

Backwell School

Station Road, Backwell, North Somerset, BS48 3BX

Inspection dates 22–23 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- In this outstanding school, all groups of students thrive, achieve highly and are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Students make rapid and sustained progress across the school, and attainment in Year 11 is significantly above average, rising year on year.
- Students' achievement is particularly strong in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, where many make impressive gains.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to that of their peers because the school makes every effort to seek the most effective support for each student.
- Teaching is outstanding because staff are highly ambitious for each student and totally committed in their aim to get the best out of each and every one. Students respond very well to this challenge and are competent and enthusiastic learners.
- Lessons are very carefully planned to make sure that they are demanding, exciting and pitched at just the right level so that all students learn exceptionally well.
- Behaviour is exemplary. Students say they feel completely safe in the school, and are keen, lively and questioning learners. They greatly enjoy and appreciate all the school has to offer.
- The range of subjects and courses available to students is imaginative and is very carefully planned to meet students' precise needs and interests.
- The headteacher, fully supported by staff and the governing body, sets high expectations alongside a relentless drive for improvement. Teaching is rigorously monitored and the management of the performance of teachers and their professional development and training is a big reason why teaching and achievement across the school continues to improve.
- The governing body gives a high level of challenge as well as support and successfully helps to plan and drive improvement in the school.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students in the sixth form achieve extremely well, have high expectations for the future and most progress to higher education.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 lessons, including 15 that were seen together with senior leaders.
- Inspectors listened to students read and visited classrooms together with senior staff to look at how well disabled students and those who have special educational needs were learning. Inspectors also visited lessons with senior staff to look at students' progress in mathematics, English and science, and at learning in a wide range of other subjects.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, heads of departments, staff, and the Chair of the Governing Body, together with eight other representative governors, and groups of students.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, including how it analyses its own effectiveness, its planning documents, reports of how others see its work and examples of students' work.
- Parents', carers' and students' responses to the inspectors took note of the 116 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). The school's own recent surveys and written comments made by parents and carers while attending parents' evenings were considered. Written comments and telephone messages left by a large number of parents and carers were also noted by inspectors. Inspectors also analysed 101 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Michael Merchant, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Howe	Additional Inspector
Wendy Delf	Additional Inspector
Lesley Voaden	Additional Inspector
Fran Ashworth	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Backwell School converted to become an academy in March 2011. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was previously inspected by Ofsted in November 2008, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school is a larger than average-sized secondary school.
- The very large majority of students are White British.
- The proportion of students who are learning English as an additional language is low.
- The proportion of students that are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding from the government for groups of students, including those known to be eligible for free school meals) is lower than the national average. There are currently very small numbers of students who are in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion of students supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs.
- A very small number of students attend Weston College as part of their programmes of study.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' progress and attainment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To support students in achieving even higher rates of progress, subject leaders should make sure that when teachers mark students' work, all consistently give high quality feedback to students as to how they can improve their work and that all students act on this advice.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students join the school in Year 7 with above standards of attainment. As a result of outstanding teaching, all groups of students build very well on this strong foundation, make rapid progress and their achievement is excellent.
- By the end of Year 11, students' attainment is high and is getting better year on year. School information shows that over three quarters of all students are on track to attain five or more good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics. Results in English dipped slightly in 2012, but school information shows that they have now recovered and 80% of students in Year 11 are predicted to gain a good grade in 2013.
- The proportion of students making and exceeding the expected three levels of progress in both English and mathematics is very high when compared with the national average.
- Significant numbers of students complete GCSE English and mathematics early. They follow a well-planned programme that is closely matched to their needs, and achieve as well as if they had taken the examinations later. They make rapid progress. Higher-attaining students are not held back by this policy and are attaining the grades of which they are capable.
- The school consistently adds significant value to the performance of all groups of students across the range of subjects, including the small numbers who are learning English as an additional language. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates. Teaching assistants and teachers communicate well to ensure that each student receives the right degree of support.
- Until recently there was some difference in the rate of progress made by students supported by the pupil premium and others in Year 11. In 2012, such students entitled to free school meals and those in the care of the local authority attained, on average, a grade lower in English and mathematics than did other students.
- School information shows that it now uses its pupil premium funding very effectively to support eligible students. It has provided individual help and guidance, and additional tuition, as well as financial support, to enable them to participate in out-of-school activities and courses. This support has effectively reduced the attainment gap between these students and others across all years, so that it is much smaller than that seen nationally.
- The school makes highly effective use of funding received through the Year 7 catch-up programme (extra money from the government to support those students who attained below expected levels in English and mathematics in Year 6). Through extra classes and additional support, such students make rapid gains in acquiring number, reading and writing skills. As a result, as all students move through the school, they read, write and speak with great confidence.
- A small number of students study courses at a local college of further education. The school keeps close checks on the progress of such students. All are achieving well and are gaining the practical and personal skills necessary to gain suitable employment or further training.
- Achievement in the sixth form is exceptionally strong and has continued to rise over time. The students surveyed and spoken to by inspectors, including those who join the school in the sixth form, attribute their excellent progress to the high quality of teaching and exceptional care they receive as they move through Years 12 and 13.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Students and their parents and carers rightly express great confidence in the quality of teaching. The quality of teaching throughout the school is very rarely less than good and is frequently outstanding.
- Teaching is characterised by very high expectations, not just in terms of achievement, but in the

amount, complexity and challenge of tasks.

- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge and understanding are used very well to pace learning so that time for imaginative and engaging activities is used flexibly. This was well displayed in an excellent Year 7 mathematics lesson. All students made rapid progress at gaining new skills of how prime numbers expressed in index notation could be used to find lowest common denominators and highest common factors. Students, very well prompted by the teacher's astute questions, worked eagerly in groups to find their own solutions to the probing problems posed.
- Students respond very well to the very high expectations teachers have of them and make excellent contributions to their own and others' learning. They grasp enthusiastically all opportunities to work in pairs and groups or independently. Teachers often stand back and let students get on by themselves, intervening when necessary, but giving the students chances to find out for themselves. This practice is very effective. In an excellent Year 8 science lesson, students collaborated very well in pairs to deduce how the moment of force around a pivot could be put to practical use. They used sophisticated language and actions in their demonstrations and greatly extended their understanding of physics.
- Teachers and other adults have similarly high expectations of those students who are disabled or who need extra help and strive, through high quality support, to help them reach the highest standards
- Exemplary planning, detailed and well pitched to meet the needs of all students, contributes to the excellent learning and rapid progress of all groups of students.
- Teaching in the sixth form is outstanding. Teachers frequently develop high-powered class discussions by encouraging students to research a topic or idea and then share the result of their research with others.
- Marking is meticulous in many subjects. Teachers' written comments on students' work contribute well to the progress they make. This is not always the case, however, and some subject leaders have not ensured that all teachers give the same high quality feedback to students. Students are not always encouraged, or given the time, to reflect and respond to these comments and so they are not as valuable in all lessons as they could be.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students' behaviour is exemplary over time and they are exceptionally keen to learn. Students thoroughly enjoy the challenge and the excitement of learning. Their behaviour around the school is calm, considerate and courteous.
- Students' excellent behaviour makes a strong contribution to their learning because the teachers' energies can be spent in teaching and so they can take a more imaginative approach in their lessons.
- The school promotes excellent relationships between students. Systems to manage any inappropriate behaviour are very well understood by students and consistently applied by staff. Exclusions are very rare.
- Students report that they feel happy and safe at school, and greatly enjoy their learning and all the school has to offer. Senior leaders check and ensure that students attending education off site behave well and are kept safe. This strong enjoyment of school is reflected in their attendance rate, which is above average.
- Parents, carers and staff express very few concerns regarding students' behaviour. Students report that any incidents of bullying are rare and that they are dealt with promptly and firmly if they occur. Students are aware of the different kinds of bullying, for example homophobic or cyber-bullying, and say they have been advised as to how to deal with them if they encounter them.
- Students are aware of the importance of understanding different faiths and lifestyles and speak of the school being a place that is tolerant of difference and celebrates diversity. The school

does not tolerate discrimination of any kind and effectively promotes equality.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides strong and determined leadership. Together with excellent support from his talented senior leadership team, his highly committed governors and enthusiastic heads of departments, he has been tenacious in maintaining and building upon students' high attainment and excellent achievement.
- Leaders have been notably successful in raising students' aspirations and providing them with an outstanding and memorable education.
- Leaders have a clear and entirely accurate view of the school's strengths and where it can get even better. It has a strong track record of improvement and innovation, based on well-formulated plans and clear action.
- The leadership and management of teaching are very effective at improving the quality of learning across the school. There is a very close link between the current teaching standards, teachers' performance and the very well-planned training and support provided for staff.
- Teachers are held to account for their performance. The targets the school sets for teachers to improve their work are being used rigorously to reward good performance and are based on an accurate review of teaching and progress.
- One of the most striking features of this successful school is its exciting and well thought out courses and their content. It ensures that students from all backgrounds enjoy learning and rapidly acquire the basic skills, particularly in literacy, that enable them to achieve outstandingly well and gain many skills for their wider personal development.
- Students enjoy many opportunities to reflect on spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. This is planned for across subjects but also in the very wide range of clubs and activities beyond lessons.
- The achievement of all groups of students is similarly strong, indicating that the school's commitment to equal opportunities is completely put into practice.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is highly effective and robust in holding the headteacher and senior leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance. Governors keep their skills up to date through regular training and are very well informed about how well the school is doing. They receive regular and comprehensive information from the headteacher and visit regularly to monitor the school's work. They know where the best teaching is in the school and, as a result, are in a strong position to contribute to school development and improvement planning. Governors have contributed fully to the discussions on how the pupil premium funding should be spent and have kept a careful check on the impact of the extra support and guidance provided for eligible students. They set ambitious performance management targets for the headteacher and hold the headteacher to account for the way in which increases in pay are used to reward teachers. They know how any underperformance is being tackled. Governors meet all their responsibilities very well, including national requirements for safeguarding students.

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	136722
Local authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	413323

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

Type of school	Academy converter
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	1693
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	387
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Edwards
Headteacher	Julian Baldwin
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Telephone number	01275 463371
Fax number	01275 463077
Email address	mailbox@backwellschool.net

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