

Belmont Community School

Buckinghamshire Road, Belmont, Durham, County Durham DH1 2QP

Inspection dates

18–19 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils have declined since the school was last inspected. Pupils have made significantly less progress than seen nationally in a broad range of subjects. The most recent examination results indicate some improvement, but this is not consistent across the curriculum.
- Until recently, teachers were not held to account for the progress made by their classes.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable to promote consistently good progress. Too many lessons fail to challenge the most able pupils sufficiently.
- Not all teachers ensure that their marking and feedback leads to improvements in pupils' work, as required by the school's marking policy.
- The pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up premium have not been used well enough. As a result, outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have been well below those of other pupils nationally. Pupils who enter the school with low levels of attainment in literacy and mathematics do not receive help quickly enough.
- Governors have provided insufficient scrutiny and challenge to prevent a decline in outcomes.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, since his arrival in September 2015, has raised expectations and improved many aspects of the school's performance. He, together with a now strengthened leadership team, has an honest and accurate picture of what needs to improve.
- Leaders now manage the performance of teachers rigorously. As a result, some aspects of teaching have begun to improve.
- Outcomes in English and mathematics are rising rapidly and new schemes of work at key stage 3 are providing current pupils with more challenge.
- Pupils behave well and take pride in the presentation of their work.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those pupils that attend the additional resource for hearing and visual impairment, is good.
- The school's revised curriculum provides well for pupils' personal development and welfare. It prepares them effectively for life in modern Britain.
- Attendance is rising and far fewer pupils are now regularly absent from school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, so that it consistently enables pupils to make good progress from their starting points, by ensuring that:
 - teachers are skilled in using assessment information to plan work which enables all pupils, especially the most able, to make good progress
 - teachers are skilled in the use of questioning to probe pupils' knowledge and extend their understanding
 - marking and feedback lead to consistent improvement, in line with the best practice in the school and the requirements of the school's marking policy.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - clear guidance and training is provided for teachers to help them develop their teaching to ensure pupils make at least good progress
 - the skills of middle leaders are developed so that they drive improvements in the quality of teaching and learning more rapidly
 - the pupil premium and Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium are used well to support the more rapid progress of eligible pupils
 - spirituality is promoted as effectively as pupils' social, moral and cultural development.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Over time, leaders and managers did not do enough to prevent outcomes and the quality of teaching from declining. This was because leaders and governors failed to hold teachers to account for the progress of pupils and did not provide a suitable curriculum to meet pupils' needs.
- The current headteacher, in post since September 2015, has begun to reverse the decline. He has raised expectations, introduced a framework to hold teachers effectively to account and re-shaped the curriculum. Provisional examination results for 2016 indicate that outcomes have begun to improve, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher is well regarded by parents, staff and pupils. One parent told inspectors, 'Since the new headteacher started at the school, positive changes have taken place'. Another commented, 'I have seen a huge improvement in the calibre of the staff'.
- Senior leaders now have an accurate and realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are realistic about the challenges they face and have well-considered plans in place to further improve the school. Leaders now check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment more assiduously and manage the performance of teachers more tightly. As a result, there has been some turnover in staffing with a relatively high number of teachers joining the school in September 2016.
- The governing body has taken steps to strengthen the leadership team and new leaders have begun to undertake their roles effectively. The recent improvements in a number of areas, coupled with effective ongoing support and challenge from the local authority, demonstrate good capacity for sustained improvement.
- A more aspirational curriculum with a greater academic emphasis has been introduced. In order to raise standards in core subjects, increased time has been allocated to English and mathematics and lower-attaining pupils in key stage 3 receive an additional literacy lesson each week. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of these recent changes.
- The curriculum is well placed to support pupils' personal development and welfare. Ethics lessons cover a range of topics that promote an understanding of the law, democracy and how to stay safe. These, together with a well-planned assembly programme and wide-ranging extra-curricular opportunities, ensure that pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. The school promotes pupils' social, moral and cultural development effectively, although provision for their spiritual development is weaker.
- Over time, middle leaders, such as heads of subjects, have not ensured that the quality of teaching has been good enough within their areas of responsibility. Senior leaders and representatives of the local authority are working with middle leaders to enhance this aspect of their role. However, there is more to do to ensure that these leaders are effective in leading the teaching and learning in their areas of work.

- Although staff speak enthusiastically about the training they receive, the leadership of teaching has not, until recently, been effective. Leaders now provide better feedback and guidance, which has begun to improve the quality of teaching in some departments.
- Leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to inclusion and equal opportunities. Pupils who attend the specialist provision are fully integrated into mainstream lessons and benefit from the obvious support of their fellow pupils. The previously high level of exclusions from the school has been substantially reduced and the effective use of restorative practices is ensuring that poor behaviour is now rare.
- Leaders have not made sufficiently effective use of the additional funding provided for disadvantaged pupils, as their outcomes have been well below those of other pupils nationally. Governors are not clear enough on how the funding has been used or the difference it has made. The new leadership team has a clearer understanding of what needs to be done and are in the process of preparing a new strategy. In addition, the school is too slow to provide additional teaching for Year 7 pupils who are eligible for additional support through the literacy and numeracy catch-up premium.

Governance of the school

- In the past, governors did not provide sufficient challenge and were unable to prevent a decline in outcomes. Following a review of governance by the local authority, they have taken steps to improve their effectiveness. With the appointment of the current headteacher, they have established an honest and open working relationship which is allowing them to challenge more effectively.
- Governors have quickened the pace of improvement. They have provided the headteacher with good support to manage teachers' performance more rigorously, improve pupils' behaviour and revise the curriculum. They recognise that the pace of improvement needs to be sustained.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher has ensured that safeguarding of pupils is the responsibility of every member of staff. Everyone understands their role in keeping pupils safe and knows what actions to take if they have a concern. New members of staff told inspectors that their induction to the school had strongly emphasised the need for continuous vigilance. All policies relating to safety are up to date and well understood. Safeguarding leaders have worked well with parents and followed up doggedly where they have made referrals to external agencies to ensure swift resolutions.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because it is too variable across the school and has not delivered consistently good rates of progress over time.
- Where pupils make less progress, teachers do not make enough use of information they have on pupils' starting points to inform their planning. Too often inspectors observed pupils of differing abilities being provided with the same tasks. Consequently,

some pupils struggle to complete the work while others are not stretched and achieve less than they should.

- Some teachers are not sufficiently probing with their questioning and settle for short, underdeveloped responses from pupils too readily. This restricts the quality of discussion and debate and prevents pupils' thinking from being more fully extended.
- Where teachers make better use of assessment information to plan lessons, pupils are well motivated and engaged by more challenging topics that are better suited to their abilities. For example, in Year 7 English lessons, enthusiastic volunteers read aloud passages from classic texts and explored the impact of new and challenging vocabulary on the reader.
- Inspectors found that most teachers mark pupils' work regularly. However, the impact of marking is limited because only some departments have established effective systems to ensure that pupils improve their work in response to the teachers' comments. This is an expectation of the school's marking policy.
- Although some pupils lack confidence to contribute in lessons, a large majority take pride in their work and the quality of presentation in most books is good. Almost all books sampled by inspectors were neat and tidy, and there were few examples of unfinished work.
- Most subjects ensure that pupils know their targets, which are recorded in their books, although not all pupils are clear from the feedback they receive whether they are on course to achieve their target.
- In most subjects, suitable homework is set in line with the school's policy and the school expects pupils to read at home regularly. The library is very busy, as many pupils choose to read for pleasure at social times.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The curriculum provides a range of opportunities for pupils to develop a good understanding of how to stay safe and foster healthy lifestyles. The ethics programme delivered to pupils in all year groups covers topics such as human rights, equalities, sex education, enterprise activities and e-safety. A high proportion of pupils take part in extra-curricular activities which contribute effectively to their sporting and artistic development. For example, a group of pupils are currently in training for a five-kilometre run to raise funds for charity. There is an extensive programme of foreign trips and a strong Duke of Edinburgh Award programme.
- Pupils are respectful of one another and very supportive of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Bullying is rare and most pupils feel it is dealt with quickly when it does occur. Leaders track incidents of bullying carefully and respond promptly when they identify patterns. For example, leaders delivered a full day of learning on racism last year, in response to a small number of recorded incidents. Since then, no further racist incidents have occurred.

- The school has a strong programme of careers guidance. Good links are in place with other local sixth forms, Durham College and the university. All pupils in key stage 4 receive independent impartial advice and there are regular trips to local careers fairs. A programme delivered by business leaders is used to promote entrepreneurship. The proportion of pupils progressing to further education, employment or training after Year 11 is above the national average.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The behaviour policy, introduced last January, has been received positively by pupils and improved the climate for learning across the school. The number of exclusions for poor behaviour has fallen sharply. The small number of pupils that misbehave are managed effectively in school through the use of restorative practices.
- Pupils conduct themselves well, both in lessons and at social times. Inspectors saw no examples of disruption to learning through poor behaviour. Pupils move calmly around the well-supervised site, wear the correct uniform and rarely drop litter. Relationships between pupils and staff are typically warm and friendly.
- Overall attendance is improving, although it is still slightly below the national average for secondary schools. Much of this improvement is the result of well-targeted work by attendance leaders who have significantly reduced the proportion of pupils that are regularly absent. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved markedly over the last year. Good parental involvement, coupled with well-coordinated support from external agencies, means that the level of regular absence is now below the local authority's target for the school.
- Leaders are phasing out the use of alternative providers, as not all pupils engaged well enough with their courses in the past. Currently, only a small number of pupils attend a small range of alternative provision. Providers are rigorously checked by leaders to ensure that attendance is high and pupils' personal development needs are met.

Outcomes for pupils

Require improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because rates of progress and levels of attainment have declined noticeably since the school was last inspected. In 2015, pupils made significantly less progress across a broad range of subjects than was seen nationally. Provisional examination results for 2016 indicate some improvement, particularly in English and mathematics, but progress rates remained weaker in a number of other subjects.
- The progress made by pupils currently in the school is inconsistent because the quality of teaching is too variable. In key stage 4, progress is strongest in English and mathematics, but weaker in humanities and science. New, more challenging schemes of work at key stage 3 are beginning to accelerate the progress of younger pupils in a number of subjects.
- Over time, outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have fluctuated. They were disappointing in 2015, when disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment was significantly below that of other pupils nationally. More recently, leaders have tracked the progress of disadvantaged pupils rigorously and have proactively provided

additional support. As a result, their outcomes improved in 2016, particularly in English where their attainment was above that of their peers in school.

- The provision for pupils that enter the school needing to catch up in English or mathematics has not been effective enough. The new curriculum introduced in September 2016 has begun to meet their needs more effectively. However, too much time this term has been lost assessing pupils' needs rather than providing the additional teaching they require.
- The current school improvement plan has prioritised the need to improve outcomes for the most able pupils. This is because teaching does not do enough to challenge and stretch them. Too often teaching does not take enough account of what these pupils already know and can do, or provide enough opportunities for them to deepen and extend their learning.
- Pupils who have special education needs and/or disabilities receive effective support and make good progress from their starting points.
- Outcomes for pupils that attend alternative provision have been mixed in the past. The small number of pupils that currently attend these providers are making good progress.

School details

Unique reference number	114308
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10019369

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	767
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Harriet Pritchard
Headteacher	Paul Marsden
Telephone number	01913 865 715
Website	http://www.belmontschool.org.uk/
Email address	school@belmontschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 November 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Belmont Community School is smaller than the average secondary school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or with an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The school hosts a local authority run specialist provision catering for 18 pupils with

visual or hearing impairment. All pupils fully access mainstream lessons across the full curriculum.

- The school currently has four pupils attending alternative provision. The alternative providers used are the Delta Independent School, Pinnacle and the Woodlands.
- The school meets the government's current floor targets, which are the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress at key stage 4.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2015. A number of new senior and middle leaders, and around a quarter of the teaching staff, joined the school in September 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons across all year groups, including a number of observations undertaken jointly with senior leaders. During these observations, inspectors sampled pupils' books and talked to pupils in order to evaluate the quality of their current work. In addition, inspectors scrutinised in detail a sample of work from pupils in both key stages 3 and 4.
- Inspectors also observed the general climate around the school at social times.
- Inspectors visited the additional resource provision for pupils with hearing and visual impairment.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, a group of teachers and middle leaders and groups of pupils from key stages 3 and 4. Further meetings were held with the chair of governors and six other members of the governing body as well as a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, policies, assessment information and records of checks on the quality of teaching. Inspectors looked at minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors took account of the 68 responses to the online survey, Parent View, 54 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 102 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Chris Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jen Cave	Ofsted Inspector
John Leigh	Ofsted Inspector
Dawn Farrent	Ofsted Inspector
Sir John Townsley	Ofsted Inspector

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