success.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Sixth form

Students enter the sixth form with slightly lower levels of prior attainment compared to the national average. Attainment in 2010 for those gaining A* to E grades at A level was 95% compared to the national figure of 98.2%. The proportion of students gaining grades A* to C was just higher than the national average at 53%. This represents satisfactory progress given their starting points within the context of a selective school system.

Students are positive about the sixth form and enjoy the support they receive from their mentors. One committed sixth form student said of the school, 'You feel like the school really belongs to you.' Although the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, there are some good lessons where teachers' expectations are high and students are required to be more independent and take overall responsibility for their learning. Sixth form students play an active role within the school community and their personal development is good. Attendance in the sixth form is average.

The head of sixth form recognises that the curriculum in the sixth form does not yet fully match the needs of the students and some classes have too few students, which does not represent value for money. The head of sixth form demonstrates a clear understanding of how the sixth form can improve and plans are in place to become part of a local consortium where a more suitable range of courses is available.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

The small proportion of parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire expressed their satisfaction with the school. Most feel that the school keeps their children safe and are positive about their children's experiences at the school. A small minority feels that their children are not making enough progress at the school. Inspectors found progress to be satisfactory overall and saw evidence that the school is aware of variations in rates of progress and that plans are in place to address these. A small minority believes that the school does not encourage their children to lead a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors witnessed most students eating healthily and noted that the school offers two hours per week of physical education as well as a range of health-related enrichment activities.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Beaconsfield School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 245 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 869 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	96	39	137	56	8	3	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	65	27	167	68	9	4	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	106	43	121	49	17	7	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	65	27	148	60	21	9	7	3
The teaching is good at this school	52	21	173	71	10	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	63	26	148	60	22	9	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	16	174	71	23	9	3	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	46	19	161	66	16	7	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	56	23	157	64	23	9	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	61	25	145	59	21	9	9	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	51	21	138	56	24	10	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	68	28	153	62	14	6	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	87	36	142	58	11	4	3	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Beaconsfield School, Beaconsfield, HP9 1SJ

Thank you very much for making the inspection team so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting with you and talking to you in lessons and during your break times. Most of you say you enjoy coming to school and that you feel safe. A minority feels that your school does not encourage you to be healthy. A very large majority believe the senior staff are doing a very good job.

These are our key findings.

- The school is providing you with a satisfactory standard of education.
- Your behaviour is good and you are supported and guided well in school.
- The number of you who are persistently absent is still too high.
- You are making satisfactory progress overall and attainment is set to improve in English and mathematics.
- Some leaders in your school perform less well than others but the school is working hard to rectify this.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but, while there are many good lessons, there is also a small number which are inadequate. Teachers do not always make the best use of data they have about you when planning lessons, especially for those of you who are gifted and talented.
- The sixth form provision is satisfactory and sixth form students enjoy being part of the school.

We have asked the senior leaders of the school to improve attendance and progress and to make sure that your teachers make better use of data when planning lessons as well as making all lessons exciting and challenging. We would also like to see all school leaders performing to the same high standard. For your part, we ask you to work hard and make the most of the opportunities offered to you.

Yours sincerely

John Daniell Her Majesty's Inspector

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