

Belmont Community School

Buckinghamshire Road, Belmont, Durham, DH1 2QP

Inspection dates 14–15 November 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.

- The school is improving rapidly and all groups of students now make at least good progress and achieve well.
- GCSE results have risen quickly since the last inspection and compare very favourably with national figures.
- The school makes sure that students who are behind in their reading when they enter Year 7 make up lost ground really well.
- Students with visual or hearing impairment make outstanding progress.
- Students benefit from good teaching. Their teachers plan interesting and varied lessons that enable them to progress well.
- Students enjoy school. They are keen to do well and have good attitudes to learning. Their attendance is above average and their behaviour is good.
- A wide range of examination and vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 means that students have a very good choice of options.
- Good leadership and management at all levels, including governors, ensure that the school continues to improve and provide good quality education for its students.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to lift students' achievement from good to outstanding.
- In some lessons, teachers do not cater fully for all students' abilities. This means that a few find the tasks quite easy while small numbers sometimes struggle with them.

Information about this inspection

- In this inspection, inspectors observed 30 lessons, including three joint observations with senior staff.
- They held meetings with the headteacher, representatives of the governing body, senior managers, middle managers, groups of students and a representative of the local authority.
- They looked at many documents, including governing body minutes, school self-evaluation, development planning, records of students' progress and safeguarding procedures.
- They took account of 22 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

John Paddick, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Christine Cottam	Additional Inspector
Gordon Potter	Additional Inspector
Jim Bennetts	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Belmont Community School is smaller than average for a secondary school.
- Almost all students are White British.
- Proportions of students supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are broadly average.
- There is specialist provision for students with visual or hearing impairment.
- The school enables students in Years 10 and 11 to attend BTEC vocational courses at Durham Federation, East Durham College and St Leonard's Catholic School.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium is just above average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school has several awards, including Artsmark Gold, Investor in Children and a UNICEF award as a Rights Respecting School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality of teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - reducing the small amount of teaching that requires improvement
 - improving the planning of some lessons so they cater well for students of all abilities
 - using the existing outstanding practice as models for teachers to learn from
 - making sure marking in all subjects includes enough detail to help students improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- GCSE results have improved rapidly since the previous inspection and are now securely above average in all respects.
- Students in all year groups make good progress and achieve well. They join Year 7 with broadly average attainment and go on to gain above average GCSE results in Year 11. The school enters some students for GCSE in Year 10. This gives them valuable examination experience and enables them to improve their grades when they are examined again in Year 11.
- In 2012, the proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE results in the range A* to C, including English and mathematics, was well above the national average for 2011. These results show that students have progressed very favourably compared to national expectations.
- Students do well in the vocational BTEC qualifications that they study in school and with external providers.
- The school has used its pupil premium funding well and is closing the gap between the GCSE performance of all students and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Lesson observations during the inspection showed that students were usually making good or better progress. Evidence from their books shows that they make good progress over time. They take a pride in their work which is extensive and generally well presented. Their reading and writing skills fully support them in making good progress in other subjects.
- Students with visual or hearing impairment make excellent progress in response to the high quality of specialist help they receive. Frequently, they gain exceptional GCSE results.
- The school's excellent tracking system enables managers at all levels to keep a careful watch on the progress levels of all students. When any student or group of students is not making at least good progress, they fully investigate the reasons and put extra help into place to enable them to catch up.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved substantially since the previous inspection in response to a concerted effort to accelerate learning in the classroom.
- The school's own observations indicate that the large majority of teaching is at least good, a small amount requires improvement and some is outstanding. This closely matches the range of quality observed during the inspection. Evidence from the joint lesson observations indicates that the school's observations are rigorous and accurate.
- Teachers demonstrate fully the qualities outlined in the national Teaching Standards. They have excellent subject knowledge and organise classroom activities well. They quickly build good relationships with students and generally promote a very good classroom atmosphere. This enables students to listen carefully, concentrate and, when required, work productively in groups and pairs. Lessons usually proceed at a brisk pace so students learn quickly and make good progress.
- Where teaching is of the highest quality, students make impressive gains in skills, knowledge and confidence. This is because teachers plan with great care so learning is logically sequenced, rapid and crosses new boundaries.
- In the small number of lessons that require improvement, the teacher often plans for the whole class to do the same work. This results in some students finding the work quite easy and others unable to complete it in the time available. In a few lessons, the pace of learning slows when the teacher takes too long with explanations and questioning to check understanding.
- The marking of students' work has improved since the previous inspection. It is good overall but varies from outstanding to requiring improvement. For example, marking in art, English and humanities is often carefully carried out and indicates exactly what pupils need to do to improve

their work. However, some marking in science is insufficiently detailed and does not encourage students to write as well as they do in English lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Attitudes in lessons are usually very positive and it is clear that most students are eager to learn and do their best. Evidence strongly suggests that students' behaviour observed during the inspection is typical of the day-to-day operation of the school.
- Students say that they enjoy school. They say that they feel very safe and that behaviour has improved markedly over the last two years. They understand homophobic, racist and cyber-bullying and say that incidents are rare. The school's records support this very positive view.
- Very frequently, students' conduct is impeccable and lessons proceed with a superb working atmosphere. However, occasionally in a small number of lessons, a few students become inattentive or restless when they are not really interested in what is going on.
- When students' behaviour or attitudes fall below the school's high expectations, members of staff are effective in improving them. Exclusions for poor conduct are below average and falling.
- Students are justifiably proud of their contribution to the school. For example, they act as prefects, have helped to draw up school rules and expectations, and operate an effective anti-bullying group. Students with visual or hearing impairment take a full and active part in the life of the school.
- The school has an excellent system for monitoring students' welfare and progress. If they fall behind in their learning or encounter difficulties of a personal nature members of staff soon intervene and help to put matters right.
- Students' attendance is above average and improving because the school checks it carefully and takes action if it starts to slip.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is very well led by the headteacher and senior team. This has resulted in substantial improvements in teaching, student attitudes and behaviour, and GCSE results since 2010. It clearly demonstrates that the school has excellent capacity for further development.
- Senior and middle managers work well together and promote a real sense of purpose among staff and students.
- Self-evaluation is accurate. Managers and members of the governing body have a clear idea of the school's strong features and where there is still room for improvement.
- Management of teaching is good and promotes improving classroom practice but it is not consistently making the best use of the outstanding teaching to serve as models for other teachers to follow. Performance management arrangements are effective and any unsatisfactory teaching is tackled quickly. However, although records of lesson observations are accurate in terms of teaching quality they do not contain enough detail about the progress that different groups of students have made.
- Equality of opportunity has a high profile. Managers do their best to ensure that all groups of students do equally well. The success of these measures is reflected in the substantially improving GCSE results for students supported by pupil premium, which is spent on a wide range of very effective measures to raise attainment. It is also reflected in the high quality provision for students with visual or hearing impairment, and the reading programme which enables students who are behind in Year 7 to catch up.
- Safeguarding meets all requirements.
- Managers have designed a good curriculum which provides students with secure pathways towards a wide range of GCSE and vocational BTEC qualifications. It promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through the provision of many extra-curricular activities, for example, visitors from Russia, China and Hong Kong, and visits to France, Spain,

Germany and Iceland.

- The local authority has recognised that the school has improved quickly and now only provides light touch support by giving a second opinion on overall performance.
- The school communicates with parents well. Most feel that they are well informed about activities and their children’s progress. The website is informative and helpful.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very effective. They have a clear and accurate view of the school’s strong features and provide effective challenge and support. They also have a clear and accurate picture of the quality of teaching and ensure that teachers’ salary progression and promotions are merited. They ensure performance management arrangements are rigorous and productive.

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	114308
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	401423

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	685
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Raymond Pye
Headteacher	Judith Wilkinson
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2010
Telephone number	0191 3865715
Fax number	0191 3840583
Email address	school@belmontschool.org.uk

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