

Bennett Memorial Diocesan School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136603
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	382226
Inspection dates	27–28 June 2012
Lead inspector	Jacqueline White HMI

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Voluntary aided
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	1,485
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	337
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Canon Chris Dench
Headteacher	Ian Bauckham
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2007
School address	Culverden Down Tunbridge Wells Kent TN4 9SH
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jacqueline White

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Additional Inspector

Valerie Fehners

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Colin Lower

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 51 lessons and 48 teachers. They also held meetings with members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders, and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school's performance data and other documents, including the school improvement plan, safeguarding and equality policies, and the minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection and analysed 343 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 167 completed by students and 90 from staff.

Information about the school

This large and oversubscribed Church of England school converted to academy status in April 2011. Most students are from White British backgrounds. Approximately 9% of students are from minority ethnic groups. Few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school is well above the government's current floor standard which sets the minimum expectations set for students' attainment and progress.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This outstanding school and sixth form is a highly inclusive community where every individual student is valued and cared for with dedication. Its strong Christian ethos is pervasive and underpins the central belief that every student can achieve success. In this very supportive environment, students are highly motivated and develop into confident, conscientious young people who are well prepared for their future lives.
- Students make rapid progress to reach high standards of attainment that have been sustained over time.
- Overall, teaching is highly effective, including in the sixth form. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and lessons are characterised by a range of carefully selected activities that accelerate and deepen learning. Rightly, ambitious leaders are intent on sharing the very best practice to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching further.
- Students' exemplary behaviour and high attendance are underpinned by the warm and positive relationships throughout the school. Students are polite, well-meaning and thoughtful. They appreciate how their attitudes contribute to their success and value the high quality support that they receive. As learners they respond to challenge with enthusiasm showing resilience and perseverance. Most have a strong commitment to making a positive contribution and realising their potential both academically and personally.
- High quality leadership ensures that high expectations prevail. Staff are proud to be part of the school. They welcome the challenge and support provided by the robust arrangements for performance management. Leaders at all levels strive successfully for continuous improvement, especially in relation to teaching. The combination of positive student attitudes and the rich curricular offer ensure that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development provided is outstanding.

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

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching further by sharing best practice and give emphasis to:
 - further extending high attaining students
 - the quality of feedback to students about how they can improve their work
 - opportunities for students to lead learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The attainment of the majority of students joining the school is broadly average with some significantly above average. At the end of Key Stage 4, students' attainment is high. They reach levels in many subjects and skills that are well above those expected for their age, particularly in English language and mathematics.

Achievement in the sixth form has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Attainment at A and AS level is above average and students make at least very good progress and often excellent progress.

There are no underperforming groups of students. Most make rapid and sustained progress. Disabled students and those with special educational needs are fully integrated into school life and make exceptional progress because of the individually tailored programmes and high quality support and guidance they receive. For example, in a media studies lesson a number of students with special educational needs were very well supported by a teacher who had a detailed understanding of their learning and requirements. She gave students a high level of individual support and the precision of her interventions enabled students to access and complete tasks successfully.

Students enjoy participating in lessons. Their speaking, listening and comprehension skills are developed extremely well. They are confident learners and respond enthusiastically when opportunities are provided for them to work together in pairs or small groups and to discuss their work. They are equally at ease and focused when tasks require them to work independently.

Most parents and carers feel that their child is progressing well and inspection evidence strongly supports this view. Students too, support their parents' and carers' views.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is consistently high. Teachers have high expectations and are totally committed to ensuring students have a positive experience. In the most

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successful lessons, teaching instils a deep interest and fulfilment in learning. Students are enthused by stimulating resources and carefully planned and sequenced activities which include opportunities for them to lead learning. During an English literature lesson, sixth form students worked to develop their understanding of the themes and characterisation in Shakespeare's *Othello*. The learning was orchestrated expertly by the teacher. Highly tuned questioning developed each individual. Discussion built confidence and students rose to the challenge of developing and substantiating their thinking very well.

Occasionally, opportunities to stretch the highest attaining students are missed. The high quality feedback to students that is evident in some subjects, for example English and humanities, is not quite so well developed in others. Not all teachers are equally skilled at creating openings for students to take responsibility for learning in lessons.

The development of students' literacy and communication skills is apparent in all subjects and full use is made of opportunities to exploit the development of technical or subject-specific language and to develop students' proficiency in their writing skills. Across the curriculum, in assemblies, and particularly in religious education, excellent opportunities are provided for students to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally through the careful selection of topics and materials that encourage reflection on current issues. Provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs is very well planned and personalised.

The vast majority of parents and carers who completed questionnaires agree that their children are well taught. One comment was typical of many: 'My son is thriving at Bennett. He is very inspired and motivated by his teachers. We are so pleased we chose the school to educate our son.' Students who completed the questionnaire were also very positive about the quality of teaching.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most parents and carers responding to the questionnaire believe that behaviour is good although inspectors found it to be outstanding. Nothing but positive behaviour by students was recorded during the inspection and scrutiny of behaviour and incident logs reveal that this is typical over time. Students are courteous, considerate and supportive of each other. They work and socialise happily in the harmonious community of the school. Sixth formers are wonderful role models for younger students and excellent ambassadors for the school. Students welcome responsibility and make an important contribution to the smooth running of the school. They participate in decision making through the well established and influential school council. Prefects and the head boy and head girl take pride in their service to the school. Students' positive attitudes are reflected clearly in their high attendance.

Students feel very safe, well looked after and free from harassment. They demonstrate high levels of self-discipline and awareness of how to keep safe. Incidents of any type of bullying are rare and dealt with swiftly and effectively.

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Students trust the adults in the school and are secure in the knowledge that they can discuss any worries they may have with them.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has established an ethos of high expectations throughout the school. Leaders at all levels are clear-sighted and steadfast in their drive for even higher standards. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's values, reflected in the careful focus on how different groups are performing and evident in the climate of tolerance and respect.

Leaders, including governors, know the school very well. Self-evaluation is accurate and exacting. The monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough, multi-layered and robust. Middle leaders are fully involved in these processes and are a powerful force for improvement. Teachers are developed successfully through intensive mentoring and coaching programmes. Line-management is well organised and provides support and challenge equally well. Underperformance is not tolerated.

The systems for tracking and supporting students' progress are excellent. Performance data are thoroughly moderated and analysed. Targets for improvement are challenging and focused sharply on ensuring students have the best possible life opportunities.

Governors bring rigour and a complementary mix of skills to their role. They are well informed and deeply dedicated to the continuous improvement of the school. They are meticulous in ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are effective.

The curriculum offers students a wide range of appropriate choices and gives them every opportunity to realise their potential. Provision is enriched by very high quality extra-curricular activities, which include international travel and exchanges. Students are immersed in an impressive array of cultural and spiritual experiences, not least the developing musical opportunities. Consequently, they gain a sense of self, value others and are inspired by being part of a close-knit, diligent learning community.

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.



29 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Bennett Memorial Diocesan School, Tunbridge Wells TN4 9SH

My colleagues and I enjoyed meeting you during the recent inspection. We were impressed by your courtesy and thoughtfulness. Our discussions with many polite and respectful students made a valuable contribution to the following findings.

- Your school provides you with an outstanding education, including in the sixth form. You make rapid progress and reach high standards.
- Teaching is outstanding. Your teachers have high expectations of you. They use their excellent subject knowledge very well to support your learning. Your progress is at its best when you engage actively with a variety of tasks that include opportunities for you to lead learning and work independently or in small groups.
- Your behaviour is exemplary. You told us you are extremely proud of your school and feel well looked after. We saw for ourselves that you are willing and keen to learn. We were extremely impressed by the respect that you show to one another and to the adults in the school. These excellent attitudes are reflected in your high attendance. Sixth formers are excellent role models and ambassadors for the school.
- Your headteacher and the staff work hard and very effectively to ensure that the school continues to improve. They concentrate extremely well on the most important areas, for example the quality of teaching and behaviour that supports effective learning.
- Leaders and governors are ambitious for the success of each and every one of you. To that end, we have agreed that your experiences could be even better if the proportion of outstanding teaching was increased further. You can help with this by continuing to welcome opportunities to lead learning and push yourselves to the very limits of your potential.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline White
Her Majesty's Inspector

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