

The Blandford School

Mildown Road, Blandford Forum, DT11 7SQ

Inspection dates 11–12 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress from well below average starting points.
- By the end of Year 11 students reach broadly average levels of attainment.
- Teaching is good and occasionally of high quality.
- In most lessons work is demanding and closely matched to students' learning needs.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes are good and sometimes outstanding.
- Students feel safe and say bullying is very rare and that any incidents are dealt with extremely effectively.
- The headteacher's effective leadership has been significant in promoting the improvements in recent years.
- Leaders develop teaching well and provide very good training for teachers to continue improving their skills.
- Provision in the sixth form is good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers' marking does not consistently provide enough information about how well students achieve, or what they need to do to improve their work further. Where teachers do provide guidance on how to improve work, sometimes students do not follow the advice given.
- Sometimes teachers spend too much time talking rather than engaging students in their own learning or independent work.
- Occasionally, work is too easy for students, and questioning does not fully engage students in discussing their knowledge and understanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 46 teachers teach 61 lessons or parts of lessons.
- Meetings were held with staff, students and parents, and inspectors spoke to members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at the school’s work, information about the achievement of students, development planning and the school’s self-evaluation.
- Inspectors took into account the 230 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Edward Wheatley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Malcolm Davison	Additional Inspector
Caroline Dearden	Additional Inspector
Judith O’Hare	Additional Inspector
Phil Taylor	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than most secondary schools.
- Students come from mainly White British backgrounds. Very few are at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is broadly average, and the proportion supported at school action plus or with statements of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school needs and for whom the school receives additional income (pupil premium) is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' progress by ensuring that by July 2013, students:
 - know how well they are making progress
 - know how they can improve their work
 - follow guidance given to them on how to improve the quality of their work.
- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by July 2013, by making sure:
 - work is always hard enough for all students
 - teachers' questioning engages all students in discussion
 - teachers reduce the amount of time they talk in a few lessons so that students have more time for independent work and to take responsibility for their own learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of students

is good

- Students make good progress from well below average starting points and reach broadly average levels of attainment by the end of Year 11. Past underachievement has been largely eliminated. Occasionally, students do not achieve quite as well as they should, but there is no significant difference in the progress made by different groups of students.
- Students' attainment has risen in recent years. More-able students do better now than in the past. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, has improved significantly since the school was last inspected. Students taking vocational subjects make good progress.
- In the sixth form, students' progress is good, with increasing numbers reaching the highest AS and A2 grades. Where historically results were lower than they should have been, performance has improved. Students taking applied A-level courses and vocational courses do well.
- Students read well and those with weaker aptitude in reading are supported effectively and quickly gain the reading skills they need. Students' writing skills develop well; they express their knowledge and understanding clearly, using a wide vocabulary accurately and imaginatively.
- Students have good mathematical skills which they apply in several subjects. They use graphs confidently and tabulate and interpret numerical information clearly. For example, in a Year 9 science lesson, students explained confidently what a graph of voltage and electrical current from an experiment showed. The most able developed their answers and understanding and, through discussion, they were able to comment on what information should not be included in their graph.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good and sometimes exceptional progress. The very small number of students at the early stages of learning English make good progress as do students eligible for the pupil premium funding. This is as a result of the carefully tailored support for their particular needs.
- Learning in lessons is good and sometimes excellent. Students work together very well. They treat each other's views with respect, they share resources, help each other and discuss their opinions about their research or practical work. Occasionally, learning slows when they are not as involved as they should be, or when they are not clear about how well they are doing and how to improve their work.
- Parents and carers are pleased with how well their children make progress. Those who have had several children go through the school say that students' progress is improving.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers' planning is good and expectations are generally high. Teachers usually make effective use of accurate assessment information to match work to students' learning needs.
- In the best lessons, learning is fast, work is demanding and pupils are fully engaged in learning. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson, students rewrote part of the *Romeo and Juliet* story. The teacher used information about students' earlier achievement to plan questions for them and to encourage them to produce their own writing. The use of challenging questions and references to what students had done in previous work helped them write imaginatively and to use a wide vocabulary and good range of sentence structures. All students were engaged, learning was rapid and progress was very good. However, in other classes, occasionally work is too easy and then the pace of progress briefly slows, and students' attention wanders.
- Questioning is often searching, and makes sure that all students have opportunities to express their own ideas and to develop their understanding. However, occasionally questioning is not used well enough to involve all students in discussing what they learn

and ensuring they have a good understanding of new work.

- There is a strong focus on students working independently and making their own choices about how they learn. As a result, students develop mature approaches to working with each other, and produce good quality work. This contributes effectively to students' moral, social and cultural development because they work with students from different backgrounds and develop respect and consideration for each other's ideas.
- Sometimes teachers talk for too long with little opportunity for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning or to work independently.
- Teachers provide regular homework that complements learning in lessons well. Students value homework as a valuable contribution to their learning and progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support for students with special educational needs. They question, prompt and provide special resources where they are required, and enable these students to work well by themselves and with other students.
- The curriculum is good and is expanding. It increasingly includes vocational subjects and qualifications to ensure the aspirations and career possibilities of all pupils are being met. The teaching of literacy, numeracy and computer skills is well established in all subjects.
- Teachers' marking is usually good, with detailed information about how well students perform, how to improve work and what the next steps in learning are. However, occasionally it is not clear how students are making progress or how they should improve their work. Sometimes pupils do not follow advice when it is given.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are enthusiastic about school and have good attitudes to learning. They work hard and behave well, especially when teaching is effective.
- Students including the sixth form take on responsibilities readily and carry them out with maturity. The student parliament contributes significantly to the life of school. It is involved in the staff appointment process, initiating charity activities and evaluating aspects of school life to improve students' experience.
- Students feel safe. They say that there is rarely any form of bullying, that the school has prepared them well for dealing with it, and in extreme cases they would know who to go to for help. On any rare occasions unacceptable behaviour occurs, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- Relationships are extremely good. Students and adults respect each other and treat each other with consideration. For example, students approached staff with some ideas about how to improve homework, teachers listened to their ideas and changes were made.
- The school has excellent systems to check on pupils' behaviour. Information about behaviour is shared effectively with all teachers to help plan teaching.
- Attendance is above average. It has improved significantly in recent years because the school has established effective links with homes and external agencies.
- Students are looked after well. The school provides considerable support for students or families experiencing difficulties.
- The school has an effective counselling service to provide personal support for individual students. All staff, including senior leaders, play an important role in providing individual personal and academic guidance for students.
- Guidance for sixth form students is very good. One student said, 'they help and support us to achieve our big dreams'.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides good direction for school improvement and has a clear vision. She is well supported by all other leaders and staff in the drive to raise standards.
- The school accurately identifies its strengths and weaknesses. It has effectively improved teaching and provides good professional development for staff. Teachers' performance

management targets are closely set against students' performance measures, and the achievement of these is directly linked to salary scales.

- Links with the local authority are strong. They provide good quality training as part of the school's programme of professional development to improve teaching.
- The work to improve teaching and students' achievement has been effective. Attainment is rising and has risen since the last inspection. Progress has improved, and gaps in achievement between different groups of students have reduced. The most able pupils make good progress, and progress in the sixth form is good. The school is demonstrating a strong capacity to continue improving.
- The curriculum is well managed. It provides a wide range of subjects to meet the academic aspirations, and an increasing choice of vocational courses, so that the needs of all students are addressed. It provides a rich experience in learning about the values and traditions of other cultures. This helps promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to eliminate all forms of discrimination.
- Links with families are successful. A parent forum helps to promote parents' and carers' views of the school and to offer suggestions for school improvement. Parents and carers are very pleased with the school and the accessibility of staff to help them if they have concerns. They feel well informed and supported.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - works very closely with the headteacher and other leaders to plan improvements
 - holds the headteacher to account for students' performance
 - ensures safeguarding and other requirements are fully met
 - makes sure additional resources, including pupil premium funds, are used effectively to support students at risk of underachieving in literacy and numeracy.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its students' needs. This ensures that students are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its students' needs. Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	113888
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	405490

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,077
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jill Stevens
Headteacher	Sally Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	22–23 March 2011
Telephone number	01258 451121
Fax number	01258 454755
Email address	office@blandfordschool.org.uk

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