

Ashton Park School

Blackmoors Lane, Bower Ashton, Bristol, BS3 2JL

Inspection dates

9–10 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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:

- Achievement is variable in a number of subjects and students are not making enough progress in English, particularly able students.
- The leadership and management of English are not securing improvements quickly enough.
- There is too much teaching which does not take account of the different needs of students or give them opportunities to take responsibility for their learning and find out things for themselves.
- Teachers' marking does not always give enough guidance on how students can improve their work.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Achievement is not good because there is too much inconsistency in students' rates of progress across subjects.
- Although senior leaders check teachers' classroom practice and track students' progress, the school's leadership and management, including the governors, have not been successful in making sure that all leaders are accountable for the progress made by all groups of pupils.

The school has the following strengths:

- Senior leaders, including the headteacher, have identified what they need to do to improve standards.
- There are examples of outstanding teaching, for example in physical education (PE), drama, modern foreign languages and art.
- Students behave well, engage willingly in learning and feel safe in school.
- Care and support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs are good and these students are making good progress.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well, both in many lessons and in a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors saw 49 lessons, of which eight were observed with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders and middle managers, two governors, a representative from the local authority, and five groups of students.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on students' progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents and carers, including 27 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and staff surveys.
- Inspectors looked at samples of students' work across age and ability groups.

Inspection team

Mary Myatt, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Colin Money	Additional Inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional Inspector
Robert Smith	Additional Inspector
Dr Richard Steward	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ashton Park School is larger than the average size secondary school.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are both below average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is slightly above the national average. This is additional government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and students with a parent or carer in the armed forces.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- A small number of students attend part- or full-time alternative provision at the Ashley Down Centre which is part of the City of Bristol College.
- The school has a specialism in sports.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school enters some students early for GCSE examinations in mathematics. Those students who do not achieve their expected grades retake the exam.
- There were a number of examinations taking place during the time of the inspection.
- The school is a member of the South West Bristol Co-operative Learning Trust and collaborates with three local primary schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching is at least good over time, and increase the proportion which is outstanding, by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently use information about students' attainment to plan lessons which precisely meet their differing needs
 - developing expertise in providing marking and feedback to students so that they make clear to students what they have achieved and guide them specifically on how to improve further
 - providing more opportunities for students to work independently so that they can use and apply their new learning for themselves
 - developing teachers' skills when questioning students about their learning so that students think more deeply and reflect on their learning more successfully.
- Raise levels of students' achievement across subjects but particularly in English so that a greater proportion of students, especially the more able, make and exceed expected levels of progress.
- Continue the restructuring of roles of senior and middle leadership to ensure accountability for the progress for all groups of pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because not enough students are making expected progress.
- Given students' starting points when they arrive at the school, which are slightly lower than average, they have not made good enough progress in too many subjects, including English. The school's records show that achievement is improving, but progress for the most able in English remains too slow.
- A programme to develop literacy across all subjects has been introduced and this is beginning to have an impact on improving students' English skills at Key Stage 3.
- Standards in mathematics are improving, but there is still some way to go before they show that students are making progress in line with their peers nationally. Outcomes for mathematics in the sixth form are variable and students are not making fast enough progress.
- Too few students have been entered for GCSE science in the past. Instead, too many were entered for BTEC science which was not always suitable for these students. This had a negative impact on their ability to succeed in science subjects at A level. The school has recognised that some students were not well served by this and has changed the way students follow courses in science. Those students who are entered for GCSE science achieve well.
- The school's data for students in the current Years 10 and 11 show that expected levels of progress are improving.
- Students achieve well in art and design, both at GCSE and A level, as do the students following courses at the Ashley Down Centre.
- Senior leaders have taken a number of steps to ensure that achievement improves, including focusing on improving the quality of teaching. Systems to track students' progress are now used more effectively by the senior leaders and there is an increasing expectation that all leaders should use information on students' achievement more robustly.
- Extra support is organised for students who are not achieving their target grades. Lesson observations, scrutiny of students' work and the school's own tracking data show that current Year 11 students are making better progress than the previous Year 11 in most subjects.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve well due to the high-quality support which meets their needs.
- The school uses the pupil premium funding for one-to-one tuition and additional mentoring for eligible students. As a result, the progress for these students is improving, including those following catch-up sessions in Year 7, although the gap between the achievement of these students and other students remains too wide. Their attainment is approximately a grade lower at Key Stage 4 than that of those students who are not supported by pupil premium funding.
- The large numbers of students who follow art, design and photography courses at post-16 make good progress and because of this, progress at Year 13 appears sound. However, this masks the inconsistencies in students' rates of progress across the curriculum. The progress for students following AS-level courses is not good and the school is addressing this through a revised range of courses more in line with the needs of students.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There is too much variability in the quality of teaching, including in the sixth form. Over time it has not been sufficiently good to ensure that students make good progress. While inspectors saw examples of good and outstanding practice, this was not prevalent across the school and students' progress in too many lessons is limited.
- Teaching in English, as observed in the inspection, requires improvement. While examples of good practice were seen, and the subject is being monitored by the senior leaders, the quality of

teaching over time does not support students in making sufficient progress.

- Where teaching requires improvement, teaching does not make sure that all students are able to engage with the learning. Sometimes, instructions are too complicated and cause confusion. Staff are often reluctant to reshape the tasks. Students are not always given enough chances to take responsibility for their learning by taking part in structured, collaborative activities.
- Too frequently lessons are planned at one level for the entire range of abilities in the group. This results in teachers aiming work at the middle ability students and means that the more-able are not challenged sufficiently, while lower-attaining students are not supported. Teachers' questioning is often limited and does not probe students' understanding or address misconceptions, nor does it encourage students to reflect on their learning.
- Students' work is inconsistently marked and assessed. Too often marking is irregular and does not show students how they can improve. Feedback in lessons does not always let students know how well they are doing and what they can do to improve. Even when this is done, students are not always given time to respond to guidance by teachers.
- Where teaching is good or better, high-quality learning is achieved through activities which challenge all students. Teachers use skilful questioning and expect students to give reasons for their answers. In these lessons, there are high levels of engagement by students who show a real pride in wanting to do well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Students' behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. When given the opportunity to work together with other students and challenged appropriately, they keep focused, share ideas, ask questions and challenge each other well.
- A small number of parents and carers raised concerns about the behaviour of students and the way sanctions and rewards are used in the school. These were investigated by inspectors and found not to be the general experience of students in the school.
- Arrangements for students' safety are secure. Students are aware of different forms of bullying, and know how to stay safe online. They say that bullying is rare and that school leaders deal effectively with instances which do occur. The school has set up an online anti-bullying service where students are able to report bullying issues and these are dealt with promptly.
- Students have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills by working as peer supporters to help younger students resolve their problems. A group of students have visited a primary school to observe how Years 5 and 6 pupils manage an arts studio. They explored whether it is possible for students to develop, organise and manage cooperative enterprises themselves, without having to rely on adults, and are applying their findings to their own enterprises.
- Students told inspectors that they have a real sense of community. They said that behaviour had improved over recent years.
- While absence, including persistent absence, is still above national figures, attendance is improving. The school has developed effective partnerships with outside agencies and parents and carers. The school's leaders have made improved attendance a priority and recognise that more work needs to be done.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Senior leaders, governors and students have started to work well together to establish a clear vision for the school's future.
- The headteacher has been in post for 18 months and her priority has been to restructure roles to ensure accountability for students' progress. Her energy and focus on raising standards are having an impact but she recognises that there is further work to do, particularly in addressing the weaknesses in English.

- The school is drawing on external support, including the local authority and eminent academics. The local authority has provided support for the school in improving both standards and attendance. The headteacher has secured a considerable change in culture to focus on standards, and this is leading to improved achievement. As a result, the school has the capacity to improve further.
 - School leaders' assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate. They are making good use of data to judge how well the school is doing across a range of subjects. This is not yet fully embedded with all middle leaders in charge of subjects so that they take full responsibility for achievement in their areas.
 - Subject leaders are being given support so that they know how to judge learning in lessons accurately, but not all have yet taken responsibility for leading improvements within their teams.
 - The range of subjects offered at Key Stage 3 is broad and balanced. In particular, the 'Opening Minds' course in Year 7 gives students good opportunities to discuss global issues and take responsibility for their own learning.
 - Students with particular learning needs benefit from nurture groups for part of their timetable where their literary skills are enhanced. The curriculum for disabled students and those with special educational needs is good. The school's courses for students with Down's syndrome are a feature of the successful provision for these students.
 - At Key Stage 4 the curriculum for 2013 has been redesigned to make sure it meets the needs of all students. For example, the school will now provide a more suitable range of GCSE courses for the most able. The option groups now allow more students to take science GCSE. Additional BTEC courses will be offered in the sixth form. The revised curriculum is beginning to have an impact on improving achievement.
 - The enrichment programme at Key Stage 4 is popular with students. For example, students collaborate with pupils in a village in Kenya. In addition to raising funds which have built a school and provided resources, there are regular exchange visits for staff and pupils. A video link was set up during the schools' sports days so that simultaneous races could take place.
 - The leadership and management of the sixth form are increasingly effective because swift action has been taken to introduce greater rigour to post-16 assessment. There are interventions targeted for students and appropriate support which are leading to improved progress for the current cohort.
 - Promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced by the 'Opening Minds' programme and a number of courses within the enrichment programme, which include the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, gardening, drama and opportunities for leading sports activities.
 - The school's sports specialism makes a positive contribution to the life of the school and take up of the extra-curricular opportunities is good. A number of students are leading within the School Sports Partnership programme.
 - Systems to hold teachers to account for students' progress are becoming more rigorous. Teachers do not receive pay awards if their teaching and the achievement of their students do not warrant this. Training opportunities are increasingly linked to the needs of individual staff. Planning for the use of pupil premium funding is carefully structured and the impact is measured.
 - Off-site provision for the small number of students at the Ashley Down Centre is suitable and promotes targeted support for students' academic progress and well-being. Senior leaders conduct thorough quality assurance of the provision.
 - Safeguarding policies and procedures are robust and meet statutory requirements.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body take their responsibilities seriously and are very supportive of the school. They are providing increasing challenge to the school. Evidence from governing body minutes shows that they are holding the school to account for standards. They are supporting the headteacher as she continues the reorganisation of leadership structures. The governing body has a secure knowledge of the standards of teaching and achievement. It
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knows how well pay is related to the quality of teaching. The governing body knows the school's performance data and how they compare with other schools' nationally. It checks how the pupil premium is used and the difference it is making. The governing body fulfils its statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding and has a secure overview of the school's finances.

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	109278
Local authority	City of Bristol
Inspection number	412749

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,165
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	149
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Roger White OBE
Headteacher	Mrs Tessa Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	April 2010
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