

# Beechwood School

Long Readings Road, Slough, SL2 1QE

**Inspection dates** 27–28 February 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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

- Results in mathematics remain below average and too few students are making good or better progress in the subject, especially the most able.
- Teaching is not good enough to quicken overall progress, especially in mathematics.
- Teaching sometimes lacks challenge. Some teachers do not use the information they have to make sure that the work given to students is at the right level of difficulty.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Results are not yet consistently high enough to represent good progress at A and AS level.
- Teachers do not consistently follow up on their marking to develop and improve students' knowledge or understanding.
- Time is sometimes wasted in some lessons as a few students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are not always as good as they should be.
- Not all middle leaders are consistent in their checking of the quality of teaching and its impact on students' learning. This means that rates of students' progress are too variable.
- Governors do not use all the available information to challenge school leaders to ensure that achievement is good or better.

### The school has the following strengths

- Determined leadership from the headteacher and senior staff has resulted in weaknesses in teaching and leadership being tackled.
- Achievement is good or better in English, science and modern foreign languages.
- Students are taught well in technology, physical education, drama and art so their achievement in these subjects is also good.
- Attainment is stronger in post 16 vocational courses, such as business and drama.
- The gap between the performance of students known to be entitled to free school meals and their peers is narrowing rapidly in both English and mathematics due to better teaching.
- Good professional development is helping raise the quality of teaching significantly.
- Attendance rates are above national averages.
- Expectations of students' behaviour is rising and the numbers of exclusions falling.
- Students enjoy school and say they feel safe. Bullying is dealt with well.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 31 lessons, of which nine were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, they made a number of shorter visits to lessons and tutorial sessions.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the school's leaders and managers, and groups of staff.
- Members of the inspection team held meetings with three groups of students, representing all age groups in the school. Discussions also took place with students informally.
- A meeting was held with the Chair and another member of the Governing Body. Conversations were also held with a representative from the local authority who has been working with the school.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and scrutinised documents, including the school's own evaluation of how well it is doing, the school improvement plan and statistical information about students' achievement, attendance and exclusions.
- There were 25 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 28 responses to the staff questionnaires. Additional comments were received from parents, and consideration was given to the views expressed by families in response to the school's own surveys completed by 69 parents of all students on roll in 2013.

## Inspection team

Rob Ridout, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Marian Prior	Additional Inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Additional Inspector
Simon Morris	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is a smaller than average sized non-selective secondary school with a sixth form in a local authority which operates within a selective system.
- A little over half of the students are from White British, Irish or other White or mixed White backgrounds. The proportion from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average with significant numbers coming from Indian, Pakistani and African backgrounds. Significantly less than the average number of students speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up premium are additional funding given to the school for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority. There are no students from service families.
- The proportion of disabled students or those who have special educational needs supported by school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above that of other secondary schools.
- A very small number of students are enrolled on alternative programmes operated by a range of providers including the Haybrook College and the East Berkshire College.
- The school does enter students early for their GCSE examinations.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2013. The school has also recently appointed a new subject leader for mathematics.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is typically good or better by embedding the best practices and ensuring that all teachers consistently:
  - have high expectations of all students and use information effectively to challenge them with work at the right level of difficulty
  - follow up on their marking to develop and improve students' knowledge or understanding
  - encourage students to take more responsibility for their actions and the ways in which they learn.
- Raise achievement by:
  - ensuring that the most able students in mathematics are set hard enough work
  - ensuring that students in the sixth form make good progress in all A-level and AS-level subjects by closely checking their progress and taking swift action when they fall behind.
- Ensure that all middle leaders work to the level of the best in the school and carefully check the quality of teaching and students' progress in their subjects and use the results to plan improvements.
- Ensure that governors check that leaders are doing the right things to improve the quality of teaching and raise students' achievement.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students in the current and the previous Year 11 joined the school with basic literacy and numeracy skills that were significantly below average. In 2013, 54% of students gained five or more GCSEs at A\* to C including English and mathematics. Results were broadly in line with the national averages in both 2012 and 2013. Achievement requires improvement because attainment in mathematics has not improved as rapidly as in English and has remained below the national average for several years.
- Achievement is not good in mathematics and standards are not rising fast enough. The most able students and those receiving support through the pupil premium made slower progress than others in 2013. Students make better progress in English and current students are continuing to make faster progress from their individual starting points than in the past.
- Students make good progress in other subjects including science and humanities at GCSE. The small number of students who were examined in modern foreign languages made outstanding progress.
- In the sixth form, achievement is not yet good and requires improvement, because students do not make fast enough progress at both AS and A level. Although results have improved and school tracking information shows that standards are continuing to rise, standards are still too variable. Attainment is particularly strong in the vocational courses, such as business and drama.
- Evidence gathered during the inspection from information provided by the school, observations of teaching, scrutiny of students' books and discussions with students shows that progress is also accelerating in art, drama, and design and technology.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make progress similar to their peers. Learners who are currently in the school supported at school action plus are making good progress. This is because of the additional lessons, coaching, mentoring and targeted support they receive.
- In 2013, students eligible for the pupil premium made significantly less progress in English and mathematics than their peers in the school. Fewer secured five or more GCSEs at A\* to C and the gap widened to almost one full grade in English and mathematics. Much has been done by the school to increase rates of progress in both subjects and the gap in attainment has subsequently narrowed. This can be attributed to better teaching and targeted support.
- A significant number of students join the school with weak reading and writing skills and are supported well by the Year 7 catch-up funding. A good range of support, including a whole-school focus on reading and writing in lessons, is securing good improvements in the skills of students during their first year at the school.
- A small number of students attend alternative courses at local colleges. Their progress and attendance have improved because they study work that both interests and engages them more fully.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because not all teachers have had high enough expectations of all students, especially in mathematics, and do not always challenge them with work at the right level of difficulty to support them to achieve well.
- Too many inconsistencies remain across different subjects and year groups. Information held on students is not always used well enough to make sure that the work they get, including homework, is at the right level. This is particularly true for the most able students, who sometimes go unchallenged and, as a result, do not achieve their best.
- Students who talked to inspectors said that they learn best when they can discuss, question and

apply what they have come across in their lessons to new problems and situations drawn from examples around the world.

- Teachers ask well-targeted questions of students to answer during class discussions. They also support the development of literacy skills, particularly writing. They often emphasise key words and many check and correct spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Most work is marked regularly. Teachers do not always ensure that students act on their comments in marking. This can lead to the unnecessary repetition of work and slower progress because teachers' planning does not take account of students' understanding of the advice given.
- Classroom assistants are deployed effectively in most lessons to support disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and those who sometimes find it hard to maintain good behaviour or concentration.
- Where teachers plan their work with the teaching assistants, this results in students receiving the specific support they need and achieving well. Students make less progress where they do not plan jointly.
- Students appreciate the commitment of their teachers in supporting their learning both inside and outside the classroom, through additional study and support programmes before, during and after school. Students who attend 'Saturday School' and the 'maths master classes' are full of praise for the help they receive.
- Sixth form students are increasingly confident when applying their skills, knowledge and understanding to new learning situations. As a result, standards are rising and more students are making good progress.
- The greatest improvement to teaching has been in English, where some is now outstanding. This has had a positive impact on achievement, so more students are making good progress than at the time of the previous inspection. Students say that teaching in mathematics is getting better.
- Teaching is strongest in art, drama, physical education and design technologies. A group of outstanding practitioners called 'Teaching Champions' display good levels of subject knowledge and a greater understanding of how to best support individuals and groups of students.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils

### requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. It is not yet good because a small minority of students do not always take responsibility for their own conduct or for their own learning behaviour in or out of the classroom to help them make good progress.
- Most students settle well and show good attitudes to learning in lessons that interest, challenge and engage them. However, some are late to lessons and others do not bring a pen, pencil or ruler to complete their work.
- Some parents responding to the online survey expressed concerns about behaviour in the school. In contrast a majority of parents who completed the school's own recent survey believe that behaviour is managed well. School leaders are working with staff to ensure behaviour is managed consistently and staff and students confirm that behaviours are much better.
- Expectations of behaviour within the school have been raised and as a result the percentage of exclusions was below the national average last year and the number of exclusions continues to decline.
- Attendance has risen over recent years as a result of the determined efforts of the school and robust intervention strategies put in place to improve it. Attendance now exceeds the average for secondary schools.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students are aware of the dangers of using the internet and of other potential threats to themselves from outside the school, such as those seen on social media.
- They report that they feel safe in and around the school site. Parents and staff confirm the views expressed by students and believe the school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. A

majority of parents would recommend the school to other families.

- Students have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying and express confidence that the school will deal effectively with any incidents.
- Sixth form students act as good role models and set a good example to their younger peers. They adopt good attitudes towards their work, although some have yet to acquire the skills needed to manage their own time effectively.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity, positive relationships and ensures that discrimination of any type is not tolerated. The staff go a long way to support the school's most vulnerable young people and its safeguarding and child protection work is outstanding.

## **The leadership and management requires improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders have not yet secured good achievement in key subjects at both GCSE and A level. Standards have not risen fast enough and the rate at which students are making progress in GCSE mathematics has been too slow.
- The headteacher is passionate about and determined to secure further improvements. Her ambition for the school is clear and staff have signed up to the agenda to secure the best for all the students. They welcome the clarity and focused approach the school has adopted in raising standards and readily acknowledge that they are now more rigorously held to account for their work.
- Leaders have successfully established a culture in which teaching is improving and staff are focused on raising achievement. The school improvement plan sets out clear priorities and helps to drive through improvements in a systematic way. The school has the capacity to improve further and it has already secured real improvements in teaching, especially in English, the raising of attendance levels and significantly better behaviours.
- The school has an accurate view of the teaching currently taking place in lessons. The feedback leaders give to teachers is rightly focused about classroom practice and judgements more accurately take full account of the progress of the students in the room. This work is beginning to impact on standards but much progress has been made towards securing this goal.
- The school holds a significant amount of information on its students. Leaders use this to inform the next steps for improvement. However, a minority of middle leaders are not consistent in evaluating teaching and checking on students' work and progress, using the results to plan improvements and evaluating the impact of improvements made.
- The progress of sixth form students has not been checked closely enough in the past. Nor has quick enough action been taken in subjects which have consistently underperformed.
- The system for performance management is linked to the school's pay policy. Teachers' salary increases are now directly linked to students' progress rates. Staff are clear about their roles, responsibilities and the expectations of senior leaders. The headteacher has worked with governors to tackle underperformance robustly and has used formal procedures when required.
- Teachers' professional training is provided through a variety of in-house and external provision. The 'Teaching Champions', a group of highly effective practitioners within the school, ensure that this aspect of the school's work is good.
- A number of pathways are offered to a range of courses that enable students to successfully progress to the next steps in their learning. The curriculum has been reviewed and revised to offer an improved balance of academic and vocational courses and a more bespoke programme for students.
- The school does enter students early for GCSE examinations and students have benefited from this in English this year.
- The school places great importance on celebrating the success of its students. This helps promote self-confidence and students take great pride in their achievements. A range of enrichment activities is offered which promotes the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development. School sport makes a significant contribution in this respect.

- Art students exhibit their work within the school, business students have successfully competed nationally and both girls and high attainers have achieved well through the engineering links with Mars.
- The local authority has provided 'light-touch' support to help develop the school's ability to manage some of the challenges it has faced in addressing underachievement in some of its core subjects.
- Safeguarding arrangements are well established and comply fully with requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - In the past, governors have not concentrated on students' achievement or actively involved themselves in the analysis and evaluation of the data regarding standards but instead have tended to accept the information presented to them, without robust challenge or interrogation. As a result, they were not swift enough to ensure that underachievement was successfully addressed.
  - Detailed reports from the headteacher and senior staff have been received and accepted by governors. The governing body recognises that not all its members have the expertise to be able to challenge school leaders. The local authority has supported governors through training, and they are more effective and do have a better understanding of the school's strengths and of those areas that require improvement. However, while governors have received training about how to read and interpret examination information, they have not fully realised the significance of some aspects of the data, and how they compare with similar schools nationally. A review of how pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up monies can be spent more effectively to raise the achievement of relevant students has been organised.
  - Governors are now aware of the links between students' achievement and teachers' salary progression. They now ask more searching questions of leaders in relation to the quality of teaching and its impact on the students' and school's performance. They are aware of the issues there have been in mathematics and at A and AS level, and have supported the headteacher in addressing issues of poor teaching and leadership. They recognise that performance in these key areas is still not good enough and have now established effective strategies to raise achievement in both.
  - Governors are committed to ensuring students are safe; they have undergone specific training in safeguarding and budget delegation. As a result, they meet all their statutory duties, including those for safeguarding.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	110076
<b>Local authority</b>	Slough
<b>Inspection number</b>	441223

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Modern (non-selective)
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	863
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	126
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Paul Rowley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kathleen Higgins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9–10 December 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01753 520473
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