

Beaminster School

Newtown, Beaminster, Dorset, DT8 3EP

Inspection dates

5–6 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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' attainment and progress have risen sharply in the last year. Attainment in the key areas of English and mathematics has improved significantly and is now above average. Typically, students learn well in lessons and are given appropriate support, so the achievement of all groups is consistently good.
- Teaching focuses closely on learning to make sure that all students make good progress in lessons. Lessons are generally enjoyable and teachers set high expectations and promote a collaborative approach to learning.
- Students' behaviour is mature and the school is a harmonious place to learn and grow. Lessons are notable for their calm atmosphere. Bullying of all kinds is very rare and students report that any incidents are quickly and efficiently dealt with.
- The more effective teaching and wider range of subjects on offer have improved the sixth form. As a result, Year 12 and Year 13 students' achievement has risen and is now good.
- The headteacher, senior staff and middle managers work as a cohesive team to drive improvements. The well-informed, active governing body supports and challenges the school effectively.
- The school makes thorough checks on progress and teaching. Assessment information is well used to provide all students with the correct type of support and to ensure teachers perform as well as they can. As a result, the school has made good improvements since the previous inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Marking is inconsistent and sometimes does not provide students with enough advice about how to improve. In some lessons, the pace slows and closing sessions are rushed. Some teaching in the resource base does not offer the right amount of challenge.
- The school's efforts to raise attendance, while successful in making improvements, have not yet raised it to above average levels.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 32 lessons taught by 30 teachers and undertook 13 joint observations with senior staff.
- Inspectors held discussions with students, teachers, the headteacher, senior managers, representatives of the governing body and a local authority officer.
- Inspectors examined numerous school documents, including policies, assessment information, planning documents and records of all kinds.
- The views of 181 parents and carers were analysed through the Parent View website.

Inspection team

John Carnaghan, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gary Kirkley	Additional Inspector
Roisin Chambers	Additional Inspector
John Cavill	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized secondary school. It runs a joint sixth form with another local school. Some Key Stage 4 students attend courses in local colleges.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families) is below the national average.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those whose first language is not English are below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The school has special provision in the resource base for up to 32 students with complex learning needs.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further through ensuring more teaching is outstanding by:
 - developing greater consistency in marking and feedback, so all teachers offer clear advice to help students improve their work and empower them to make further progress
 - planning lessons in more depth so the pace of learning does not diminish as time goes by, and so closing sessions of lessons thoroughly review and reinforce what has been learned
 - ensuring that students in the resource base are consistently challenged to reach their full potential.
- Build on improving school practice to ensure that attendance levels keep rising.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' attainment rose sharply in 2013 as a result of improvements in teaching, in particular a sharper focus on learning in lessons. Attainment at the end of both Year 11 and Year 13, as shown in GCSE and A-level results, is above average; this is commendable given that the school includes a unit for students with complex learning needs and the results from this group of students are included in its assessment information.
- Attainment in English and mathematics is above average, promoted by good teaching in these subjects. Students are competent and fluent readers who benefit from the many opportunities that the school offers, making good progress. Given their starting points, this pattern represents good achievement for all groups.
- Typically, progress in lessons is good. Pupils are keen to learn, listen well and work hard. Lessons are usually interesting, closely focused on learning and, with older students, have a strong emphasis on how to succeed in examinations.
- Achievement in the sixth form has improved since the previous inspection, largely because of better teaching. The school provides well for sixth form students who find learning difficult. The proportion of students making and exceeding expected progress is rising smartly and students are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- The students with complex learning needs who attend the resource base often enter the school with exceptionally low attainment levels. Given the variety of barriers to learning that they face, the strong support and nurturing they receive enable most to make good progress, not just academically but also in their personal and social development. Their achievement is good. However, their progress in English and mathematics is slower than in other subjects because teaching in these subjects has, in the past, not been challenging enough.
- The use of data to identify students with particular learning needs who may be in danger of falling behind is most effective. In this small school, each student's needs are well known and what the students study and how they are taught are adjusted as required. Many students benefit from additional personal support and this helps the school to meet its objective of being inclusive. It also means that the achievement of all groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, is consistent.
- Students in receipt of additional government funding (the pupil premium) benefit from a variety of initiatives to boost their progress and achieve well. A major focus in the last year has been personal, often individual, tuition. This has significantly closed the gap between this group and their peers. In last summer's GCSE examinations, the gap in attainment between these students and other Year 11 students narrowed considerably. As a result, this group was four terms behind other students in both English and mathematics.
- A group of Key Stage 4 students follow vocational courses at two local colleges. The arrangements made for their attendance and the checks on their progress are robust, and evidence from national examination results confirms that these students make good progress, similar to their peers. The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations. A group of students benefit from the school's Year 7 catch-up programme and make good progress; the initiative provides effective preparation for their Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 studies.

The quality of teaching is good

- The more rigorous checks done by leaders and managers have provided the school with an accurate view of the quality of teaching and have empowered the school to successfully tackle underperformance. As a result, a high proportion of teaching is good and some is outstanding.
- Typically, lessons include a range of brief, stimulating activities that include good opportunities for students to work independently. Teachers set high expectations and trust students to behave maturely and take their studies seriously. This is invariably rewarded through students' hard

work and commitment.

- Classroom relationships are warm and supportive and the inspectors saw notable examples of students helping one another with their learning. Teachers go out of their way to foster good relationships. Students report that they enjoy lessons. Their behaviour has a positive benefit on their progress. They listen well and are quickly responsive to teachers' instructions, so little time is lost.
- An excellent Year 9 science lesson provided many examples of good practice. The skilled and knowledgeable teacher set high expectations, but was also cheerfully encouraging to students as they acted in role as elements like carbon and oxygen, developing their understanding of the action of heat on chemical compounds. Very good repetition and consolidation throughout the session ensured all students were able to grasp the essential features and make outstanding progress.
- Teachers maintain comprehensive records of each student's academic performance and, where appropriate, their individual needs. They use this information to provide effective additional support where required, especially through the well-targeted deployment of teaching assistants. This helps all students feel included in their learning.
- Teaching in the resource base is generally good, but students' progress is not tracked as closely as in the rest of the school. This can mean that some teaching in English and mathematics is not challenging enough, reducing progress in these subjects. In contrast, teaching in other subjects in the resource base is often outstanding.
- Sixth form teaching is typically good. Teachers question students well. They monitor progress carefully, marking students' work thoroughly and reshaping learning as they go along. They plan carefully in association with their partner sixth form school to ensure continuity of learning.
- Marking in Years 7 to 11 is inconsistent. Some teachers write detailed comments and offer helpful advice and encouragement, so students understand the next steps in their learning. However, the school does not promote good practice sufficiently, and some work is not marked in any depth, so students are unaware of their points for improvement.
- The few less than good lessons are characterised by a slowing of pace because teachers do not inject a sense of urgency. The planning of the timings of lessons is sometimes imperfect so that teachers run out of time and are not able to sum up and reinforce learning in the closing minutes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The vast majority of students, staff, parents and carers correctly regard behaviour as good. The school is a calm and caring environment, and classrooms and the building are orderly both during and outside of lesson times.
- Students travelling to sessions off the school site are well supervised and safe in transit as the school provides a regular bus service. They are as well behaved in the local schools and colleges they attend as they are at Beaminster.
- In lessons, students are quick to respond to staff and are very cooperative with adults and one another. They follow teachers' advice carefully, readily taking responsibility for their own learning. Teachers manage students with great assurance, and disruptive behaviour is extremely unusual.
- Students report that bullying is very rare and are most confident that the school reacts quickly and effectively to any hints of victimisation. They are aware of various forms of bullying, such as homophobic bullying, and say that all types are virtually unknown at Beaminster. As a result, students say that they feel safe at school.
- The personal, social and health education programme and the life skills course taken in the resource base help students take a mature view of the dangers associated with daily life. For example, they are well informed about the risks inherent in alcohol consumption and taking other dangerous substances. They know about the potential dangers of the internet and how best to avoid them.

- The school has steadily raised attendance levels over the past three years through a range of strategies and by using expertise within the school and from an education welfare officer. By developing personal contact with some families, the level of persistent absence has been reduced.

The leadership and management are good

- The recent improvements in many aspects of the school stem particularly from a much more effective use of assessment information. The data on students' performance are collected regularly and presented in a way that enable all staff and governors to understand the strengths of the school and where improvements need to be made.
- Assessment information enables the checks on teaching to have a sharper focus on the quality of learning. Leaders and managers at all levels follow up on weaknesses identified in the data and this promotes more effective teaching through holding staff to account for the performance of the students they teach. Regular lesson observations by senior staff, and by teachers' peers in 'trio' observations, have promoted better practice and a greater consistency in teaching.
- Assessment information is also used to identify students in danger of falling behind. This is an inclusive school and staff act quickly to put additional support in place for students experiencing difficulties. This ensures equality of opportunity for all students and that there is no discrimination.
- The local authority provides good support to this improving school. The headteacher, ably supported by other leaders and managers, plans carefully for the future; the school's priorities are relevant and progress towards them is subject to regular checks. The school has used this system to address concerns raised at the previous inspection; for example, all aspects of the sixth form have improved. This track record indicates a continuing capacity for improvement.
- The subjects the school offers match the needs, interests and aspirations of students. At Key Stage 4, the school offers a wide range of GCSE courses; vocational studies are provided through well-organised off-site courses at local colleges. Significant numbers of students opt to stay on in the Beaminster sixth form. The school has broadened its offer of subjects post-16 by a close link with another Dorset secondary school. The success of the sixth form is indicated in the very few students who do not move on to more education or training at the end of Year 13.
- The school offers a notable range of sporting and other activities outside of the school day; students speak warmly about the additional learning opportunities that are provided by the many subject clubs that help them with their studies.
- There are numerous opportunities for students to reflect on important spiritual issues through subjects such as religious education, considering the environment and in assemblies. For example, Remembrance Day assemblies were quiet and reflective, giving plenty of opportunities for students to contemplate the folly of war. Students' strong moral and social development is both evident in the warm relationships and routine collaborations across the school.
- Well managed partnerships with local schools and colleges increase the range and variety of subjects the school offers. Leaders and managers are forging positive relationships with the new special school recently opened on the school site and this is starting to benefit the school's provision for its students with complex learning needs, as well as others with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has an increasingly clear understanding of the school, that is based on regular visits and informed interrogation of assessment information. Their analysis enables the governors to gain a clear picture of how well students achieve and where their attainment stands in relational to national averages. Governors' checks on teaching help the governors understand how it has improved and what needs to be tackled next; they also understand the relationship between teachers' performance and their pay progression. Regular training and briefings help to keep governors abreast of the changing educational scene. They are well briefed about how additional pupil premium funds are spent; they know that this has a

positive impact on the progress of this group of students and provides good value for money. The checks made by governors on students' safety ensure that the school is secure and that safeguarding procedures meet all requirements.

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	113884
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	424613

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary controlled
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	655
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Webb
Headteacher	Mike Best
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 October 2008
Telephone number	01308 862633
Fax number	01308 863909
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