

Maiden Beech Academy

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137118
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	397466
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2012
Lead inspector	Robin Gaff

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	443
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Weeks
Headteacher	Stephen Smith
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2008
School address	Lyme Road Crewkerne Somerset TA18 8HG
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Age group	9–13
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Introduction

Inspection team

Robin Gaff Additional inspector

Jacqui Goodall Additional inspector

Howard Dodd Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with one day's notice. Inspectors watched 28 part lessons taught by 22 teachers, observing two lessons jointly with senior leaders, as well as making a number of shorter visits to classrooms in order to observe groups of students at work. Inspectors talked to students and looked at their work. They held meetings with groups of students, school leaders and representatives of the governing body. The inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. In addition, they reviewed documents provided by the school, including safeguarding and attendance records, monitoring files and self-evaluation and planning documents. They analysed questionnaire responses from students and staff, as well as 94 completed questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

Information about the school

Maiden Beech Academy is much smaller than the average secondary school. Most students are of White British heritage. A small number are from Gypsy and Traveller backgrounds. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is much lower than that found nationally. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. Of these students the main group represented is the small number of students who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. The current headteacher took up his post in January 2011. Maiden Beech converted to academy status in August 2011. The Chair of the Governing Body was elected in September 2011.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school where achievement is good as a result of mostly good teaching. It is not yet outstanding because, on a very small number of occasions, teachers do not enable students to make at least good progress in lessons by giving them tasks which fully match their abilities and provide them with sufficient challenge.
- Students achieve well because they are taught well and the school uses its assessment procedures very effectively to identify and address any potential underperformance. Those who are disabled or have special educational needs make good progress because of the well-tailored support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.
- Teaching is good and on occasions outstanding. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects, and most provide a good range of activities in their lessons. They ensure that students know the levels that they are achieving and what they need to do to reach their targets.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, and their positive attitudes contribute well to their learning. They feel safe because they are not unduly concerned about bullying and report that it is dealt with promptly and effectively when it does occur. The school has established well-conceived systems for promoting good behaviour, but not all staff apply them consistently. As a result, some students, and parents and carers, have questioned their effectiveness.
- Leadership and management are good. Leaders have successfully addressed the areas for improvement highlighted by the school's last inspection. The leadership of teaching and the management of performance, including professional development for teachers, are effective. Leaders closely monitor the quality of teaching and provide good opportunities for teachers to share good practice. Together with the governing body, leaders have accurately evaluated the school's performance and have identified appropriate priorities for further development.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By December 2012, accelerate students' progress in lessons by ensuring that all teachers:
 - give all students tasks which are specifically matched to their interests and abilities
 - provide consistently high levels of challenge for all students in their lessons.

- Ensure that the school's procedures for promoting good behaviour are even more effective by making sure that all staff apply the system of rewards and sanctions consistently, so that all students, parents and carers have confidence in its fairness.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students join the school with levels of attainment and skills which vary from year to year, but overall are broadly average. They make good progress in a range of subjects from their starting points, so that, by the time they leave the school, their attainment is above that expected for their age. Students' performance in national tests at the end of Year 6 has risen substantially over the last three years. Their attainment in mathematics was above the national average in both 2010 and 2011, and in English it was well above average. The school's own reliable assessment data indicate that students' progress continues to meet or exceed expectations in Years 7 and 8. A very large majority of parents and carers agree that their children are making good progress.

Students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, as well as those who are from Gypsy and Traveller backgrounds, make similar progress to their peers. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also make good progress because of the well-targeted support they receive in mainstream classes, small groups and one-to-one sessions.

Students' reading, writing and mathematical skills develop well as they progress through the school. They make a good start to their learning in subjects that are new to them, for example French. They are keen to respond to teachers' questioning, to ask questions and to volunteer their own ideas, and are willing to learn from one another as well as from their teachers. Students report that they mostly enjoy their lessons, especially when they are given plenty of opportunities to work on stimulating tasks in pairs or in groups. For example, in a Year 8 geography lesson, students made outstanding progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of shanty towns. They showed extremely good team-working and problem-solving skills in completing tasks which were extremely well tailored to their

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different levels of ability, and demonstrated their good social, moral and cultural development in their discussions and the presentations they made on the topic.

Occasionally students make slower progress in lessons because the work does not challenge them enough to enable them to make good or outstanding progress.

Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers feel that their children are taught well, and inspectors' findings support this view. Teachers use their good knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, their subjects effectively, as well as a good variety of teaching strategies and resources to engage students and ensure that they remain on task. They establish good working relationships with students and know them well as individuals. Most teachers provide students with a good range of activities in lessons, including opportunities for independent learning. Teachers, in a range of subjects, develop students' reading and writing skills effectively by, for example, ensuring that they understand and can spell correctly the technical terms and less familiar words that they encounter. Teachers mostly make very good use of the information they have gained through their very regular and detailed assessment of students' learning and progress to ensure that they are given realistic but challenging targets during lessons. They monitor students' progress during lessons carefully and make good use of a variety of questioning techniques to check and to develop their learning. Teachers mark students' written work frequently and accurately, and give them detailed feedback, which enables students to build on their strengths and to understand the next steps they need to take to improve their work.

Teachers promote students' social development well by giving them good opportunities and encouragement to work cooperatively. For example, in an excellent physical education lesson, the teacher enabled students to develop strong team-working, logic and deduction skills, as well as their physical strength and resilience, as they followed instructions and solved clues to plot and complete an 'orienteeing' course around the hall. He also ensured that tasks for different groups corresponded to the abilities of the students within them, and enabled students to consolidate their learning very effectively by assessing their own and each other's performance. In a few lessons, however, activities were not matched closely enough to the specific abilities and interests of individuals and groups to enable them to make as much progress as they could.

Teachers and teaching assistants ensure that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are fully included in classroom activities, and receive the support they need in order to make good progress. They successfully promote the learning of individuals and small groups of students who have additional needs, by providing them with well-focused activities, and regular and supportive assessment and feedback.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Inspectors find that behaviour is typically good. Most parents and carers agree with this judgement. Students contribute well to an orderly and purposeful atmosphere, and their behaviour in lessons is typically good. They are attentive to their teachers and keen to participate in classroom activities, and work purposefully on individual and group tasks, requiring very few reminders to maintain their level of focus. Students say that they feel very safe in school. They have a good understanding of different types of bullying, such as misuse of the internet or mobile phones, but report that they have few concerns about bullying in school. This is because incidents are rare and are dealt with quickly and effectively when they do occur. A small minority of students expressed concerns about bullying or behaviour in class but inspectors found little evidence to support this.

The school has established effective systems for promoting high attendance and good behaviour. Attendance overall and for groups is above average and rising. The number of exclusions is low and has fallen in recent years. The school can point to examples where its actions have led to marked improvement in individual students' behaviour. Staff have high expectations of behaviour, and make them clear to students. On the rare occasions in lessons when students' behaviour is satisfactory rather than good, this is usually because activities are not challenging enough to prevent some individuals from becoming bored or distracted. Leaders have developed a clearly defined set of rewards and sanctions, but students report that not all staff apply them consistently, leading to a sense of unfairness, which is shared by some parents and carers.

Leadership and management

School leaders, several of whom, including the headteacher, are relatively new to their post, have together with the governors accurately evaluated the quality of provision and put in place well-considered and ambitious plans to promote further development. The quality of teaching has improved through the establishment of effective systems for managing performance and professional development. Senior leaders model effective practice, regularly monitor lessons, and provide good opportunities for staff to share examples of successful teaching. This has resulted in a sustained rise in students' attainment and progress, especially in English, which was highlighted as an area for improvement by the last inspection. Leaders recognise the need to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching. Staff morale is high, and teachers are keen to take advantage of opportunities to improve their own practice. Leaders' success in promoting equality of opportunity is demonstrated by the extent to which any gaps in performance between different groups have been swiftly identified and addressed effectively. The school is a harmonious and coherent community, and there is no evidence of any discrimination. It has established good links with the local Gypsy and Traveller community, which have led to improvements in individual students' attendance and progress.

The governing body's good range of expertise and experience, together with its

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effective monitoring systems, enables it to set the school's strategic direction and hold leaders to account. Governors and senior leaders ensure that arrangements for safeguarding students, including vetting new appointments and providing suitable training for staff, are robust and effective. The broad and balanced curriculum enables students to make a smooth transition from primary to secondary education, and provides them with a good basis for further study. A good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities promotes students' cultural development effectively by enabling them to take part in music and drama productions, as well as trips and visits. The school also fosters students' spiritual and moral development well by, for example, giving them regular opportunities, via its website, to reflect upon and to discuss 'big questions', for example, 'Is there more happiness than unhappiness in the world?'

School leaders have built on the strengths and addressed the weaknesses identified by the last inspection. This, together with their strong commitment, shared by staff and the governing body, to make the quality of provision and outcomes for students even better, indicates the school has the capacity for further improvement.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Maiden Beech Academy, Crewkerne TA18 8HG

Thank you very much for being so welcoming and helpful to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. The purpose of this letter is to tell you about what we found.

Yours is a good school. You told us that you feel safe there because there is little bullying and when it does occur the school deals with it well. You behave sensibly in lessons and around the school, and are keen to express your ideas. We were particularly impressed by the way you respond to the 'big questions' which the headteacher poses for you on the website. Some of you say that you are not happy with the points system for encouraging good behaviour because you think that not all teachers apply it fairly and consistently.

You make good progress in reaching standards which are above average by the time you leave, and the school prepares you well for the next stage of your education. You get on well with your teachers, who make sure you know how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve your work. They give you a good variety of things to do in lessons, but the activities do not always match closely enough your different interests and abilities.

The headteacher, all the staff and the governing body want to make the school even better. To help them to do this, we have asked them to make sure all the teachers include activities in their lessons which fully meet your different needs and keep you interested all the time. We also want them to make sure that all the teachers apply the points system consistently.

You can help by behaving as well as you can in all your lessons and by telling your teachers what you think would help to make lessons even more interesting.

We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Robin Gaff
Lead inspector

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