

Maiden Beech Academy

Lyme Road, Crewkerne, TA18 8HG

Inspection dates 18–19 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- While the academy's overall effectiveness remains as it was at the previous inspection, there have been undoubted improvements. Weaknesses identified at that time have been rectified and there is greater consistency in the good quality teaching.
- Students achieve well in almost all subjects of the curriculum. The proportions making good or better progress, especially in reading and mathematics, exceed comparable averages in other schools.
- Teaching is good in all subjects. Work is challenging and generally meets the needs of all groups of students in the class. Teachers show students how to improve their work.
- Students behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite to adults and each other. Bullying is infrequent and students say that it is dealt with effectively.
- Students feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet or taking part in outdoor activities.
- The curriculum prepares students well for life in modern Britain. They are excited by the many additional and outdoor activities available. Students develop a good level of understanding of aspects such as working in teams or having an understanding of democratic values.
- The governors have a good understanding of their role. They challenge senior leaders to bring about improvements. As a result, those areas identified as in need of improvement at the previous inspection, concerning teaching and students' perceptions of bullying, have been successfully tackled.
- Led by the headteacher, staff have created a calm atmosphere where learning can thrive. This is due to their high expectations of students' behaviour and application to learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Some students who start at the school with underdeveloped skills, especially in writing, do not make the progress needed to catch up. This is because some staff involved in teaching them do not use the full range of successful approaches to this work.
- As senior leaders recognise, too little teaching has outstanding features that generate great enthusiasm and rapid, lively learning among students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 26 lessons. Several of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised the written and other work of groups of students, notably in English, in order to determine their progress over a period of time.
- Inspectors reviewed documents, including those relating to students' attainment and progress, behaviour and safeguarding. They also analysed information supplied by the academy concerning the attainment and progress of current and past students.
- Meetings were held with staff, students and members of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with a consultant employed by the local authority.
- The views of 83 parents and carers who submitted them on the Ofsted, online Parent View survey were analysed and taken into account. The views of 40 staff who completed a questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Paul Sadler, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Justine Hocking	Additional Inspector
Mark Thompson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy educates students in Years 5 to 8. It is designated as a secondary school and, as such, is very much smaller than the average-size secondary school.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs is below average. Most of these students have moderate learning or behavioural difficulties.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for children who are looked after) is below average.
- The academy does not use any alternative provision.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher is leaving the school in July 2015, having been appointed as one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The governors have appointed the current deputy headteacher as acting headteacher for the autumn of 2015.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the achievement of lower-attaining students, especially in writing, by:
 - quickly correcting any weaknesses in their skills that exist when they start at the school in Year 5 and increasing opportunities for these students to write at length
 - ensuring that staff are trained in the range of approaches that have proved successful in tackling weaknesses in students' writing.
- Ensure that students experience more outstanding classroom teaching by:
 - increasing the use of tasks that motivate students to learn quickly
 - ensuring that students respond to teachers' feedback so that they have a better understanding of how to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders have successfully created a climate where students behave very well. As a result, they apply themselves to their work and make good progress. The equally good achievement of boys and girls, and of students from different backgrounds, shows senior leaders' commitment to equality of opportunity and to fostering good relationships.
- Weaknesses identified at the previous inspection have been rectified. Inconsistencies in teaching concerning the degree of challenge for students have largely been eliminated. Pupils' confidence that bullying will be tackled has also improved, showing that the school tackles potential discrimination.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's current strengths and weaknesses. They have good plans to tackle the latter. For example, they recognise correctly that while almost all teaching is good, there is too little that is outstanding.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school. Students study a wide range of subjects from Year 5, including for example French, and take part in a wide range of competitive sports. Students were also excited by their forthcoming production of *Alice in Wonderland*, showing their interest in the creative arts. They learn respect for different beliefs and traditions, and basic skills such as reading and mathematics are well developed. Students have a developing understanding of British values, for example through a 'democracy day' they experienced at the time of the recent general election. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Teachers' performance is managed effectively. Checks on its quality are frequent and accurate. Senior leaders regularly discuss their performance with individual teachers, who are provided with appropriate training to improve their practice. Teachers who teach students who lack basic skills, especially in writing, lack sufficient training concerning the range of approaches they can use in their work.
- Subject leadership is of good quality, as is shown by the consistently good teaching and student achievement found in each subject. Slow progress is generally spotted quickly and action taken to put things right is usually effective.
- Additional funding is used well to ensure that disadvantaged pupils catch up with others. This work is most successful in reading and mathematics. The primary school sports funding is also used effectively. All pupils in Years 5 and 6 take part in physical activity and have a growing understanding of how to lead a healthy life.
- Arrangements to safeguard students meet requirements and are effective. Required checks on adults are carried out in a timely manner. The police were asked to advise on the security of the premises and grounds, and action was taken on their recommendations.
- School leaders choose to purchase much of their external guidance from the local authority. As a result, the academy continues to work closely with other schools in the authority's area. This has contributed, for example, to a smoother transition process when students move on to their next school. Students receive good guidance on the next stage of their education. They are well-prepared for life in their next school.
- Parents rightly have increasing confidence in the school. Some feel they are not given sufficient information about their child's progress. Inspectors found no evidence to support this concern, but the school leaders are rightly going to investigate this further.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a very good understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. They challenge senior leaders to make improvements to the quality of teaching. They have a good understanding of how students' achievement relates to that in other schools at the end of Year 6. They have a reasonable understanding of achievement at the end of Year 8, where national comparisons are not available.
 - Governors know about the overall quality of teaching in the school through regular reports from the headteacher and of how good performance is rewarded. They know of the action taken to rectify weaknesses in teaching.
 - Governors meet their statutory responsibilities such as to keep students safe. They are aware of the impact of additional funding on improving the achievement of disadvantaged students and take appropriate steps to make this even more effective.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons they follow adults' instructions and work hard. They play well together and especially enjoy outdoor activities.
- Students respect the school, staff and other students. The large site is completely free of litter or graffiti. Students are rightly proud of the many displays of their best work in classrooms and corridors.
- Students say there is little bullying and this is confirmed by the academy's records. They are now confident that staff will tackle bullying fairly and effectively, which was not the case at the time of the last inspection.
- Students' behaviour when learning outside is especially good. They enjoy the many such activities and are aware that, when outside the gates, they represent the school. They respond with enthusiasm when learning, for example, athletics skills. Behaviour is not outstanding as there are too few lessons where this enthusiasm for learning is evident inside the classroom.
- Attendance is well above average as students are keen to come to school. They are punctual to lessons and bring the right equipment. Exclusion happens rarely and when it does, those involved are supported well.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Risk assessments are thorough and ensure that the many outdoor activities are safe.
- Arrangements for safeguarding and child protection meet requirements. There are good links with other agencies that contribute well to students' safety in and out of school. Examples include the police and agencies that work with the families of persistent absentees, or who provide for excluded students.
- Training of staff in child protection arrangements is adequate, but insufficient priority is given to updating staff when requirements change.
- Students have a good understanding of how to stay safe when using electronic media. They understand the range and causes of different types of bullying and are keen to tackle any they encounter.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good in all subjects and students come to each lesson ready to learn. Teachers have appropriately high expectations of what students can achieve, They plan suitable work for each group of students. Both these aspects of teaching have improved since the previous inspection.
- Teachers are effective in managing students' behaviour. The straightforward policies for behaviour are applied consistently, so students feel they are fairly treated and know what to expect. Again, this is an improvement since the previous inspection.
- Teachers provide good quality written and oral feedback to students which helps them to improve their work. As senior leaders recognise, there are insufficient checks made on students' responses to this guidance.
- In most respects, reading and writing are taught well. Students are encouraged to read widely. For example, Year 8 students have recently studied both *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Lorna Doone* in their English lessons. In all subjects, teachers plan to develop students' reading and writing skills, for example by teaching them the appropriate technical language for the subject.
- Students who start in Year 5 with weak skills in reading and, especially, writing make slower progress. This is because some teachers do not use the range of approaches that might help these students to learn more quickly.
- Students are taught well to use their mathematical knowledge to solve problems, such as when Year 7 students were weighing and measuring ingredients for their vegetable soup.
- Senior leaders are aware that too many lessons, especially those that take place in classrooms, fail to generate great enthusiasm in students. They recognise that this is why teaching is not outstanding.
- When students learn outdoors or on educational visits, this enthusiasm is much more in evidence. For example, the Year 8 work on *Lorna Doone* included a visit to Exmoor, which resulted in some excellent writing by students.
- Additional adults provide students with useful support. Senior leaders recognise that some of these adults are not always fully involved in lessons.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students currently in Year 7 made good progress in Years 5 and 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. Their progress since the start of Year 3 was greater than the average for pupils in primary schools nationally.
- However, this is very much a partial picture of progress in the academy, where students continue until the end of Year 8. School leaders have developed useful tools to analyse attainment and progress across the school and have started to share these with other similar schools. This information indicates that students attain highly and make very good progress in reading and mathematics. In writing, especially among students who started in Year 5 with weak skills, attainment and progress are less strong.
- Scrutiny of student's work and discussions with students and staff show that, in other subjects, students make good progress and attain standards that are at least in line with those expected of students of a similar age. Particularly good achievement was noted in science, French, history, geography, art and physical education.
- Published information on the progress of disadvantaged students relates to their progress in Years 3 to 6. For Year 6 in 2014, this group's attainment in mathematics and writing was about half a school year behind that of other pupils nationally. In reading, this gap was less than one term. Gaps in performance compared with other students in the school were slightly larger, but all pupils had made similarly good progress from their starting points in all three aspects.
- The school's own information examines these gaps at the end of Year 8. This shows that the performance of disadvantaged students continues to converge with that of others in reading and mathematics, but is less good in writing. School leaders have recognised this and are taking action to rectify the position.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress in reading, mathematics and other subjects. Again, their progress in writing is slower because a number of these students arrived in Year 5 with weak writing skills that had not been corrected fully.
- The most able students achieve well. A range of work of very good quality was seen in English in Year 8 where, for example, students had exchanged letters with Texan students of similar age. Overheard conversations showed that students have a wide vocabulary. For example, a discussion in Year 7 food technology included the possible use of the word 'tantalising' to describe a dish. Many enjoy French, history and geography and are keen to study these subjects to GCSE.
- Students achieve well in physical education, especially in the case of students in Years 5 and 6, because of effective use of the primary school sports grant. All take part, and many enjoy additional activities, such as team sports including football and netball. Students know the importance of eating healthily and abstaining from substance abuse.

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	137118
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	461960

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	380
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lee Gilman
Headteacher	Stephen Smith
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 May 2012
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