

Bedminster Down School

Donald Road, Bedminster Down, Bristol, BS13 7QD

Inspection dates 7–8 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Requires improvement 3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement 3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement 3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good 2
Leadership and management		Good 2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching is not good enough in some subjects.
- Not all teachers plan work that matches students' different abilities so the work is either too easy or too hard for some.
- In some lessons learning slows because teachers talk for too long and students are not given enough time to think for themselves or explain their ideas.
- Marking is not consistently of good quality. As a result, in some classes students do not know how well they are doing and are unclear about what they need to do to improve.
- Not enough students do as well as they should in GCSE mathematics.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to develop their numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- It is well led and well placed to improve. The headteacher's determination to provide a good education is shared by all members of the academy community.
- Leaders and managers are determined and effective in driving improvement.
- Good progress has been made in raising standards, improving the quality of teaching, closing gaps in students' learning and raising levels of attendance.
- Behaviour is good and students' attitudes to learning are positive. Students feel very safe and well cared for. Their parents and carers agree.
- Staff performance is managed effectively. The governing body supports leaders well in dealing with weaker teaching.
- The curriculum meets students' needs well with a good balance of academic and work-related subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 lessons, many of them alongside senior leaders. In addition, one inspector undertook a learning walk, which comprised a number of short visits to lessons to see how well teaching meets the needs of lower-ability students and those with special educational needs.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body, one other governor and academy staff, including senior and middle leaders.
- By the end of the inspection visit, 10 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) had been collected and analysed. The academy’s analysis of its own parental surveys was also taken into account.
- Inspectors analysed 50 questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work, and looked at a number of documents, including the academy’s own data on students’ current progress, its self-evaluation, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, documents relating to safeguarding, and students’ work.

Inspection team

Karl Sampson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Daniel Burton

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Justine Hocking

Additional inspector

Sue Smith

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Bedminster Down School converted to become an academy in June 2012. At its last inspection the predecessor school was judged to be satisfactory.
- Most students are of White British heritage and almost all speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional government funding for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is slightly above that found nationally.
- The proportion of school action pupils (those who require extra help with their learning) is above average.
- The proportion of students supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The academy has set up its own centre (The Lamp) to support a small number of students with poor attendance or whose behaviour might otherwise exclude them from education and examination success.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A new headteacher joined the school in September 2010. There have been a number of staffing changes at all levels since the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good teaching by ensuring:
 - all teachers plan lessons that meet students' different needs, and amend their teaching according to students' progress during the lesson
 - lessons are demanding and well paced with regular opportunities for students to discuss complex problems and explore challenging questions
 - any gaps in students' knowledge and understanding are spotted and corrected quickly
 - all teachers immediately implement the new marking policy so that all students receive high-quality, subject-specific verbal and written feedback.
- Raise standards in mathematics by ensuring:
 - teaching is consistently good so that previous underachievement is quickly addressed
 - lessons deepen students' mathematical understanding by enabling them to make connections between different topics and to apply their knowledge and understanding to new and contrasting problems
 - a more systematic development of students' numeracy skills in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students make much better progress in some subjects than others. Their progress in English has improved at a faster rate than in other schools nationally. Their progress is good in science but it requires improvement in mathematics, humanities and modern languages.
- When students join the academy in Year 7 most of them are working below the level expected for their age. From these low starting points, their attainment has been rising faster than in other schools nationally over the past three years. The number of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C rose sharply during this period.
- There is a similar, though much slower, pattern of increase in the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics, although this figure fell slightly in 2012. The standards seen in lessons and students' books and the academy's latest analysis of current performance indicate that the overall trend of improvement is set to continue.
- Changes in staffing and in the way that mathematics is led and managed are beginning to show some success. Although, the quality of mathematics teaching is improving, it is still not consistently good enough to secure good progress for all students.
- Lower- and average-ability students are entered early for GCSE examinations in mathematics as a means to raise their motivation and increase their chances of success. This practice has had mixed success: in 2012 a third of the students moved from a grade C to a grade B. Academy data indicate that interventions using pupil premium funding led to improvements in the rates of progress and attendance levels for Year 11 students last year and that this is set to continue for current students, particularly in English and mathematics. Consequently, while these students did less well than their peers, any gaps in the achievement of students eligible for the pupil premium are closing at a faster rate than seen in other schools nationally.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve at least as well as their peers. Good leadership has resulted in better use of information about individual students to speed up their progress in each subject and to coordinate the support they require.
- In most lessons, students work hard and apply their skills to a range of learning activities, working cooperatively in pairs and groups. Learning and progress are better where work is set at the right level for each student, challenges them to be creative, take risks and is planned carefully to develop their communication and literacy skills.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There is not enough consistently good teaching to ensure good achievement in all subjects and year groups. There is some good teaching in most subjects and there is also some outstanding teaching.
- Weaker teaching occurs when teachers talk for too long and offer too much guidance and so students are not given enough time to think for themselves or to work on their own.
- Where learning in lessons is too slow, teachers' planning fails to take full account of the range of abilities in the classroom. As a result, students are either not challenged enough, or their work is too difficult. In these lessons teachers fail to check frequently how well the students are doing and are unable to adapt their planning to reflect individuals' different rates of progress.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to make connections between different topics and apply their knowledge and understanding to more complex questions or new situations. Although improving, this is still too often the case in mathematics.
- Students are not developing their mathematical skills sufficiently quickly and too many opportunities to develop their numeracy are missed in subjects other than mathematics.
- The most effective teachers know exactly where students are in their learning, understand when

they are ready to take the next steps and convey clearly how this can best be achieved. They are skilled in setting work at the right level so that students' progress is consistently good or better. For example, in an outstanding Year 10 geography lesson, students enjoyed being challenged to think and the teacher skilfully supported them to justify their opinions. They delighted in working together and with the teacher and were totally engrossed throughout.

- Written feedback from teachers to students about their work usually gives students an understanding of what went well and what needs improvement. However, this feedback is not having enough impact because it is not always sufficiently subject specific and teachers do not make sure that students follow up their recommendations.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the academy. Students know why good behaviour helps them to learn well in lessons. It is not outstanding because in the lessons where teaching is weaker some students lose focus and interest in the lesson.
- Academy records show that incidents and exclusions have reduced significantly over the last two years. This is due to good behaviour systems that are consistently applied across the academy; the 'BDS ten' and the four-stage approach to dealing with incidents set high expectations and clear consequences so that any inappropriate behaviour is swiftly dealt with.
- Students who spoke to inspectors highlighted their good relationships with staff and other students, which contribute to their feeling safe and well cared for. Bullying is rare and incidents are quickly and effectively dealt with.
- Students have a good understanding of the dangers of social networking sites and how to stay safe on the internet. Assemblies, lessons and tutorials provide good-quality advice about cyber bullying, how to prevent it and how to report it.
- Students' attendance has improved dramatically and is now above average. Staff work tirelessly to help any student who may be at risk of falling below the target for attendance. Strong systems of support are put in place if a pattern of absence or lateness occurs.
- The academy has been particularly successful in developing a programme of support for the small number of students with poor attendance or whose behaviour might otherwise exclude them from education and examination success. 'The Lamp' centre provides a positive and nurturing atmosphere which enables students to learn and make progress. It is a valuable stepping stone in helping them to re-engage with education.
- The small number of parents and carers who completed Parent View questionnaires were all positive about behaviour and the way that bullying is dealt with. The academy's own larger survey of the views of parents and carers supports the findings of the inspection.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has the highest aspirations and expectations of his staff and students and is transforming the work of the academy. He and his academy leaders have the commitment and determination required of leaders and managers in a successful school. They are working successfully to break down the barriers to learning that previously existed among staff and students.
- Staff questionnaires show that, despite all the changes, morale is high. Many staff spoke to inspectors about the positive impact of the headteacher.
- Senior leaders continue to take measures which are raising the quality of teaching. The new system to set targets for teachers is thorough and is used appropriately to support teacher development. Where teaching is judged to be less than good, weaknesses in the work of individuals and groups of teachers are followed up with training and support. The headteacher and governors ensure that teachers' movements up the salary scale are closely linked to the

quality of their teaching.

- Information about teachers' performance is used precisely to develop the academy's training programme and this is also helping to improving the quality of teaching. However, the programme's impact is not being uniformly felt by all departments.
 - Expectations for all senior and middle leaders have been raised, placing the academy in a good position to bring about the improvements required. Systems for monitoring the performance of students and subjects are steadily improving and all leaders are held tightly accountable for students' achievement.
 - The leadership and management of subjects where students' achievement has been historically weak have been strengthened. As a result, there have been notable improvements in students' achievement in physical education and art and design.
 - Reviews, which evaluate individual subjects and/or aspects of the academy's work, such as marking and feedback, are important elements in identifying what is working well and where improvement needs to take place. This information is being used effectively to address quickly any underperformance.
 - The development of academic subjects, complemented by work-related courses, enables all students to achieve in ways appropriate to their individual strengths and interests. The curriculum is supplemented by a range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities that make an adequate contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
 - The targeted and creative use of the pupil premium has enriched the academy's offer across all year groups. The availability of free transport and, most recently, a 'laptop on loan scheme' has been instrumental in significantly improving attendance, increasing motivation and engagement as well as enabling students to attend regularly new study and sporting opportunities outside school hours.
 - The views of parents and carers are sought through questionnaires and concerns can be raised at any time through a wide range of face-to-face opportunities and by email and telephone. Feedback from parents and carers is very positive; most feel that the academy is well led and managed and that they would recommend it to others.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy and governors have used their previous experience of the National Challenge programme to maintain a strong focus on improving achievement. They have recently changed their committee structure to strengthen further the way that they monitor the impact of the academy's improvement plan. The governing body has a clear understanding of how the pupil premium is being used. However, the evaluation of the impact that it is making on the progress of students has only been introduced recently as a regular item at meetings of the governing body. Consequently, this aspect of governors' work is not as strong.
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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 pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils 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 pupils' needs. Pupils 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 pupils 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	138204
Local authority	Non-maintained
Inspection number	406767

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	846
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Rick Palmer
Headteacher	Mr Gary Schlick
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 September 2009
Telephone number	0117 353 2800
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