

The Purbeck School

Worgret Road, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 4PF

Inspection dates

3–4 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	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
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- All teachers have a strong focus on improving students' examination results. This has led to a rapid improvement in achievement since the previous inspection.
- The headteacher and other leaders, including governors, have brought about big improvements in the quality of teaching, students' attitudes and behaviour and the rate at which students progress in their studies.
- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers have strong subject knowledge, good relationships with students and plan lessons carefully so that students learn quickly.
- Students' behaviour is good. They are keen to learn, co-operate well with one another and respond quickly to their teachers' instructions. Outside of lessons, they behave very responsibly and are polite towards one another and to adults.
- Students are kept safe by the school. They know about different kinds of risk and how to avoid them, including how to stay safe when using the internet.
- The sixth form is good. In the past, students have achieved in line with national averages in their examinations, but this is improving. They make a good contribution to school life and are highly successful in going on to university, further education and training or into employment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs have not made progress as quickly as other students in the school, particularly in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 30 lessons, seven of them jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors looked at students’ work including the frequency and quality of marking and the progress students make. They also considered case studies of individual students.
- Meetings were held with three groups of students, five governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and senior and middle managers.
- Inspectors took account of the 145 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), a letter and emails from two parents and 28 staff questionnaire responses.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents, including: the school’s self-evaluation and development plan; the school’s information on students’ current progress; and records relating to monitoring, behaviour and attendance, and safeguarding.

Inspection team

John Mallone, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Malcolm Davison	Additional Inspector
Paula Sargent	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Stiddard	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Purbeck School is an average-sized secondary school with sixth form.
- When the school was last inspected it was a 13 to 18 school. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2012. The school became an 11 to 18 comprehensive on 1 September 2013. Since the previous inspection new appointments have also included a deputy headteacher, the heads of English, science and modern foreign languages, the special educational needs coordinator and an attendance officer.
- The students come from predominantly White British backgrounds. Very few students come from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are very few students who speak English as an additional language.
- About one fifth of students are disabled or have special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs. This is in line with national averages.
- About a fifth of students are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for those who are looked after and those known to be eligible for free school meals. This is less than the national average.
- About a tenth of students are from service families.
- A small number of students receive their education at The Blandford Learning Centre, The Dorchester Learning Centre and The Christchurch Learning Centre.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4. It also meets the interim minimum standards for sixth form students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve rates of progress, especially in mathematics, for disabled students and those who have special educational needs, so that they match the good progress of other students in the school, by ensuring that
 - they are set work that is challenging for them
 - work is always completed and presented accurately
 - marking makes a stronger contribution to their achievements.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The inspirational headteacher, along with other leaders in the school, has created a culture in which staff and students alike have high aspirations. School leaders have a clear grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have put in place highly effective plans which have rapidly improved the quality of teaching, students' behaviour, including their attitude to learning, and the rates of progress students make.
- The recently appointed leader responsible for disabled students and those who have special educational needs has begun to improve rates of progress for these students, so that they are now progressing faster overall than other students in the school. Progress in English has been stronger than that in mathematics for these students.
- Students are set challenging targets, based on their levels of attainment when they enter the school. Teachers expect students to do better than those in schools elsewhere. Progress is monitored and reviewed frequently; any students who are falling behind are given extra help so that they catch up quickly. As a result, rates of progress have increased and students are now achieving in line with national averages, in both their GCSE examinations and in the sixth form. Parents are appreciative of the reports on their children's progress they receive three times a year. They are informed quickly if any problems arise.
- Middle leaders, including those in charge of subjects, make a good contribution to students' progress. In consultation with subject teachers and form tutors, they regularly review the academic progress of all students and put in place additional support for any who may be falling behind. As a result the proportions of those making expected progress in English has increased rapidly since the previous inspection. The proportions of those making expected progress in mathematics remains in line with national averages.
- The school has a broad and balanced curriculum which allows for a wide range of choices at GCSE level. In Key Stage 3, students follow the Purbeck Learning Skills programme, which has been instrumental in bringing better attitudes to study and has helped raise students' attainment. The programme of personal, social, moral and spiritual education, taught through tutor periods and assemblies, prepares students well for life in modern Britain. As the school is situated in a rural area, there is a special emphasis on taking students to other parts of the country and abroad, both as part of the taught curriculum and outside of school hours.
- A small number of students for whom a mainstream school is unsuitable are taught at Learning Centres in Blandford, Dorchester and Christchurch. Their attendance, behaviour and progress are well monitored by the school and they achieve useful qualifications.
- There is an extensive programme of independent advice and guidance, taught through personal, social and health education lessons from Year 7. Students are carefully guided in choosing their GCSE options in Year 9 and the school is very flexible in responding to students' requests so that each timetable is tailored to individual needs. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form there are visits to universities and many opportunities for students to find out about careers in specific subject areas, and individual appointments are arranged with a specialist careers officer. As a result of this well-targeted guidance, almost all students who leave school either continue in education or training or find jobs.
- When students arrive from primary school, they settle in quickly and say that they enjoy school and feel safe. They appreciate the efforts made by teachers to ease their transition to the new school. Those students who leave primary school at below the expected level in English and mathematics receive extra help to enable them to catch up. As a result, in English, almost all students are at the expected level by the end of Year 7. Students who enter below the expected level in mathematics also make progress. New arrangements are in place this year for mathematics, with these students being taught in small groups, but it is too early to assess the impact of this work.
- The school has received support from the local authority to help its provision for students who are disabled or have special educational needs. This has helped bring about the improvement in rates of progress for this group of students in the school.
- The pupil premium funding has been used very well to provide focused support for those disadvantaged students it supports. As a result, the gap between their achievement and the achievement of others in the school and nationally has narrowed rapidly.
- Parents, staff and students are all clear that the school has become a place where everyone is focused on learning. Parents strongly endorse the work of the school to educate and look after their children.
- The school vigorously promotes equality of opportunity and takes many steps to ensure that students experience ways of life beyond their immediate neighbourhood. The wealth of trips to other parts of the

country and abroad helps reinforce the school's work to foster respect for and tolerance of other cultures. Discrimination rarely happens and is dealt with quickly and effectively if it occurs.

- The school meets the current statutory requirements for safeguarding.

■ **The governance of the school:**

– The governors have worked hard and contributed well to the school's recent improvement. They challenge the headteacher and other leaders effectively and monitor students' progress and behaviour. They keep an especially close eye on the finances and have been very active in helping overcome some of the difficulties posed by the reorganisation of schools in the local area and the drop in numbers of school-aged children. Governors know how much teaching has improved and in particular which subjects have needed support. They take pride in the fact that students' achievement has increased substantially this year and that progress of students currently in the school is equally strong. Governors have carefully monitored the use of the pupil premium funding, which has seen the achievement of disadvantaged students rise substantially faster than others'. They oversee the performance management of teachers, including the headteacher, and have been keen to reward exceptional performance as well as to withhold pay rises from those who fail to meet their targets. Governors are strongly supportive of the school and proud of its recent achievements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Students are keen to learn, bring the right equipment to lessons, take a pride in the presentation of their work and readily follow the instructions of their teachers. As a result, lessons run without interruption and progress is good.
- Outside lessons, students behave very well. They move calmly around the school and show consideration towards others, for example by opening doors or standing to one side to let someone pass. They are polite and courteous towards each other and towards adults.
- Students are respectful towards the environment: no litter or graffiti were seen on inspection and the many attractive wall displays, including students' work, are well looked after.
- Students know about different kinds of bullying, including various types of name-calling. They report that bullying is rare, and that when it does happen they know who to turn to and it is dealt with quickly and effectively. The school's own records show a large reduction in the number of incidents in the last year. Racist and homophobic name-calling is very rare.
- Attendance has improved since the appointment of an attendance officer last year, and is above national averages. The attendance of disadvantaged children, although improving, is still below that of others. Persistent absence is not declining fast enough and is still higher than that in similar schools.
- Students who receive their education at Blandford, Christchurch and Dorchester Learning Centres attend and behave well and are kept safe.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Parents, students and staff all agree that the school is a safe environment. Students are well informed about the various risks they face, both inside and outside school. They know how to keep themselves safe, for example by wearing goggles when conducting science experiments. The school has made sure that they are well aware of the dangers of putting personal information onto social media sites and other risks associated with using the internet.
- Sixth formers play a key role in supporting younger students who are bullied, acting as mentors to victims. There are various ways in which students can report bullying, which help them remain anonymous. Students report that they have confidence in this system and that bullying is now uncommon. The restorative justice process has been very successful in reducing the amount of repeat offending.
- Fixed term exclusions are high compared with national figures, although there was a slight decline in the proportions excluded from 2013 to 2014.
- All visitors to the school are subject to identity checks and given clear instructions about how they must behave while on site. All staff are subject to strict vetting procedures.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- The quality of teaching has improved rapidly and is now consistently good or better across most subjects and all year groups. This has improved the rate at which students learn and led to an increase in the proportions of students gaining five grades at A* to C including English and mathematics in their GCSE examinations. Rates of progress have improved especially strongly in English and been maintained in mathematics.
- Teachers have high expectations of how students should behave and the efforts they should put into their work. This has led to good attitudes to learning, a pride in their work and good progress in lessons.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and strong, respectful relationships with students. This gives students the confidence to adopt different learning styles readily, for example working in pairs or groups. As a result of their ready cooperation with one another, students make quick progress.
- Teachers use questioning well to check students' understanding and adjust their teaching accordingly. This ensures that no students get left behind and all make progress. The school has been working with teachers to increase the use of 'secondary' questions, which check how students know something to be true. As a result, more teachers are using this method to develop students' understanding.
- Teachers use a wide range of resources and strategies to engage and maintain students' interest. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson, students played a game that encouraged them to remain alert and ready to answer questions; the learning was fun and students consolidated their understanding well.
- Teachers set and mark homework regularly. The school's policy of making sure students follow up suggestions for improvement contributes to the good progress that students make in most subjects. The marking is particularly strong in Key Stage 4. The progress, presentation and marking of work seen in the books of students with special educational needs is not as good as others.
- Teachers use the information they have about students' needs and abilities to set work at the right level. In the past, this has not been the case for disabled students and those who have special educational needs, especially in mathematics, where lessons have not always been sufficiently challenging for these students. The school is addressing this and rates of progress are now improving for this group.
- Teachers think carefully about the way they teach and take full advantage of the carefully designed training they receive to address areas where they need to develop. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved significantly and continues to do so.
- Teaching for those students who receive their education off site is good. They make good progress and gain useful qualifications.

The achievement of pupils**is good**

- Students join the school with prior attainment which is generally below national averages. They make good progress and achieve well in their GCSE examinations. In 2014, 54% of students achieved five grades at A* to C including English and mathematics. These results are in line with national averages and are a big improvement on results in 2013. No students are entered early for GCSE examinations.
- Students currently in the school are making good progress. The school's reliable data indicate that GCSE results in 2015 are likely to show similar rates of progress.
- The most able students achieve very well. In 2014, almost all of them achieved at least five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics. This is higher than the national average.
- Boys achieve less well than girls. There is a larger than average gap between the proportions gaining five grades at A*-C including English and mathematics at GCSE.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs has not been as good as that of other students in the school, particularly in mathematics. The introduction of smaller groups for those in greatest need and other evidence seen on inspection indicate that progress for these students is now improving.
- The very small numbers of students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve in line with their peers.
- The achievement of students from service families varies from year to year and subject to subject. They make consistently good progress in English.
- Support provided to those who arrive in Year 7 with below expected levels in English and mathematics means that most catch up by the end of the year. Progress in English is especially good.
- There is a gap between the progress of disadvantaged students and their classmates, but this is closing rapidly throughout the whole school.
- The performance of disadvantaged students in the school has improved. The gap between this group in the school and non-disadvantaged students nationally in their GCSE examinations in English has reduced from a grade and half in 2012 to less than a grade in 2014. In the same period in mathematics the gap

has reduced from a grade and half to just over a grade. For students further down the school, the gaps in achievement between disadvantaged students and others are reducing strongly.

- Students who are educated at the Learning Centres in Blandford, Christchurch and Dorchester make good progress and achieve in line with their peers in the school.
- Many students take part in a wide range of cultural and sporting activities, including overseas trips. These activities make a strong contribution to students' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The well-led sixth form has improved strongly since it was last inspected. Students achieve well in their examinations and many go on to university. The proportion of top A*/A grades at A level has risen steadily from 2012 to 2014. The proportions of those achieving results in the A* to C range has also risen steadily. At AS level A – B grades accounted for 38% of all entries in 2014. Results at AS are also continuing to rise. The very small numbers of disadvantaged students achieve in line with their classmates.
- Attitudes to learning in the sixth form are very strong. Students manage their non-lesson time well, using the library for private study. They are encouraged to take on responsibility and act as mentors for younger students, as well as supporting learning in local primary schools. Attendance rates are improving.
- Sixth formers receive very good advice and guidance, which prepare them well for life after school. As a result, almost all stay in education, or move on to training or employment. Students value this advice and guidance. They feel safe and are well informed about how to stay safe as they move into adulthood.
- Teaching is well monitored and its quality has improved. Teachers have very high expectations and plan lessons which engage and stimulate students, who readily respond. For example, in a Year 13 French lesson seen on inspection, both students and teacher spoke French throughout. As a result students learn quickly and progress is good.
- Support for sixth form students who did not have a GCSE grade at A* to C in English or mathematics is good and results for retaken examinations are improving strongly.
- The school's strong programme of extra-curricular and enrichment activities has a significant impact on students' leadership and employability skills.

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	113855
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	431077

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Maintained
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	1014
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	182
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Scupholme
Headteacher	Leanne Symonds
Date of previous school inspection	15–16 September 2011
Telephone number	01929 550077
Fax number	01929 554025
Email address	office@purbeck.dorset.sch.uk

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