

Bideford College

Abbotsham Road, Bideford, EX39 3AR

Inspection dates

2–3 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Examination results for Key Stage 4 students are not as good as they should be because some students do not make sufficient progress, especially in GCSE English and mathematics.
- Leadership and management have not brought about improvements sufficiently rapidly, although recent additions to the team, including a sixth form specialist have strengthened the capacity to make further changes.
- The sixth form requires improvement because the outcomes are below national average and there are inconsistencies across subjects.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good or better because some lessons do not engage all students. Teachers need to ensure that appropriate tasks are set for all students to ensure further learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The behaviour and attendance of students have improved since the last inspection, following the introduction of new systems. Most students are keen to learn and gain qualifications.
- Students are very proud of the new buildings and seek to make good use of the facilities. Conduct around the college is calm and purposeful and relationships are good.
- Students feel very safe in the college and bullying is rare. The college ensures that all forms of discrimination are tackled effectively.
- Provision for students with special educational needs and disabilities is good, so that these students make good progress.
- The provision for students with hearing impairments includes a special unit, although for most lessons the students benefit from being fully integrated into classes with their peers.
- The staff and governors of the college are committed to ensuring the success of all students and are tackling the weaknesses with increasing success and speed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons, ten of which were observed jointly with members of the college's senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors made several short visits to lessons and to the college's learning support centre and special centre for hearing impaired students. Inspectors also visited registration periods when the students met with their tutors.
- Discussions were held with representatives of the governing body, local authority, staff, and with groups of students.
- Inspectors observed the college's work, attended an assembly, and looked at samples of students' work. They also looked at progress data, documents about college development and evaluation, safeguarding information and records about attendance and behaviour. The records showing the impact of professional development for staff were also examined.
- The views of parents, as expressed in 49 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), were taken into account, as were the responses made by staff in questionnaires completed at the beginning of the inspection.

Inspection team

Ann Cox, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kim Bishop	Additional Inspector
Richard Butler	Additional Inspector
Peter Clifton	Additional Inspector
Malcolm Davison	Additional Inspector
Marian Marks	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bideford College is a much bigger than average-size secondary college with a sixth form which serves the town of Bideford in North Devon, and the surrounding area. The college roll has fallen in recent years because there are fewer students in the secondary age range living in the area.
- The college has been completely rebuilt and now occupies a single site. There was an unavoidable and prolonged period of major disruption during building work and the new buildings have been in use since September 2010.
- The college specialises in science and its facilities include the Faraday Lecture Theatre. It has a second specialism in sustainability and evidence of this is obvious throughout the college site.
- The college recently formed a Co-operative Trust, with the local authority as a partner, and is working in partnership with its primary schools to develop closer links and enhance the transition from primary to secondary education. The college also works closely with local groups in the community which provide opportunities to introduce students to businesses and other workplaces.
- The college works collaboratively with nearby schools and colleges within the North Devon Academic Board and also as a part of the Devon Co-operative Schools Group, and so gives its staff access to a wider range of support and resources.
- A small number of students in Key Stage 4 attend work placements with local businesses on a weekly programme.
- Almost all students are White British and very few have English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding, is slightly above the national average.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above average. The largest group of these has behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The college has an on-site specially resourced provision for students with hearing impairments. The college meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of the quality of teaching so that all lessons are brought up to the standard of the best by:
 - giving a stronger focus to the planning of lessons so that all students are given tasks which are appropriate to their needs so that work is not too easy or too hard
 - getting students more actively engaged, working at a high pace without direct input from the teacher and taking responsibility for their own learning
 - formalising marking and feedback to students so that they know exactly what they need to do next in order to improve, and check that students respond to this advice.
- Increase the rate of students' progress so that it is at least in line with national averages, especially in English, and mathematics, by:
 - developing the use of progress data by middle leaders, and making sure class teachers use the data to identify what students need to learn next
 - improving how well subject leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The GCSE results achieved at the end of Key Stage 4 are not as good as they should be and require improvement. Students enter the college with standards in English and mathematics which are consistently below the national average for Key Stage 2. There have been some improvements in GCSE results, but the rate of progress has not been as fast as it needs to be, especially in English, reflecting the need to improve the focus of teaching.
- Achievement in the sixth form is below national average. There is some variation between subjects, but overall outcomes are not as good as they should be and require improvement. The outcomes at AS level in 2012 showed some improvement and this needs to be built upon to ensure more rapid progress.
- The progress data for current Year 11 students indicate that there will be some improvement in GCSE results, bringing them closer to national averages.
- The progress of students in English is below that expected against the national average, except for the more able students who make progress in line with national expectations. In mathematics, progress is generally closer to the national average and, again, the students with higher starting points make progress in line with national averages.
- The college takes steps to ensure promotion of equality of opportunity, tackles potential discrimination, and fosters good relationships throughout the college.
- The provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs is good and these students make better progress relative to other groups in the college.
- The majority of students with hearing impairments make good progress in English and mathematics. These students are integrated into the main college for most lessons and this helps them to develop self-confidence and become more articulate.
- The college has used the pupil premium funding in a variety of ways, such as providing additional staffing for literacy and numeracy, and provision in Year 8 to develop study skills. In the most recent GCSE examinations, this group of students did not perform as well as other students, mirroring the position seen for the group nationally. Based on average point scores, the gap between the students entitled to pupil premium support, and those who are not, is equivalent to about one GCSE grade lower in mathematics, and slightly more than one grade lower in English. The college is reviewing the ways in which further support may be given to these students in order to close this gap. There is evidence that the gap is closing in Key Stage 3 already, the impact of the interventions is helping students who receive the funding to catch up with their peers.
- A small number of students in Year 11 attend workplace experience on a weekly basis and this helps to ensure that they remain engaged with their education. Often these students are able to gain a level 1 qualification, providing a pathway to further training and employment.
- The college's specialist status for science is reflected in the wide range of science courses available to students in Key Stage 4, leading to outcomes in science which are relatively better and in line with national averages.
- The college has entered most students for GCSE examinations in English at the end of Year 10, so that, if an appropriate grade is achieved, students may then focus on other subjects in Year 11, but the policy is currently under review. In addition, students take the first GCSE in mathematics in Year 10, and then the second of the pair of mathematics GCSEs in Year 11. The college values the experience that early entry gives, although considerable numbers of students re-take the examinations in Year 11 in an attempt to improve their grades.
- Good attention is given to helping students to develop their reading skills, but a more coordinated approach is needed to fully develop writing and communication skills across the college.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- Evidence shows that the quality of teaching is improving, but changes have taken too long so that the progress of students has not yet accelerated as fast as it needed to.
- During the inspection, most of the teaching observed was good or outstanding, and this observation is reflected in the college's own monitoring records. Although some outstanding teaching was seen across different subjects and in different year groups, there was some teaching which did not reach the required standard and therefore teaching requires improvement overall.
- The college leaders are determined to further improve teaching and remove inconsistencies. When inspectors made joint observations with senior leaders, there was close agreement about the quality of teaching observed. The college has now developed well-structured monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that improvement work is appropriately targeted.
- Members of staff are supported with comprehensive professional development programmes which they value.
- The college has developed systems to share information about students so that teachers can plan lessons. Students are now set challenging targets and analyses of current grades enable the college to check students' overall progress in a systematic manner, and to put in place interventions where students are not making appropriate progress. There is further developmental work needed to ensure that all students are set appropriate tasks in lessons to promote their progress, instead of all students in a class completing the same assignments.
- In the best lessons, activities include peer assessment and coaching, mixed with group work and independent learning. These students were keen to learn, but the practice is inconsistent across the college and this means that in some subjects students are less enthusiastic to learn and they do not take responsibility for their own learning.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form shows the same variation as in other key stages. The college's own monitoring records do not fully recognise the variation and inconsistencies, and more robust monitoring will be required to ensure that improvements can be secured.
- Where students have special educational needs, their teachers are provided with good information about their needs. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and there is a careful balance between supporting students and enabling them to be independent, and this supports these students in making good progress.
- The college has a unit dedicated to assisting students with hearing impairments and there is an emphasis on supporting the inclusion of students in mainstream classes wherever that is possible. These students make very good progress across all subjects.
- Teachers look at students' work regularly, but the quality of marking and assessment is variable. Particularly good practice was seen in BTEC science work where students responded to advice to improve their work and move to higher grades. In most subjects, written feedback does not give students clear advice about what they need to do to make improvements or advice is given but students do not respond to it.
- Throughout the college, there are examples of an emphasis on developing the use of language and understanding of terminology in subjects. Paired reading schemes, with sixth form students guiding younger students, are helping these students, and developing the skills of older students at the same time. There were also examples of opportunities where literacy skills could be developed, being missed in lesson activities. The promotion of mathematics across the curriculum is not yet well developed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**are good**

- The behaviour of students towards each other, to members of staff and visitors is polite and positive. Students are willing to help each other; relationships between students and adults are generally very good and promote a positive ethos for learning.
- Students are extremely proud of their new college buildings and its many facilities; they look

after and use these with respect.

- The attitude of students to learning is good. A few instances of students not engaging with learning were noted during the inspection, but these were in lessons where the pace and challenge of tasks needed to be changed.
- Students, staff and parents acknowledge the success of the college in raising standards of behaviour over recent years. The atmosphere throughout the college is calm and purposeful. The college focused on systems for managing behaviour and most members of the college community say that behaviour is now consistently good. The majority of parents also supported this view.
- Attendance has improved in the last two years, but is still slightly below the national average. The college monitors attendance carefully and is working on strategies to bring about further improvements. The appointment of staff who liaise closely between home and college has had a pivotal role in bringing about improvements in behaviour and attendance.
- Students are knowledgeable about different forms of bullying and the college takes steps to ensure that students are well informed about the risks associated with modern technology. It takes active steps to help ensure risks are minimised. Advice and updates to students about reducing cyber-safety risks are a regular feature in assemblies and other events. Students are sensitive about issues such as racism and homophobic bullying and they have a good understanding of potential hazards, including alcohol or substance abuse.
- Students feel safe at college. There are few instances of bullying reported in the college, but on the rare occasions when there is an issue the college resolves matters swiftly and effectively. Inspectors spoke to representative members of the students and these students reported that they have complete confidence in the college to deal with any matters which are reported. Parents also have a high level of confidence in the college, as indicated in the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire.
- When older students attend work experience placements their attendance is carefully checked, as are all aspects of ensuring their safety and well-being.
- The number of exclusions has reduced as behaviour has improved throughout the college. Inspectors were satisfied that the sanction is used only when necessary as an appropriate response to unacceptable behaviour. The college's learning support centre has been used to good effect to provide a programme of interventions and support for students to avoid exclusions, where possible, and to successfully re-admit students where the sanction has been used.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Over time, progress has not been as rapid as it should be and students' attainment in GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4 is below average. Attainment in the sixth form is also below average. These are central to leadership and management requiring improvement.
- Recent appointments to the leadership team have strengthened it and the college now has the capacity for further improvements to be made at a more rapid pace.
- The principal of the college leads a whole college drive to raise standards. Senior and middle leaders communicate a shared vision to promote improvements in teaching and learning.
- Senior and middle leaders are clear about the improvements which need to be made, and they are being held to account. All leaders are ambitious for the college and its students.
- There is a robust system for performance management, aligned to the new Teachers' Standards. Salary progression for teachers is linked to performance. Leaders are aware that they need to focus on students' learning and progress when making judgements about the quality of teaching in order to bring about further improvements in teaching.
- The college meets all statutory requirements for safeguarding; record keeping is exemplary.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, providing a range of opportunities to students. The curriculum is adapted well to the needs of students with special educational needs and disabilities. Alternative pathways are available to students in Year 11 to secure their engagement

in education and training.

- There is good provision to facilitate the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.
- The college works well with parents and takes active steps to encourage them to visit the college on appropriate occasions, seeking to overcome the barrier of considerable travelling distances for some. Open days have been a great success, providing an opportunity for parents to discuss students' progress with tutors, but also offering an opportunity to engage with local groups such as potential trainers, employers and sports organisations on the college campus. The annual Science Day, held on a Saturday, is a successful family event day which encourages participation.
- The college has a good programme of events to ensure the transition of students from primary school, including summer school for those who benefit from some additional help with basic skills.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very well informed about the work of the college and receive regular updates about progress. The college leaders are appropriately challenged by the governors, who are realistic about the need to make further improvements, especially to secure an increased rate of progress in English. Their knowledge is complemented by advice from an independent consultant and the local authority, taking advantage of opportunities for training and development. The governors have a good overview of the performance management system and link success to teachers' pay awards in so far as funds will allow. Governors make regular visits to the college and take active steps to engage parents. Governors monitor the management of financial resources including the use of the pupil premium fund, and evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions.

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	113516
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	401375

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	1,487
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	191
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Doug Bushby
Headteacher	Veronica Matthews
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 December 2009
Telephone number	01237 477611
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