

Poole High School

Wimborne Road, Poole, Dorset BH15 2BW

Inspection dates

23–24 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is a rapidly improving school. The new headteacher has introduced a sharp, systematic and effective focus on raising the quality of teaching and learning.
- Senior leaders strongly support the headteacher's vision. They challenge all staff to expect more of themselves and their pupils. Consequently, standards across the school have risen since the previous inspection.
- The proportion of pupils who attained GCSE grade C or above in both English and mathematics was above average in 2016.
- Pupils, and in particular those who are disadvantaged, make strong progress in mathematics as a result of very effective teaching in this subject.
- Teachers use questioning well to encourage pupils to use higher-order thinking skills. This enables pupils to deepen their understanding.
- Recently appointed middle leaders, for example in science, history and literacy, have brought fresh, effective approaches to ensure that pupils across all year groups make better progress.
- Teachers in some departments have been slow to make improvements to their practice and so pupils do not make the same rapid progress in these subjects.
- Teachers know the pupils very well and are adept at providing for their welfare. Pupils of all backgrounds feel welcomed and included. The school's work to keep pupils safe is of a very high standard.
- Staff have been successful in increasing pupils' attendance, which is now in line with the national average.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is generally good. However, although rare, there is some minor disruption in lessons where pupils do not find the work interesting.
- Strong leadership of the sixth form has caused the quality of teaching on 16 to 19 study programmes to improve. The progress of students in Years 12 and 13 is now good.
- Careers guidance is effective in the sixth form. However, leaders have not ensured that pupils receive consistently high-quality advice in Years 7 to 11.
- The governing body has changed considerably since the previous inspection. Governors now have a better understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Governors and senior leaders communicate well. The good level of trust that exists allows governors to question and challenge senior leaders effectively.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise the achievement of pupils by making sure that teachers consistently:
 - adopt strategies that help pupils learn well
 - provide work for pupils which motivates them and holds their attention.
- Provide a cohesive and effective careers education and guidance strategy to prepare pupils for informed choices about their next steps at age 16.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has high aspirations for each and every pupil. He communicates them very clearly to all staff so that they are in no doubt about the standards expected of them, particularly those in positions of leadership. Since his arrival, just over a year ago, he has introduced an effective framework for assessing the quality of teachers' work. This has raised expectations throughout the school and quickly improved the quality of teaching so that it is now good.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership for the senior team. They are clear about their roles and support him enthusiastically in his determined efforts to make this 'a world-class school'. Senior leaders operate as an effective team and so are able to convey a persuasive vision of high aspiration to the whole staff.
- Leaders and governors are accurate in their evaluation of the school's performance and reflect critically on their work. Hence, plans for improvement are realistic and effective. Leaders share an urgency about their work. For example, a new role was quickly created which has added impetus to the school's efforts to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Pupil premium funding is targeted very well and these pupils now make the same progress as other pupils nationally.
- Several new middle leaders have been appointed and changes have been made to leadership responsibilities, particularly in the pastoral teams. As a result, middle leaders are enthusiastic and increasingly effective at bringing about improvement in their areas. However, there is still scope for further improvement in some subjects.
- Senior leaders make effective checks on the quality of teaching through a rigorous performance management system. This enables leaders to provide robust challenge where teaching is not good enough. Teachers are offered high-quality training to improve their skills. Consequently, teachers are well motivated because they are not only held accountable for their performance, but also well supported. Newly qualified teachers develop their practice quickly because they receive a full and appropriate induction programme.
- Lead practitioners are used effectively to share good practice in literacy teaching. This is leading to better-quality writing across the school.
- Leaders and managers at all levels have worked together successfully since the previous inspection to improve rates of pupils' attendance and reduce incidences of poor behaviour. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has fallen but leaders recognise that more needs to be done to reduce it further.
- Senior leaders keep the curriculum under review and ensure that pupils study for a wide range of appropriate qualifications. They alter the structure of the curriculum and options available to pupils according to each cohort, which ensures that pupils' needs and aspirations are met well.
- Pupils have many opportunities to benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities that include charitable work in the local community and a connection with an Islamic School in London. These opportunities help to broaden pupils' horizons and build their confidence.
- British values are promoted strongly through activities in the curriculum, tutor periods and assemblies. School leaders' ambition for pupils to be 'valued, inspired and

empowered' is widely understood by the school community. Pupils are accepting of each other and tolerant of differences. Consequently, they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

- The school puts the principles of equality, dignity and respect at the heart of its work. This contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is promoted very well.
- Senior leaders ensure that extra funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is coordinated by a strategy team that ensures it is used well. Funding to help Year 7 pupils catch up with their basic skills is also being used effectively.
- Parents who responded to the Parent View survey indicated a high level of satisfaction with the quality of education the school provides. The vast majority would recommend this school to other parents.

Governance of the school

- A new chair of the governing body has taken over since the previous inspection. Governors now have far greater clarity in their roles, which they fulfil effectively. They understand their key functions of setting strategy and providing challenge to senior leaders.
- The relationship between the new headteacher and the new chair of the governing body is characterised by trust and openness. This has resulted in good communication between governors and senior leaders and encouraged tough questioning.
- Link governors hold discussions with senior and middle leaders regularly and provide consistent challenge. As a result, governors now understand the school's strengths and weaknesses accurately.
- Governors make effective checks on the school's use of pupil premium funding to raise the progress of disadvantaged pupils. They oversee the school's performance management arrangements well.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Exemplary systems are in place to safeguard pupils. Governors and staff are highly trained and receive frequent updates. This results in a deep understanding of a range of safeguarding issues and a high level of vigilance across the school. Some pupils are given responsibility by the school for promoting positive messages to their peers about how to keep themselves safe. This involvement makes a good contribution to the very strong safeguarding culture.
- The school's philosophy is outward looking. Very clear and effective lines of referral exist with appropriate agencies. Senior leaders share their expertise well by operating as a centre to provide training for other local schools.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is good overall. Teaching is particularly strong in mathematics and because of this, pupils make strong gains in their knowledge across all years. Teaching has improved rapidly in English, history and science. Inconsistencies in teaching still exist over a range of subjects and within some, particularly in religious education.

- Teachers' expectations are high and they are skilful in helping pupils develop new skills. Consequently, pupils make good progress.
- Teachers have a deep understanding of their subjects. Their planning focuses on the key issues in each topic. They are able to think on their feet and adapt their teaching well when pupils are struggling to understand. As a result, pupils overcome difficulties and learn challenging concepts quickly.
- Teachers work together well to improve their skills. This year they have focused on questioning so that they consistently ask probing questions which encourage pupils to think deeply and extend their knowledge.
- The most able pupils are well catered for with challenges that help them make strong progress towards ambitious targets. Pupils who are most able and disadvantaged receive significant additional support and this helps them to overcome any barriers to their progress.
- Pupils show positive attitudes. They generally have good relationships with their teachers and enjoy being challenged. In a few cases, where the teaching is not as effective and pupils do not value the subject highly, these relationships are not as strong.
- Pupils receive thoughtful and constructive written feedback about their work in line with the school's policy and they respond by diligently improving their work. Teachers are also adept at providing verbal feedback. For example, in A-level information and communication technology, the teacher skilfully teases out how students might improve their projects.
- Many parents say that their child is treated as an individual. Inspectors agree; teachers know their pupils well and respond to their unique strengths and weaknesses. As a result, pupils feel encouraged and supported.
- Teachers use homework effectively to reinforce pupils' learning and give them time to practise skills. Sometimes pupils are asked to set the stage for the next lesson by preparing the topic at home. In A-level sociology, for example, students feel this helps them develop their skills and prepare for university.
- Pupils' literacy skills are improving. School leaders place emphasis on improving writing skills and pupils are responding well to the challenge. Pupils are regularly asked to produce long, in-depth pieces of writing in a number of subjects. In history, for example, pupils in every year group practise writing extended GCSE-style answers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils express their opinions with confidence. The majority speak about their school with great pride. They value their books and equipment. Consequently, pupils have good-quality resources to use in lessons.
- Pupils arrive on time at school and are punctual for their lessons, even though they have to move around a very large site. This means that little lesson time is wasted.
- Senior leaders involve pupils in efforts to prevent bullying, for example by giving them responsibilities as safeguarding representatives. These efforts, alongside other school strategies, have been successful and pupils say that incidents of bullying are now rare.

Records kept by the school support this and show that incidents of racist, homophobic or other types of bullying have greatly reduced over the last two years.

- Teachers are swift to deal with the use of derogatory language and this contributes to an inclusive culture at the school. Pupils accept differences readily. For example, a 'rainbow club' for pupils from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community has recently developed.
- Pupils from all years know how to manage risks associated with extremism and radicalisation. As a result of assemblies, tutorials and lessons, pupils are confident about keeping themselves safe in a range of situations including when using the internet and mobile technology.
- A large majority of parents who replied to the Parent View survey agreed that the school looks after pupils well and keeps them safe.
- Students in the sixth form are clear about their future options because they receive a comprehensive range of advice as part of their 16 to 19 study programmes. However, this receives less emphasis in the main school. Pupils take part in a range of activities related to careers education but they are not clear where they can go to get more advice. As a result, some pupils in the main school are not informed well about all of the post-16 options open to them, such as apprenticeships.
- Senior leaders give pupils responsibility in many aspects of school life. Pupils run the school parliament and they are involved in running the large, successful breakfast club. This ensures that pupils have a good understanding of the importance of being responsible citizens when they leave school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils move around the site calmly and with good humour. They are generally courteous to each other, resulting in good relationships and a positive atmosphere.
- Most pupils are respectful of their teachers and their peers. They are prepared to listen to each other's views in lessons so that learning is able to proceed briskly.
- Improved teaching and greater success in reintegrating pupils who find good conduct more difficult have resulted in fewer incidents of poor behaviour. The new inclusion unit in school has made a strong contribution to this. The rate of exclusions for fixed periods, which was previously high, has declined in the last year, as has the rate of permanent exclusions.
- In some subject areas where the teaching has not improved as quickly, a minority of pupils do not value lessons as much as they should. As a result, there is some minor disruption which hinders the progress pupils make.
- Attendance rates, which two years ago were well below average, have been improving as a result of a concerted effort by senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers and a newly appointed pastoral lead practitioner. The rate of attendance of the pupils currently in school has risen to the national average.
- The school's efforts to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent are having some success. The number of these pupils is falling but it is still too high.
- A small number of pupils with emotional or health needs attend off-site provision at The Quay School. Senior leaders make sure that these pupils are kept safe and behave well. Pupils who attend part-time courses at Bournemouth and Poole College are also checked to ensure they are in a safe environment and behave well.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes for pupils have improved and are now good. The school achieved its best ever GCSE examination results in 2016. GCSE mathematics is a particular strength. Pupils make significantly better progress in this subject than is found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve grade C or better in both English and mathematics has risen quickly and is now above the national average. Pupils' overall attainment across eight different GCSE subjects is also above average.
- Pupils make strong progress across a broad range of subjects because of the better teaching they receive. Pupils are responding well to the increased level of challenge that teachers are providing, particularly in English, science and history. Progress in some other subjects, such as religious education, is slower because the quality of teaching has not improved at the same rate.
- Disadvantaged pupils overall make the same progress as other pupils nationally. The performance of this group has improved as a result of effective use of the pupil premium and well-targeted extra support by teachers.
- The most able pupils have not made good progress in the past. The new headteacher acted swiftly to change this by raising teachers' expectations and insisting that pupils are given work which stretches them. As a result, the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are making much better progress. For example, in English lessons, Year 7 pupils are regularly challenged to think deeply about complex ideas.
- Pupils who begin Year 7 with attainment that is lower than average are given effective support. Teachers use the catch-up funding well to focus on helping pupils with their literacy skills. This strategy is paying dividends as pupils in key stage 3 are now reading more fluently and writing more confidently.
- Both the most able and lower-attaining pupils showed great pride when given the chance to read to inspectors. A large, well-stocked library and plentiful opportunities to read at breakfast club and at lunchtime create an environment where reading is encouraged.
- The support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved in the last year because there is better teamwork between teachers and the staff responsible for the welfare of these pupils. These pupils are now receiving effective help and making more progress as a result.
- A small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow part-time vocational courses in catering, construction, engineering and motor vehicle maintenance at The Bournemouth and Poole College. These pupils achieved a very high rate of success last year.
- Pupils who are attending The Quay School make strong progress from their starting points.
- The percentage of pupils who leave Year 11 and do not sustain a job with training or a place in education is marginally above the national average. Recent improvements in attainment at the school mean that more pupils now have the skills necessary to make a success of the next stage in their education. However, some pupils are not fully aware of the career paths that are open to them when they leave.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The leadership and management of the sixth form are now good. Since September 2015 when a new senior leader with responsibility for the sixth form was appointed, there has been a more focused, purposeful approach.
- In 2016 there was a significant increase in the progress made by students on academic and vocational courses, especially the most able students. Consequently, the proportion of A-level results at grade A* to B increased. History, geography and mathematics are particular strengths.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment on 16 to 19 study programmes has improved and is now good. As a result, the difference in performance between boys and girls has diminished considerably and disadvantaged students are making much better progress.
- Senior leaders are ambitious to improve the sixth form further. They monitor the quality of teaching closely and provide good training for teachers to help them develop their skills. Teachers appreciate this and consequently they are highly motivated and enthusiastic.
- Teachers set innovative and creative activities for students to complete at home. These activities assist students' learning when in school. As a result, time is used more effectively and students make rapid progress.
- The vast majority of students who join the sixth form come from the main school. In the past, too many students who joined did not complete their two-year programmes, often because of weaknesses in pre-16 careers guidance that led to some following inappropriate courses. Because senior leaders are now tailoring study programmes for individuals, the retention rate from Year 12 into Year 13 is rising but it is not yet high enough.
- Personal development and employability skills are developed well through a programme of enrichment and work-related activities including work experience.
- Students are given good advice about the higher education application process and this leads many to secure university places in their chosen subjects. They are supported by personalised guidance from their tutor.
- Students understand how to keep themselves safe in many situations because of the comprehensive tutorial programme they experience. Students are confident about using the internet and social media extensively, while at the same time taking steps to protect themselves.
- A small number of students enter the sixth form without attaining a GCSE grade C in English and/or mathematics. Because they are well taught by specialist teachers, the proportion who achieve a grade C when they re-take the examinations in Year 12 is well above average.
- Senior leaders use every opportunity to develop students' leadership skills. Students recognise this and grow in confidence as they involve themselves in many sixth form activities. For example, a recent whole-day activity for Year 12 on the theme of 'forgiveness' was organised and presented by a group of Year 13 students.
- The conduct of sixth form students is good. They are mature, studious and are excellent role models for pupils in the rest of the school.

School details

Unique reference number	113907
Local authority	Poole
Inspection number	10022750

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1853
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	256
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeff Hart
Headteacher	Paul Gray
Telephone number	01202 666 988
Website	http://www.poolehigh.co.uk/
Email address	school@poolehigh.poole.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 June 2015

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new chair of the governing body and several new governors have been appointed. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2015.
- This school is much larger than the average secondary school.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through pupil premium funding is average.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- A small number of pupils attend The Bournemouth and Poole College to follow part-time vocational courses.
- A small number of pupils with emotional or health needs attend off-site provision at The Quay School.
- The school has been supported by a national leader of education through the Jurassic Coast Teaching School Alliance.
- The school offers support to other local schools through the newly formed Sigma Teaching School Alliance.
- The school is involved in the Wessex Schools Training Partnership, which provides initial teacher training.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils in key stage 3, key stage 4 and sixth form students.
- Inspectors observed learning across a range of age groups and subjects and scrutinised samples of pupils' written work. Many of these activities were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including development plans, analysis of pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour logs, safeguarding documents and the school's review of its own performance.
- An inspector listened to a number of key stage 3 pupils of different abilities read.
- Inspectors took account of 173 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View and 75 responses to the pupil questionnaire. In addition, inspectors took account of 143 responses to the staff questionnaire completed online and nine responses completed on paper.

Inspection team

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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