

The John Bentley School

White Horse Way, Calne, SN11 8YH

Inspection dates 6–7 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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.

- Students make good progress and achieve well because the school meets the needs of all its students effectively.
- The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades in Year 11 examinations was average at the end of last year, representing good progress.
- Students currently in the school are making good progress in a wide range of subjects in all year groups.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress because their needs are identified early and the quality of care and support is excellent.
- The sixth form is good. Students receive very good advice and guidance and achieve well as a result of challenging teaching.
- Teachers generally use the information they have about students' progress to plan interesting and demanding lessons.
- Students' behaviour is good, they feel safe and have very good relationships with members of staff and with each other.
- Senior leaders and governors work well together to drive improvement. The constant and accurate checks they make on students' learning have meant that achievement has improved.
- The range of subject choices is wide and effectively adjusted to meet the needs of individual students.
- Parents, carers and students are very positive about the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- A small minority of lessons are not engaging students' interest and enthusiasm enough because the pace is too slow or the whole class is given the same tasks so that some students do not make as much progress as they could.
- Some teachers' marking does not give enough precise information about how students can improve their work.
- Some subject leaders do not have a strong enough focus on how students learn in their subjects to improve learning at a fast rate.
- Checks on the quality of teaching do not always result in the effective sharing of the most imaginative and successful teaching methods.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons, of which eight were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made a number of shorter visits to lessons to look at specific aspects of students' work.
- Meetings were held with school staff, including subject leaders and senior leaders, four groups of students and representatives of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the 154 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) and other communications with parents and carers, such as letters, which helped inspectors to focus on particular aspects of the school's work.
- Inspectors considered the responses to 80 staff questionnaires.
- They observed the work of the school, spoke informally with students and looked at a number of documents, including the school's policy on how it manages and improves teaching and decides on pay. Records relating to attendance, behaviour, minutes of governors' meetings and documents relating to safeguarding were also examined.

Inspection team

Simon Blackburn, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Terry Fish

Additional Inspector

Stephen Williams

Additional Inspector

Janet Hallett

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium is below average. In this school the funding is provided for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The school provides alternative provision in the form of work-related education for some of its students through Wiltshire College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The John Bentley School converted to become an academy school on 1 November 2011. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement through making sure that more teaching is outstanding by:
 - making activities inspiring and exciting through links to everyday life and a faster pace of learning
 - consistently giving all students work that challenges them to make the most of learning
 - seeing that the quality of marking and written feedback given to students is consistently high, giving them precise information about how to improve their work.
- Improve the impact subject leaders have on the quality of teaching by making sure that:
 - they focus on how students learn most effectively in their subjects
 - the checks they make on the quality of teaching give useful information to teachers to help them inspire and motivate students to outstanding learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics were below those typical for their age when they arrived in the school. In July 2012, Year 11 students reached average standards which represented good progress for this group of students. Current school information, confirmed by inspection evidence, indicates that current Year 11 students are above average in almost all subjects, including English, mathematics and science.
- Students currently in the school are making good progress in all year groups as a result of good teaching. Students are set particularly challenging targets in Years 7 and 8 so that they make a very good start in the school. The school's data show that the progress of students continues to improve and that attainment is set to exceed national averages.
- In many lessons seen, students made good or outstanding progress as a result of high expectations and students being given the opportunity to discuss their work.
- The detailed system for checking and following students' progress is accurate. Teachers generally use this information well to plan activities and to work out where students' progress or achievement dips below their target level.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good and improving strongly as a result of accurate and early identification of their needs and the development of good strategies to support their learning.
- Students who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding also make good progress and the gap between their progress and that of their peers is now closing. The school makes good use of the pupil premium to set up one-to-one and small-group tuition sessions and to broaden the experience of students with off-site education. The school uses the Year 7 catch-up premium funding to provide additional literacy teaching in small groups and to buy reading support programmes which are already accelerating students' progress in reading so that they are beginning to catch up with other students.
- A small number of students following the 'Alternative and Flexible' subject route did not make as much progress as they should have in the core subjects. The school has taken effective steps to make sure that the progress of all students on these courses is checked regularly so that extra help can be provided to make sure they do not fall behind.
- A very small number of students are entered early for some GCSE examinations when it fits their subject choices. These are usually students who follow the 'Alternative and Flexible' subject pathway and it does not limit their ability to reach the best grades they are capable of.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good and continues to improve. Leaders have taken effective steps to ensure that students are given good advice and guidance on entry and the quality of teaching is checked carefully.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers routinely monitor the progress students are making through skilful questioning that tests their understanding so that adjustments can be made to the learning activities.
- Lessons are well planned and activities are taught in an order that develops students' knowledge and understanding logically and allows them to experience success. In many lessons, students talk about and assess each other's work, which generates greater enthusiasm and helps them to explore other viewpoints.
- Teachers generally mark students' work thoroughly, using a uniform system to give useful feedback that students can use to improve their work. In the best examples seen, students responded to the comments made and improvements could be seen in the next piece of work. However, some marking does not give the level of detail and precision needed for students to know exactly what they need to do to improve their work.

- Many lessons contribute well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Time is built in for reflection and consideration of moral issues. In a Year 10 history lesson students reflected on the morality applied to politics in the early 20th century compared to the way it would be viewed today.
- Common features of the best lessons seen were extremely strong relationships between students and teachers and a relentless pace to the learning that was driven by the teacher's obvious enthusiasm for their subject. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson, there was a natural sharing of humour between the students and their teacher, coupled with time-limited, challenging activities that students attempted in groups. As a result, all students made outstanding progress.
- These features were not present in all lessons and where they were absent the pace of learning was slower and the engagement of students fell off. Some teachers are too mechanical in their teaching and occasionally lessons lack spark because the teacher does not adapt the plan to suit the students' interests as they emerge.
- In a few lessons all the students do the same tasks. This sometimes means that students are not given work that is demanding enough.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Lessons are well planned and designed to challenge individual students at their appropriate level.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students behave well around the school, treating each other with respect and showing courtesy to adults and visitors. They enjoy socialising with each other and use the communal spaces around the school well.
- Parents and carers who expressed a view through the Parent View website are extremely positive about behaviour at the school, the way bullying is addressed and the extent to which their children feel safe. In formal discussions with students, inspectors found that they understand the different forms of bullying, including homophobic and cyber-bullying, and have been taught how to keep themselves safe from these. Students say that there are very occasional incidents of bullying but they are dealt with very effectively.
- Students' attitudes to learning are generally good. They arrive punctually to lessons and are ready to learn. In a few lessons, where the teaching does not inspire or interest the students, students are slow to get started on their work and spend too long chatting.
- Students told inspectors that behaviour has improved a lot over the last few years and that the new rewards system was having a positive effect on behaviour.
- Attendance is improving slowly this year. The school takes all possible actions to improve attendance and has had some success in reducing persistent absence by adjusting the timetable for some students and working closely with their families.
- The attendance and behaviour of those students taking part in courses away from the school site is checked regularly and is well managed.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and his skilled senior leadership team have made significant improvements to the quality of teaching over recent years which are leading to improved outcomes for students. They are ambitious for the future of the school and committed to moving teaching to outstanding.
- The checks that senior leaders make on all aspects of performance are accurate and the systems to highlight areas that need improvement are rigorous and robust. Plans for improving the school identify the correct priorities and provide clearly defined actions, the success of which can be easily measured.
- Those with management responsibilities, such as subject leaders, share the same ambition as

senior leaders for the success of their students. They are increasingly confident in using the school's accurate progress checking system to identify underachievement and to put interventions in place to support students. In some cases, their understanding of how students learn effectively in their subjects is less well developed so that the impact of provision is less effective.

- There are clear structures in place to identify how each teacher can improve their practice and opportunities to support the improvement. These are not yet directly linked to the formal performance management system which also works effectively to set challenging targets for teachers. Not enough is done to share the best practice observed by subject leaders in the school to promote outstanding learning in all classes.
- The school has developed an excellent curriculum which offers great flexibility and can accommodate individual needs and interests. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and balanced and allows for students to access GCSE and other Level 2 qualifications when they are ready and able to do so. There is a good range of subject options at Key Stage 4 tailored to the abilities and interests of individuals, including alternative provision for students who need more work-related experience.
- This provision is a good example of how the school promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination effectively. A number of the students involved in the 'alternative pathway' had become disaffected and their attendance had slipped but the imaginative course structure, partly funded by the pupil premium, has enabled them to enjoy their learning and improve their basic skills.
- The sixth form is well led and managed. The advice and guidance provide to students on entry to the sixth form mean they have a realistic view of the demands of the courses they are choosing and the number of students who dropped out after one year was very low as a result. Achievement continues to improve.
- The school commissioned a review of its provision from external consultants in autumn 2012 and this helped to sharpen the improvement planning process. All statutory requirements for safeguarding are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a good understanding of how well students are achieving because governors take a keen interest in the school's data and have a wide range of skills to interpret the information that the school presents. Governors have a realistic view of the quality of teaching and make sure that teachers' pay is linked closely to their performance and that any underperformance is tackled swiftly. They hold the school to account increasingly well for the performance of its students. Governors play a key role in monitoring the key strategic direction of the school, in managing the performance of staff and in setting the budget. They understand the impact that the pupil premium is having in the school.

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	137650
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	412782

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,066
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Kelly
Headteacher	Gordon Trafford
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01249 818100
Fax number	01249 818136
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