

Bradon Forest School

The Peak, Purton, Swindon, SN5 4AT

Inspection dates 1–2 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' achievement requires improvement because progress has been too slow and results not good enough in a number of GCSE subjects, particularly English and science.
- Students who have fallen behind and are entitled to specially funded help have not been helped to catch up as effectively as they should. They have not done as well as other students in examinations.
- Teaching is not consistently good through the school. The quality of planning in some lessons is not good enough to help pupils develop skills and knowledge at a good pace.
- Written feedback to students about their work does not give enough advice about how they can improve in future.
- Not all teachers have sufficiently good skills to check students' understanding and knowledge during lessons, so that they can then adjust the lesson as necessary.
- A small proportion of students are not making good enough progress with their reading. They are not confident in their use of phonics (the sounds that letters make).

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher, with the full support of senior teachers and the governing body, has already brought about substantial improvements.
- As a result of systematic monitoring and good support for staff, teaching is improving rapidly. Current students are making good progress.
- The behaviour of students is good. They are polite, well-mannered and are keen to learn. The school provides a safe and secure environment in which students thrive.
- The school is developing effective strategies to help those who fall behind to catch up.
- The positive ethos throughout the school is supported by a strong belief that students can and will be successful. Students and staff have been set more challenging but realistic targets.
- Students, parents and carers, and staff confirmed that the new behaviour policy has helped to reinforce a very positive learning environment. Students expressed appreciation for the care and support that they are given.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 teachers in 31 lessons, 10 of which were observed jointly with senior teachers from the school. In addition, inspectors made some short visits to lessons and to the school's special educational needs base.
- Meetings were held with some members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders, teachers and groups of students. An inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. One inspector listened to individual students reading aloud and talked to others about their reading.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, visited an assembly, and looked at samples of students' work. They also looked at progress data, documents about the school's development and evaluation, safeguarding information and records about attendance and behaviour. The records showing the impact of professional development for staff were also examined.
- Inspectors took into account the views of over 80 parents and carers who completed the online questionnaire (Parent View). All members of staff were also able to contribute their views in a questionnaire; 28 responses were received.

Inspection team

Ann Cox, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Roger Garrett	Additional Inspector
Janet Hallett	Additional Inspector
Charles Joseph	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an averaged-sized secondary school for students up to the age of 16. Bradon Forest educates students from across the North Wiltshire and Swindon areas. The number of boys in the school exceeds the number of girls.
- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2013.
- The vast majority of students are of White British heritage, with very small numbers from several minority ethnic groups.
- The school roll has fallen in recent years due to changes in the number of local secondary school-aged children.
- The proportion of students with disabilities and special educational needs supported through school action, school action plus or with statements of special educational needs is below the national average.
- A below-average proportion of students receive pupil premium funding. This provides additional funding for looked after children, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families.
- In Years 7 and 8, about a tenth of students benefit from additional help in mathematics and English, funded by the government's catch-up programme.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- In Key Stage 4, a small number of students attend courses including work-related training off-site at Swindon College, New College in Swindon, and the Riverside Centre in Swindon. A very small number of students have provision through Nisai Virtual Academy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the standard of teaching so that it is consistently good or better throughout the school by:
 - planning lesson activities to interest all students and maintain their focus throughout the lesson
 - developing techniques so that all teachers probe the understanding of their students effectively and adjust the lesson content to deal with any gaps in their knowledge
 - giving students detailed written feedback on their work so that they understand exactly what they need to do to make further improvements
 - giving more support to those students who are not making good progress in reading and ensuring that they have the necessary phonics skills.
- Increase the rate of progress made by all students so that examination grades improve and are at least in line with similar students in other schools.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' achievement requires improvement because their progress has been too slow, especially in English and science. In consequence, the GCSE grades achieved in many subjects do not show the expected progress, given the above-average starting points of students.
- The progress of students in English was particularly slow in 2012. There was an improvement in 2013, although the rate of progress was still below average.
- Current students are making much better progress in English and mathematics. Current Year 11 students are working at better levels compared to students in previous years. These improvements have come about following a whole-school emphasis on raising expectations, and a focus on improving teaching and also behaviour, driven by the new headteacher and other leaders in the school.
- Progress in other subjects has also improved. The school has made changes to the curriculum which allow students to study more appropriate qualifications, particularly in science and PE.
- The most-able students in Year 11 sat GCSE mathematics in Year 10 and all of them achieved high grades, demonstrating very good progress. Many of these students gained A* or A grades. They are now studying for an additional qualification in mathematics.
- In mathematics, the proportion of students who make enough progress to achieve GCSE A* or A grades is similar to other students nationally. However, in English, the proportion who achieve the A* or A grades is not as high as it is for other students with similar starting points. The most-able students have an opportunity to study separate qualifications in three sciences.
- The school has now developed a range of strategies to help students entitled to pupil premium and catch-up funding. In 2013, the gap between students entitled to pupil premium funding and others was equivalent to two GCSE grades lower in mathematics and two and a half grades in English. This was a bigger gap than that in 2012. Inspectors judged that in lessons current students entitled to additional funding were making progress similar to other students.
- The school is giving some attention to ensuring that students make good progress in literacy but some students are not good at using phonics (the sounds that that letters make) to help them with their reading skills and so they do not read as well as they should.
- Students with special educational needs or disabilities are given good support so that they achieve in line with similar students nationally.
- Students from minority ethnic backgrounds make progress at a rate comparable to all other students in the school.
- A small proportion of students in Key Stage 4 are educated at other centres and spend some time on vocational, work-related training. Most members of this small group are engaged by these courses and they make good progress to leave school with useful qualifications.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The progress of the school's students over time has not been as rapid as it should have been because teaching has not been consistently good and requires improvement.
- Lesson planning is not of consistently good quality to help students develop knowledge and understanding at a good pace. As a result, some students, particularly boys, can lose focus and do not maintain a rapid pace of learning. Where planning is good, well-thought-out sequences of activities help students learn well.
- Looking at samples of students' work, inspectors found that often the marking is not as detailed as it could be and students are not always given enough written feedback about how they can improve their work.
- Not all teachers use appropriate techniques to check students' understanding and to then adjust the lesson to respond to their needs. Nevertheless, there are examples of good practice within

the school.

- Inspectors agree with the school's view that teaching is now improving strongly. Current students are making better progress.
- Under the new leadership, teachers have set more challenging targets for students to achieve. Generally, students have made a positive response and they are making more rapid progress.
- Literacy skills and mathematics are being developed across all subjects, and the school has given particular attention to reading and the use of correct terms in different subjects. There is effective use of targeted support matched to students' needs. Intervention strategies to help those who have fallen behind are being developed throughout the school.
- Homework is set to help reinforce what has been learnt in the classroom.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students have a consistently positive attitude to learning and there are very good relationships between students and adults which provide a supportive learning environment for good progress to be made.
- One student in Year 11 wrote to inspectors, 'I could not have asked for more support throughout the duration of my five years here and it is something that I will always be grateful for.'
- The school has made improvements this year to encourage good learning behaviour and this was widely acknowledged by students and adults in the school. Lessons are not interrupted by poor behaviour and students respond quickly to teachers' instructions. However, behaviour is not outstanding because students do not always display a thirst for knowledge and love of learning.
- Students arrive at lessons for a prompt start and have with them the equipment that they need.
- Students appreciate the clear procedures set out in the new 'consequences policy'; they understand the link between good behaviour and learning. The number of exclusions for poor behaviour has decreased to a very low number during this academic year.
- As they move around the school, students conduct themselves well, with minimal supervision needed. Students are courteous towards each other, staff and visitors.
- The school has worked hard to improve students' attendance, which is now above average.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Inspectors were told by student representatives that bullying does not often happen. Students were confident that when bullying incidents are reported to the school they are dealt with quickly and effectively. The vast majority of parents and carers shared this view.
- There are fortnightly lessons and other activities, such as assemblies, to focus on topics such as raising awareness about different forms of bullying, including homophobic and cyber-bullying. Students have advice about how to avoid harm from substances including alcohol and tobacco.
- The care of students who attend courses at other sites is also managed very well. There are frequent, regular checks to ensure that they are safe and make as much progress as possible.

The leadership and management are good

- The school has been extremely well led by the headteacher since he took up his appointment in September 2013. He has been determined in pursuit of improvements to raise standards across the school.
- The headteacher is very well supported by a reorganised team of senior leaders and middle managers who now share the same goal of improvement across the school. All leaders clearly communicate high expectations and ambition for the school and its students. This gives the school the capacity to sustain improvement.
- The school gives high priority to the professional development of every member of its staff. There is a new system to set targets for all teachers to help them to improve further.
- Middle leaders have benefited from development opportunities which have strengthened their

ability to improve teaching and learning in their areas.

- The school's curriculum provides a broad range of subjects and opportunities for all students. When it supports their interests and abilities, students follow work-related courses to ensure that they remain motivated and achieve as well as they can.
- The school has introduced new measures to help students in danger of falling behind. These include special help and dedicated time to address issues. These actions are having a positive impact.
- The school has received advice from a local authority consultant and this has helped it to make improvements, particularly in the leadership and management of the school.
- The school has systems in place to ensure that safeguarding and child protection arrangements meet statutory requirements. Record keeping is thorough.
- The school makes sure that all students have equality of opportunity and it actively tackles potential sources of discrimination.
- Students are well informed about the choices available to them when they leave school. Many continue to study at local colleges or take up apprenticeships.
- Students are given a wide range of experiences to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school takes steps to give them a balanced view of other cultures with links to places such as India, Tobago and the Falkland Islands. Students have opportunities to visit a range of countries including France and India.
- The school has strong traditions in expressive arts and recently gained the Artsmark Gold award for a fourth time. The on-site theatre provides the local community with a valued amenity.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body works very closely with the headteacher and other senior staff. Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching and its impact on learning as they receive regular and detailed written reports alongside meetings with the school's leaders. Governors keep up to date with appropriate training and study information about the school's performance so that they can evaluate the school's progress; they are well aware about its relative strengths and weaknesses. The governing body requires school leaders to constantly review their work to ensure a continuous effort for improvement.
 - The governing body plays an active part in setting targets for the most-senior leaders and now has an overview of the targets set for other teachers to ensure that their future salary progression will be related to the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
 - Governors scrutinise the school's finances and make sure that funds, particularly for pupil premium students, are used to raise standards. The governing body works hard to engage parents, carers and representatives of the community so that their views help to inform its decisions. The governing body fully meets its responsibilities with regard to 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

Unique reference number	126503
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	426793

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	927
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	William Webster
Headteacher	Andrew Morrison
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 December 2011
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