

Ashton Park School

Blackmoors Lane, Bower Ashton, Bristol, BS3 2JL

Inspection dates

5–6 February 2015

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
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher supported by leaders, governors, staff and students has acted with determination to secure improvements in teaching and students' achievement. The school's capacity to improve further is strong.
- There have been sustained improvements in standards at GCSE in English and mathematics. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was above average in 2014 and is set to improve further.
- Teachers have high expectations of students and enjoy positive and supportive relationships. As a result, teaching is good.
- Achievement is good; students make good progress from their starting points and achieve well across a broad range of subjects.
- The whole-school focus on literacy is having a marked impact on students' reading, writing and communication skills.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Students behave well in lessons and around the school. They show very positive attitudes to learning. They feel safe in school.
- Governors are passionate about their school and have equipped themselves well to challenge and support school leaders.
- The sixth form provision and leadership are good. Students value the inclusive nature of the sixth form and have good attitudes to their learning. As a result, standards in the sixth form are rising rapidly.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Disadvantaged students have not, until recently, achieved as well as their peers, both in the school, and by comparison with national standards.
- Middle leaders have not been consistently effective in tackling inconsistencies in teaching. In some lessons students do not receive enough written or verbal feedback on how they could improve their work. Consequently, they are not always clear about how to get better.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 40 lessons, of which ten were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders and representatives of the governing body. A telephone conversation was also held with a member of the local authority.
- The inspection team took into account the 110 responses to the online parent survey, Parent View.
- Four groups of students talked to inspectors about their views of the school and the inspection team spoke informally with students.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including students' work, achievement information, school self-evaluation and development plans. They also looked at records of safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspection team observed the work of the school at break and lunchtime and at the end of the school day.

Inspection team

Chris King, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Lesley Voaden	Additional inspector
Terry Payne	Additional inspector
Charles Joseph	Additional inspector
Ifeyinwa Chinye Jibunoh	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ashton Park is a larger-than-average-size secondary school.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are both below average.
- About one in 14 students are disabled or have special educational needs. This is below the national average.
- Nearly a third of students are supported by the pupil premium, which is in line with the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after.
- A small number of students attend part-time alternative provision with the City of Bristol College following courses such as construction, and hair and beauty therapy.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school is a member of the South West Bristol Cooperative Learning Trust and works closely with Luckwell Primary School, Ashton Vale Primary School, and South Street School and Children's Centre.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and so raise students' achievement by making sure that:
 - all students receive high-quality marking and feedback across the school so that they are always clear about what they need to do to improve their work
 - all middle leaders are involved in promoting the very best practice amongst teachers so that students make outstanding progress across all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leadership team have a precise view of the strengths and areas for improvement in the school and a relentless focus on its continued development. They have pulled together the whole-school community to ensure continued improvements. They have developed a strong, whole-school focus on high-quality teaching, taking decisive action to improve teaching and extend teachers' skills. Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because some inconsistencies remain in teaching.
- There is a positive culture of improvement in the school, supported by a strong capacity for further improvement.
- The areas of weakness at the previous inspection have been rigorously tackled. Improvements in teaching have helped to accelerate progress in learning across the school. Most middle leaders are now more effective because they are held properly to account for their responsibilities. They have a growing role in evaluating and developing the quality of teaching, although best practice is not always shared well. Not all are fully involved in playing a significant part in raising students' achievement.
- The curriculum caters for students needs well. The teaching of British values such as tolerance and respect is clearly evident in the school's well-planned and well-delivered personal, social and health education course. These values are also prompted through the religious education curriculum, which all students follow to GCSE. Discussions with students revealed the school has been very effective in fostering positive relationships, tackling discrimination and promoting equal opportunities. Students are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school provides a range of effective guidance to students when they are making decisions about the next stage in their lives. Students recognise the value of this advice and exploit the positive relationships they have with staff to ensure they are well informed about future options.
- Governors and school leaders recognise that gaps in performance have existed between disadvantaged students and their peers. They are monitoring this situation rigorously and through effective and creative deployment of the pupil premium grant and a range of interventions can demonstrate that gaps are rapidly closing.
- Performance management for teachers is robust and identifies the skills they need to improve. This is used to plan appropriate professional development. Effective practice within the school and elsewhere has been shared well to improve teaching that previously required improvement.
- The progress, attendance, behaviour and safety of those students attending off-site provision are monitored effectively by leaders.
- The local-authority-appointed improvement advisor has supported the school's own self-evaluation and provided helpful moderation for their quality-assurance activities.
- The inspection team carefully checked the school's safeguarding arrangements. The school was able to demonstrate the impact of actions taken to ensure that they are secure and effective, and meet statutory requirements.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have ensured that they are well trained and have the necessary skills to be able to understand school information and provide effective challenge to the headteacher. They are passionate about Ashton Park and are excited about its future. Governors regularly attend events at the school and are linked to key areas of the school's work such as, how disadvantaged students are supported and how teaching is developing. They understand what good-quality teaching looks like, and emphasise the importance of maintaining a transparent and rigorous system for monitoring and linking teachers' pay to the progress of their students. They play an active role in checking that this process is managed effectively and that it is fair.
- Governors have ensured that the finances of the school are spent appropriately and effectively, including allocation of the pupil premium grant. They understand their responsibilities with regards to safeguarding. They have ensured that they have received the necessary training to meet statutory requirements to keep the students safe and secure. Governors have a good understanding of school performance information. They were able to talk knowledgeably and fluently about attainment, achievement and attendance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**are good****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is good. Leaders have taken very successful actions to ensure that the students are proud to be part of the school. A strong sense of community runs through the school and its work. Students' conduct around the school is good. They dress smartly and wear their uniform with pride. Students are pleasant, polite and courteous to visitors. Those students with disabilities feel fully included in all aspects of school life.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because some students' attendance still needs to be improved further and exclusions further reduced.
- Students are very clear about the standards of behaviour expected of them and meet these expectations in lessons and around the school. Students are punctual to lessons, making sure that they arrive properly equipped and well prepared for learning.
- Students behave well in lessons. They show very positive attitudes to learning, asking interesting questions and showing curiosity and engagement in the learning activities. Their good behaviour has a strong impact on their improving achievement.
- Students' behaviour and attendance at the alternative provision are good, and the school makes regular checks to ensure that they are kept safe there.
- Sixth form students behave very well indeed, providing excellent role models for younger students to aspire to. Their attendance rate is high and they dress smartly and interact positively with younger students during lessons and around the school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students say they feel safe in school and are clear about what to do if they have concerns. They say that the use of derogatory language is rare, taken very seriously by the adults and effectively dealt with.
- Students say bullying is rare and that if any happens they would help each other to talk to a member of staff. They feel sure they would get the help and support they need. They describe how the school helps to keep them safe through assemblies, in tutor-time discussions and in personal development sessions. From these, students understand the risks associated with social networking sites and how mobile phones can be used to intimidate or pressurise individuals into behaving in a way they know is unsafe.
- Parents and staff share the same, positive views about students' behaviour and safety.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- The quality of teaching has improved rapidly since the last inspection and, as a result, students are making accelerated progress across a number of subjects. There are very good relationships between students and teachers. Students are fully engaged in the range of learning activities and teacher expectations are high.
- Students have good opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills in a range of subjects. This effective teaching is supporting good development of students' literacy and numeracy skills and supporting their achievement.
- The school has successfully tackled previous weaknesses in students' achievement in English. This includes strengthening the leadership of the subject, improving the teaching of reading, promoting literacy across the school and increasing the consistently good quality of English teaching. The proportion of students making good progress has risen strongly in English and is now above national averages. Whole-school strategies for improving literacy have been successful.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. The use of high-quality resources stimulates discussion and allows the students to build effectively on their prior understanding. Detailed annotation of students' work and frequent reference to assessment objectives contribute to students making good progress.
- The quality of marking and feedback varies. In the best lessons oral feedback is frequently well targeted and effective, as is the quality of written feedback. However, this varies at times across subjects and between teachers. Consequently, students are not always clear about how they can improve their work.
- The learning support assistants are well managed, effectively skilled and support students successfully. In most lessons they make a good contribution to students' learning.

The achievement of pupils**is good**

- There has been a steady improvement in standards at Key stage 4. The GCSE examination results in 2014 showed an increase in the proportion of students gaining five A* to C grade passes, including English and mathematics (which is now above the national average). The proportion of students that make expected progress in English and mathematics has also risen and is now above national averages in both subjects.
- Students enter the school with attainment broadly in line with national averages. In 2014 attainment for the vast majority of subjects improved to being above, and in some cases well above, national averages.
- Good teaching in most subjects, especially English and mathematics, is helping students to make good progress. The school's current assessments indicate that attainment in 2015 will be higher than in 2014, thus continuing the recent improvements.
- The number of students that exceed expected progress in mathematics and English is in line with or above national averages. This is linked to the performance of the most able students, who are now making good progress.
- In the past there has been a gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and their peers and between their achievement and all students nationally. In 2014 this gap was one and a third grades within the school but the school's assessment indicates that this has narrowed to one grade. In mathematics the gap was nearly one and a half grades, but is now on track to narrow to one grade. The progress of disadvantaged students in Key Stages 3 and 4 in English and mathematics is good and continuing to improve.
- Achievement in the sixth form has improved steadily. The number of students achieving A* to B and A* to E grades is increasing and school information indicates that these increases will continue into 2015.
- The school does not enter any students early for examinations.
- The most able students benefit from consistently good teaching. Their progress is in line with that of their peers, but the school is continuing to develop opportunities to extend and deepen their understanding to ensure that more of them attain A* and A grades at GCSE.
- Those students studying at off-site provision make good progress in their studies.
- Throughout the school, disabled students and those with special educational needs are now achieving as well as others. They have made rapid progress over the past year as a result of improved leadership and better training for teaching staff and teaching assistants. The needs of these students are fully met. This is a good indication of the school's commitment to equality of opportunity for all.
- Year 7 catch-up funding (government funding for those entering secondary school with below-average standards in English and mathematics) is allocated successfully to help students to improve their literacy and mathematical skills.

The sixth form provision**is good**

- The sixth form provision is good. It is well led and managed and leaders have a clear and accurate picture of the strengths and areas for development
- Students enter the sixth form with prior attainment below the national average. As a result of good teaching across a range of subjects, they now make good progress.
- In many lessons, students make decisions and take responsibility for their own learning, which leads to greater understanding, and enhanced achievement.
- The curriculum is varied and well matched to the needs of students. This includes the introduction of level 1 courses and those designed for young people with high special educational needs. This is allowing more students to continue onto appropriate post 16 education.
- Students receive effective guidance before joining the sixth form. As a result, students choose appropriate courses and the number staying on to Year 13 is improving quickly.
- Those students that do not gain a grade C or better in English and or mathematics at key stage 4 are well supported and most now make good progress to gain these or equivalent qualifications.
- Students benefit from a comprehensive range of non-qualification activities. For example students have opportunities to support younger students in the school with their learning, take part in sport or develop their creative skills through performing arts enrichment.
- There is effective support in place for students, including high quality advice and guidance provided to help them achieve their next steps in education. For example those students planning to apply to Oxbridge

access an application support programme run by a local grammar school.

- Behaviour in the sixth form is exemplary. Students have highly developed attitudes to learning which enable them to effectively lead their own learning during times when they have private study. The quality of the relationships between staff and students fuels the process of learning by allowing learning to take place at a deeper level. Students feel comfortable about debating and discussing issues openly, which leads to faster progress.
- Attendance rates in the sixth form are high. Students feel safe and well supported by the school.

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	109278
Local authority	City of Bristol
Inspection number	453845

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,200
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger White
Headteacher	Tessa Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	May 2013
Telephone number	0117 3772777
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