

Bucklers Mead Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123890
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	359544
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Anne Looney HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	974
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Lamont
Headteacher	Michael Featherstone
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 33 lessons, observed 30 teachers and held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning documents, policy documents, students' work and external evaluations of the school's work. They also scrutinised 281 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers, and those completed by staff and a sample of students from each year group.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How good is the achievement of all students, including that of lower-ability students and those eligible for free school meals?
- Whether teaching consistently promotes good learning and progress.
- How well the school ensures every student develops equally well on a personal level.
- How effectively leaders at all levels have identified the reasons for the drop in the most recent examination results and how swiftly and well they have acted to bring about improvement.

Information about the school

Buckler's Mead Community School is an average-sized secondary school. Most students are White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and of those who speak English as an additional language has risen in recent years but remains below average in both groups. The number of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals has increased since the time of the last inspection and is now broadly in line with the national average. The school has specialist technology status and has recently gained the Healthy Schools Plus award. The school hosts a language resource base for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities for the local authority. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities has risen considerably and is now above average. These students' needs include difficulties with speech, language and communication, specific learning difficulties, and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

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

Buckler's Mead is a satisfactory school. Since the last inspection, it had maintained a trend of improvement up to 2009 when examination results were the best the school had achieved. In 2010, however, there was a considerable drop in results which disrupted that trend. The school analysed in detail the reasons for that dip and acted swiftly to put in place interventions to improve attainment and accelerate progress. Students' achievement is now satisfactory and there is no significant difference in the progress made by different groups. A consistent strength of the school is the outstanding quality of the care, guidance and support given to students. Almost all students who responded to the student questionnaire felt that adults in the school cared about them. This sentiment is shared by parents and carers, the overwhelming majority of whom feel that the school keeps their children safe. The support given to students experiencing difficulties in their lives is excellent. Students talk with pride of their school and their behaviour is good, as are the vast majority of outcomes relating to their broader personal development. Their contribution to the community is outstanding.

The school's curriculum is satisfactory overall and there are some notable strengths in curriculum provision, such as the carefully tailored programme for targeted students in Years 10 and 11.

Teaching is satisfactory. There is some good teaching which leads to students making good gains in learning but too much of the teaching is no better than satisfactory and leads to students making adequate, rather than good, progress. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they have good relationships with their students. Their planning is thorough and pays attention to the varying needs of the students. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, this planning does not translate into activities that are well matched to students' needs. The best lessons observed involved students well in their learning, although in less effective lessons teachers did too much of the talking. The quality of marking and feedback is variable and not all teachers are consistently making clear to students what steps to take to improve their work.

Senior leaders have set a clear and shared agenda for improvement. Almost all staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire stated that the school was well led. Morale in the school is high. Since the disappointing examination results in 2010, senior leaders have improved the quality and regularity of tracking to improve the monitoring of students' performance. Senior leaders have also provided good support for subject areas identified as underperforming. An additional management layer of school improvement leaders was introduced a few years ago. This has helped subject department managers to develop a stronger understanding of data analysis, leading to improved collaboration and good subject self-evaluation of students' outcomes. The leadership and management of teaching and learning have not been as effective in improving the quality of teaching.

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Observations lead to detailed feedback but there is too much focus on teaching rather than learning and progress of students and this has led to some over-grading of the quality of teaching. The school's self-evaluation on outcomes is accurate and well grounded in evidence and the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of learning by:
 - ensuring that all teaching is more finely tuned to meet the needs of all students ♦
 - ensuring that students have more opportunities to play an active role in their learning
 - improving the quality of feedback so that all students know exactly what steps to take to make their work better.
- Develop a more rigorous process to monitor the impact of teaching on learning and progress and ensure that the three points above are met.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students show positive attitudes to their learning, concentrating well and applying themselves to the tasks they are given. Students told inspectors, and this was borne out in a recent questionnaire carried out by the school, that they would like more opportunities to be active in lessons. In lessons observed during the inspection, students responded particularly well when given opportunities to develop their independence. These students talked knowledgeably about their work and about choices they had made. Students have a good awareness of the levels at which they are working but not all are as clear about what precisely they need to do to get to the next level.

The proportion of students attaining five A* to C grades and five A* to C grades including mathematics and English at GCSE remained broadly average up to 2009, having improved in the three years prior to that. Staffing disruption in subjects with large entries had a considerable impact on overall results in 2010 which were significantly below the national average. The school planned a range of intervention strategies to ensure that progress for the current students in Years 10 and 11 would be better. These included greater use of early examination entry, additional classes in mathematics and English, and greater involvement of class teachers in monitoring. The school's detailed data analysis indicates that students are on track to meet the challenging but realistic targets set for them and all groups of students are now making better progress towards their targets than corresponding groups did in the last school year. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall, although their progress is accelerated when they are working with specialist support in the learning support resource bases.

During the inspection, students talked openly and enthusiastically about their school. They are keen to exploit the good range of extra-curricular opportunities. Students develop

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good workplace skills and almost all students who responded to the questionnaire felt well prepared for their future. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students' contribution to both the school and wider community is particularly strong. Students use the school parliament well to ensure their views are heard and this body has brought about changes to the school fabric. Many students have involved themselves in the 'extra mile' project which allows them to observe lessons and report on learning. They also contribute well to the local community and are seen as very good ambassadors for Buckler's Mead when out of school.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

Transition into the school and advice and guidance on the next stage of education, training or employment are very effectively managed. While students are at the school, there is excellent and well-targeted support for all students and the school shows a high level of awareness of the varying needs of its students and how it should help them develop. Work with a very wide range of external agencies supports the school very well in providing that help.

The curriculum provides a satisfactory match to students' needs and interests. The school has, however, recognised fully where the curriculum should develop, particularly at Key Stage 4, and has already started on that work. There is to be a greater breadth of vocational options, and specific courses, such as in information and communication

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technology (ICT), have been changed to those better suited to students' needs. There are also existing strengths, such as the carefully tailored 'ASPIRE' programme for targeted students in Years 10 and 11. This programme allows them to maintain a core curriculum but combine it with a significant element of work-related learning and this develops their self-confidence well. The school also exploits effectively the 14 to 19 partnership with local schools. The school makes good use of its specialist status in providing good access to ICT for all teachers. ♦

Although teaching is satisfactory overall, there is some good teaching across a range of subjects. Particularly effective teaching was seen in lessons in physical education, English, design and technology, and art. In these lessons, student involvement, or even independence, was high and teachers were using assessment regularly and effectively to ensure that they knew how well students were doing. Questions probed students' knowledge. Teachers manage activities well but there are, in some lessons, too few opportunities for students to work in groups. ♦♦

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have shared their focus on improvement well with the middle leaders and classroom teachers and there is a great deal of mutual respect and trust amongst the staff. The use of data is now better understood by all middle managers. The target-setting process, which is now half-termly, is involving class teachers much more effectively in the monitoring process to ensure that students' academic performance is well monitored. The school promotes equality of opportunity well and has effectively focused on the progress of different groups. The gaps between groups are now closing. The self-evaluation process is rigorous at both whole-school and subject level and makes good use of the analysis of students' outcomes. In both whole-school and subject self-evaluation, however, there is insufficient analysis of how teaching impacts on learning and progress. It is significant that the school development plan, which focuses so well on the areas for improvement for the students' pastoral care and on how the curriculum is to be developed, does not give a strategic steer on how teaching and learning are to be developed and monitored.

The governing body is experienced and fulfils its statutory duties well. Through the system of advisory groups, the governing body gains an in-depth understanding of the work of the school. Governors know the strengths and areas for development well and all decision

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making is based on thorough consultation. They are fully involved in evaluating the work of the school but the level of challenge is not always as robust as it might be.

Links with parents and carers are good; the school targets its resources well in this area. Parents and carers are consulted well and communication is soon to be extended by electronic means. The school makes good use of its extensive range of partners; for example, to extend curriculum provision, to support transition from primary school and, most effectively, to support students' well-being. It also gives back to the community through, for example, its work with the local Polish community and with local special schools. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. It has an informed understanding of its religious, ethnic and socio-economic context and has taken some action to make improvements. ♦

There are outstanding procedures in place to ensure the safety of the students in the school's care and this is recognised by the students themselves, the overwhelming majority of whom say that they feel safe in the school. ♦

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires said that their children enjoyed school and that they themselves were happy with their children's experience at the school. Almost all believed that the school kept their children safe. A very small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about the school's effectiveness in dealing with unacceptable behaviour. The inspection team followed up this area but found no evidence to support these concerns and judged that aspect of the school's work to be good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

The inspection team received 281 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 974 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	86	31	175	62	15	6	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	85	30	182	65	9	3	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	122	43	120	52	11	4	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	120	43	148	52	11	4	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	114	41	156	56	7	2	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	89	32	167	59	15	5	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	53	19	192	69	23	8	7	2
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)	86	31	161	57	16	6	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	81	29	182	65	10	4	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	85	30	158	56	24	9	9	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	72	26	165	59	23	8	4	1
The school is led and managed effectively	103	37	159	57	9	3	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	111	40	141	50	8	3	2	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



9 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Buckler's Mead Community School, Yeovil BA21 4NH

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us, both in meetings and as we walked around your school. We enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school, which we judged to be satisfactory.

After a good year in 2009, there was a drop in examination results in 2010, and we were pleased to see that the school acted quickly and that the achievement of all groups is now satisfactory. The school has continued to promote your personal development well. You talk with pride of your school and we think you behave well. We agreed with you when you told us that the school kept you very safe and we think that you make an outstanding contribution to the school and local community. Almost all of you who responded to the questionnaire and who talked to us said that the school cared for you really well. We agreed, and judged the care, guidance and support at Buckler's Mead to be outstanding. ♦ The curriculum on offer is satisfactory, although there are strong elements. School leaders have got a clear picture of how the school should improve and this is shared well with all staff in the school. The school has improved the way that it monitors your progress and all teachers are now making better use of data to set you targets. Although there is some teaching which is good and that helps you make good progress in lessons, there is scope for improvement here. The observations of teaching made by the school's managers focus too much on what the teachers are doing rather than what you are learning.

We have, therefore, asked the school to improve the quality of learning by making sure that your individual needs are met in all lessons, to give you more opportunities to be involved and active in lessons, and to make sure that you know exactly what you need to do to improve your work. We have also asked the leaders to monitor that this is happening more carefully. ♦

All of you can help by getting involved as much as possible in lessons. I wish you all the best for your future happiness and success.

Yours sincerely

Anne Looney

Her Majesty's Inspector

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