

Bedminster Down School

Donald Road, Bedminster Down, Bristol, BS13 7DQ

Inspection dates

6–7 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, effectively supported by senior staff, has ensured that the school has made significant improvements since the last inspection. As a result, students' achievement and the quality of teaching are now good.
- Students achieve well in most subjects. The progress students make in English has risen significantly.
- Disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs are well supported. As a result, they now make good progress.
- Teaching has improved rapidly since the last inspection. Teachers are committed to further developing their skills.
- Governors provide very strong leadership. They support and challenge the school effectively and have a positive impact on students' achievement and the quality of teaching.
- Students' behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. They are courteous and polite and arrive at lessons on time and ready to learn.
- Students confirmed that the school is a safe place. They are confident that staff will act quickly to resolve any concerns that they may have.
- The range of subjects and topics studied by students is broad and balanced between academic and work-related courses.
- Students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is promoted very well through assemblies, lessons and a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement is not yet outstanding. Learning activities planned by staff do not always enable all students, especially the more able, to make the best possible progress.
- Teaching is not outstanding. The quality of marking and feedback is improving, but students are not always given enough time to respond to the feedback. As a result, they do not always show that they know how to improve their learning.
- Teachers' feedback in their marking does not consistently show students how to further improve their learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons, 11 of which were undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors made a number of shorter visits to other lessons. Inspectors observed an assembly.
- Inspectors held meetings with several groups of students, members of the senior leadership team, and leaders in charge of subjects and other aspects of the school’s work. Inspectors also met with teachers new to the school and profession.
- The lead inspector met with members of the school’s governing body and representatives of primary schools in the Malago Learning Partnership.
- Inspectors discussed lessons they had seen with teaching staff. They examined a range of documents, including the school’s self-evaluation, its plans for improvement and student progress information.
- Inspectors evaluated the school’s own information about exclusions, attendance and behaviour. They also considered evidence of how effectively it spends additional funding (known as the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding).
- Inspectors looked at a range of students’ work in lessons.
- Inspectors took into account 31 responses to Ofsted’s Parent View questionnaire.
- The inspection team considered questionnaires completed by 56 members of staff.

Inspection team

Jackie Jones, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Patrick Hazlewood

Additional inspector

Terry Payne

Additional inspector

Janet Simms

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bedminster Down is an academy for students aged from 11 to 16 years. It is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are from a White British background and the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (this is additional funding for students entitled to free school meals and in the care of the local authority) is above the national average.
- There are 21 students eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding. This is funding for students who did not achieve Level 4 (the nationally expected level) in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action is above the national average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- There are 16 students who attend the school's own alternative provision called The Lamp. This is the school's own additional off-site education provision for students at risk of being excluded from education.
- There have been a number of staff changes since the previous inspection.
- The school is part of the Malago Learning Partnership. This is an informal partnership of seven local primary schools, a local special school and Bedminster Down School.
- The academy met the government's current floor standards in 2014, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan activities that enable all students, especially the more able, to make the best possible progress and which engage students fully in their learning
 - teachers' feedback and comments in their marking consistently inform students about how to further improve their learning
 - students are given time to respond to teachers' feedback and comments in their marking so that they show clearly that they know how to improve their learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Since the last inspection, leaders have ensured that students' achievement and the quality of teaching have improved, and they are now good. All staff who responded to the staff questionnaire agreed that they were proud to be a member of staff at the school. They also expressed complete confidence in the leadership of the school.
- The school's view of its own performance is robust and accurate. It informs a high quality plan to bring about improvements that has measurable outcomes and is leading to increasingly high quality provision.
- The management of teaching and its impact on learning have improved since the last inspection. School leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching are accurate. This is informed by rigorous checks by senior and middle leaders.
- Middle leaders have a good and developing understanding of how to improve the learning opportunities for students. They work closely with an outstanding local secondary school and also with the partner primary schools. Although this work was originally about supporting middle leaders, it is increasingly becoming one of mutual support.
- Training for staff is carefully tailored and based on an accurate analysis of need. This is improving the quality of teaching and learning so that student achievement is rising. Staff also have the opportunity to gain additional qualifications such as a Master's degree in education from a local university.
- Systems for managing staff performance are rigorous. They relate fully to the Teachers' Standards. Salary progression only occurs when merited by good performance.
- The leadership of the school has taken robust action to challenge underperformance. The headteacher expressed the minimum standards expected of staff at the school as 'anything less than good is not good enough'.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. There is a mix of academic and work-related courses on offer and students are very well guided when making their subject choices for Key Stage 4. Each student has a career plan so that subject choices as well as extra-curricular opportunities can be closely matched to a student's aspirations. This is encouraging the more able students to 'aim high' in the next stage of their education.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Through the subjects they study, the assemblies they attend and the visitors that come into the school, their understanding of life in modern Britain is well developed. Inspectors observed a very moving Remembrance assembly where students and staff reflected in a mature way on the impact of war.
- There is a very wide range of opportunities for students beyond the classroom, including a variety of sports, arts, drama and visits. Staff support students' interests wherever possible by setting up opportunities such as the Young Brunel engineering project, the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and the Ten Tors expedition. Students have also had the opportunity to help in the construction of classrooms for a school in Tanzania, for which there was a rigorous selection process.
- The school leadership ensures that these opportunities are available to all students by providing funding should it be needed. This ensures that all students make good progress academically.
- Careers guidance is well developed. All students visit local colleges and universities, which raises their aspirations. The school ensures that disadvantaged students have yearly careers interviews so that their future career choices are not limited.
- School leaders ensure that additional funding for disadvantaged students, disabled students and those with special educational needs enables all students have the same access to the wide range of opportunities available at the school.
- The introduction of the new house system and tutor groups in September has increased the opportunities for student leadership. The older students have fully embraced this as they appreciate being able to support younger students in the school.
- The Malago Learning Partnership has supported both the school, its partners and students. Staff have the opportunity to work in each other's schools and, as a result, there is a seamless transition for the students after Key Stage 2.
- Behaviour has improved since the last inspection as the result of actions taken by the school leaders. As a result, the number of exclusions has reduced significantly.
- The school has highly effective safeguarding processes and procedures. The school makes very effective use of a large number of outside agencies to support students when needed.

- The school works very well with parents and carers. The large majority of parents who responded to Parent View agreed that the school responded well to any concerns that they had.
 - School leaders closely monitor the progress, attendance and behaviour of those students who attend The Lamp. As a result these students achieved well, with the majority gaining five A* - C GCSE grades.
 - Students attending The Lamp also attend lessons in the main school and are able to participate in extra-curricular activities provided by the school. This ensures that they still have a definite link to the school, which benefits their social development.
- **The governance of the school:**
- The governance of the school is now a strength of the school. Governors very effectively support and challenge the school. They have done so with increasing effect since the last inspection.
 - They are fully involved in reviewing students' performance and setting the school's priorities through discussion of the school's view about how well it is doing and its plans for improvement.
 - Governors are very well equipped to carry out their statutory duties, which they do effectively. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They understand the ways in which students' performance is measured.
 - Governors manage the finances of the school well and ensure that spending is linked to improving students' learning.
 - Governors know about the quality of teaching and are fully aware of what is being done to reward good performance from staff. They are also knowledgeable about how underperformance is addressed by school leaders.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. They behave well in and out of lessons. Their good behaviour has contributed to improved achievement.
- Students arrive at lessons on time, with the correct equipment and ready to work. They take pride in their school, wearing their uniform well. There is little evidence of graffiti, but there was some litter left after students had eaten their lunch. Students commented that the dropping of litter was improving as the result of actions taken by the school.
- Students appreciate the school's focus on rewarding good behaviour through the issuing of reward stamps at the end of lessons. These contribute to house points.
- Students attending The Lamp are helped to improve their behaviour so that their learning continues to improve.
- Staff and parents all commented favourably on the behaviour at the school and the way it is managed.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students say they feel safe, which is confirmed by both staff and parents.
- Students know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. For example, they have a good understanding of the risks connected with using the internet.
- Students report that any incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and firmly. The school is developing its responses to the small numbers of homophobic bullying incidents through the involvement of Stonewall. There is very little racist bullying.
- Attendance has improved significantly since the last inspection. It is now above the national average. The school has taken a number of effective actions to bring about this improvement. One example of this is providing free transport to school for those who previously may have found it difficult to attend school.
- Exclusions have reduced significantly at the school. The Lamp and the use of a system of restorative justice to resolve any poor behaviour have played a part in this reduction. Permanent exclusion is only used as a last resort when all other measures have been employed.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved rapidly since the last inspection. As a result, students' achievement is also rapidly improving.
- A significant feature of the good teaching at the school is the excellent relationships between staff and students. Students work very well in lessons to improve their learning.
- Teachers have clear expectations of the standard of work and behaviour expected from students. As a result, students feel comfortable asking for additional help from all staff present in a lesson.
- High-ability students relish the opportunities provided to extend their learning. In a mathematics lesson students were being challenged to explore the links between the theory and practical applications of trigonometry. However, this level of challenge for the most able is not consistent across the school. This means that, although achievement for the more able is improving, it is not consistent across all subjects.
- Occasionally, the learning activities planned by teachers are too easy. This means that students lose interest in the topic; as a result, they become less engaged in their learning.
- Support for disabled students and those with special educational needs in lessons is good. Teachers know and put into practice the advice given by specialist teachers. Teaching assistants are very well used in lessons to support students in their learning. This ensures they make good progress.
- The school is working hard to improve students' literacy, including their reading skills. There is a clearly established expectation that teachers will correct spellings, for example, when marking and that students will respond to this by correcting any misspelt words. As a result, students' quality of writing is rapidly improving. Students' reading skills develop well as teaching encourages students to use these skills effectively in other subjects.
- The quality of feedback and marking has improved since the last inspection. The school's marking policy expects staff to identify what a student has done well and how they can improve their learning. Students are expected to respond to the guidance given by staff. In the best practice this results in a clear dialogue between staff and students, leading to rapid improvement. However, not all students receive good feedback or are given time to reflect and respond to the guidance given. This means that their learning does not improve as rapidly as it could do.
- The very large majority of parents who responded to the Parent View survey felt that their child is taught well. Inspectors generally agreed with this.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are below the national average. The proportion of Year 11 students who attain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is above the government's current minimum standards. It is not yet outstanding because not all students consistently make the progress of which they are capable.
- The achievement of Year 11 students in 2014 was significantly above that of those in 2013. This improvement was seen in the five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, as well as in other subjects such as science, French and history. Students did not achieve as well in some other subjects, including geography, art and design and computer studies.
- The proportion of students making at least expected progress in English is above the national average. It is less strong in mathematics, but is improving rapidly.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress. Their achievement is rapidly improving and is close to that of others in the school and students nationally. This is because of the highly effective support they receive, particularly from teaching assistants.
- Students who are eligible for extra funding have previously achieved less well than others. The gap is now closing rapidly as a result of the support they receive from staff at the school. In 2014 the gap in achievement for English was half a grade; in mathematics it was just under a grade at GCSE compared to other students within the school and those nationally.
- Current students eligible for extra funding are making rapid progress and the gap is reducing significantly.
- Improving students' literacy and numeracy is a very high priority for the school. The school effectively uses the Year 7 catch-up funding to improve students' achievement in English and mathematics. This is due to the high quality support provided by the school, which is tailored to their individual needs.
- Higher-attaining students' achievement is improving rapidly. However, it could be even better if these students were challenged sufficiently in all lessons and not just, for example, when in groups that are set by ability.
- Students who attend The Lamp achieve well. In 2014 the majority of these students achieved five or more

GCSEs at grade A* to C. It is not yet outstanding as not all students achieved the government's minimum standards.

- As the result of the improving achievement for all students there were no pupils who did not go into education, employment or training after leaving the school.
- The school does not enter students early for English or mathematics exams.
- The majority of parents who responded to the Parent View survey felt that their children are making good progress.

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	138204
Local authority	Bristol
Inspection number	449070

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	779
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rick Palmer
Headteacher	Gary Schlick
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 November 2012
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