

Blenheim High School

Longmead Road, Epsom, Surrey KT19 9BH

Inspection dates

17–18 January 2017

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	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Some groups of pupils have not made as much progress as they should. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils.
- In 2016, Year 11 pupils did not achieve as well as other pupils nationally in some subjects, including science and modern foreign languages.
- Although leaders check the progress of individuals and groups of pupils, they do not ensure that those who are falling behind consistently catch up.
- Leaders do not rigorously check that their actions to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are bringing about results.
- In several subjects, teaching is not consistently good. There is too much variability across subjects and ability groups. Too little teaching meets the needs of disadvantaged pupils.
- Assessment is not used as well as it could be to help pupils make progress. Some teachers set work that is too easy or too hard. Often, teachers do not check learning in lessons to make sure pupils are working at the right level, understanding and making progress.
- In some lessons, time is not used as well as it could be to support learning. Some teachers talk for too long or repeat tasks, and so pupils do not listen and do not make enough progress.
- Leaders have taken action to reduce absence of specific groups of pupils. However, attendance for these vulnerable groups has not improved.
- Governors have not held leaders or teachers fully to account for the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils say they feel safe and adults ensure that this is the case.
- The sixth form meets learners' needs well. Good-quality provision ensures that these learners achieve good outcomes and are effectively equipped for the next stage of education or for employment.
- Behaviour is good. Almost all pupils behave well in and around school, even when unsupervised.
- Pupils' welfare and personal development are supported very well. The guidance and advice pupils receive, in conjunction with the well-planned curriculum, ensures they are happy and enjoy school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - undertaking an external review of the use of pupil premium funding, so that it leads to improvements in outcomes for the pupils for whom it is allocated
 - implementing rigorous processes for checking that actions to improve the school are bringing about the intended results
 - ensuring that leaders and teachers are held fully to account for the progress and attainment of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged
 - increasing attendance for vulnerable groups, including disadvantaged pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good in all subjects by:
 - making sure that teachers plan activities at the right level, and assess learning in lessons, adapting activities when necessary
 - ensuring that teachers involve pupils in their learning so that they develop better attitudes to their learning.
- Raise progress and attainment for all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, so that:
 - pupils at the school do at least as well as other pupils across the country in all subjects, particularly in science and modern foreign languages
 - disadvantaged pupils across the school catch up with other pupils nationally
 - more of the most able disadvantaged pupils reach the higher levels.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress and attainment are not as good as they should be, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Historically, these pupils have not made enough progress to catch up with other pupils nationally. Although the interim co-headteachers have taken action, it has not brought about the necessary rapid improvements to ensure these pupils reach the same standards as other pupils nationally.
- Leaders do not clearly identify what they are aiming to improve and do not track carefully whether their actions have brought about improvements. They implement changes which appear to be useful and relevant, but they do not rigorously check that the actions are having sufficient impact. As a result, improvements are not consistent or rapid enough.
- The temporary headship arrangement of the two deputy headteachers taking on the shared headteacher role has ensured that the school has continued to provide a safe and happy place for pupils to learn. The two interim co-headteachers work cooperatively, with clearly identified responsibilities, so that day-to-routines and systems have continued to be implemented and further refined. Other leaders have similarly escalated their roles and many have developed enhanced leadership skills during this period of transition. The whole staff team continues to work together to provide excellent personal support for pupils, recognising them as individuals.
- Leaders, including those with responsibility for specific subjects, check teaching and recognise where improvements need to be made. However, systems for providing support to improve weaker teaching are not always effective. This means that some teachers do not teach as well as they need to for pupils to make good progress.
- Progress and attainment information is accurate and leaders set targets for end-of-year progress. However, targets are not always as ambitious as they need to be. For example, in English, some pupils have almost met their end-of-year target after only one term.
- In mathematics, where teaching and outcomes had declined, leaders' actions have led to noticeable improvements in teaching and progress, so that pupils are catching up to where they should be.
- Although leaders monitor the achievement of individuals and of specific groups, such as disadvantaged pupils, they do not always take effective action to improve the progress of pupils who need to catch up. Consequently, these pupils often do not reach the expected standards. Leaders' actions to improve outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have been more successful in bringing about improvements.
- Leaders' actions to improve fixed-term exclusions have resulted in better behaviour and fewer incidents requiring these sanctions. However, actions to improve attendance of specific groups have not resulted in reduced absences for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, providing a range of opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and do well. It is supported by a wide range of additional experiences. Pupils visit other countries to develop their languages, and spend time at universities to encourage them to continue their education. They make a number of

day and residential visits, as well as being able to attend a large range of clubs and activities before and after school.

- British values and personal, social and health education are developed well through assemblies and explicit lessons, as well being woven through other subjects. For example, in an English lesson, pupils considered what an appropriate response to violence might be. Pupils are encouraged to be tolerant of each other and demonstrate respect for others' faiths and cultures.
- Leadership of special educational needs provision is generally effective. Leaders are clear about where pupils are and what they need to do to catch up. In the main, the support programmes are carefully planned and tracked to ensure they are bringing improvements. However, in one reading intervention group, more than half the group had not made progress.

Governance of the school

- The governing body, which is also the trust for the academy, understands its role and many of the priorities for the school.
- Governors meet with leaders to ensure they are fully informed about what actions are being taken to tackle areas they have identified as needing improvement. For example, to ensure mathematics teaching and outcomes were improving, they reviewed progress with the mathematics leader. Other visits to school are similarly focused on specific areas for improvement.
- Governors rightly identify that disadvantaged pupils are not doing as well as they should and this has sensibly been an area of focus in governors' meetings and meetings with leaders. However, these discussions have not brought about the necessary rapid improvements in progress and attainment for these pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Appropriate checks are carried out to ensure staff are safe to work with pupils, and the recording of these checks meets statutory requirements.
- Leaders, governors and staff receive relevant and useful training and updates. Consequently, they understand and carry out well their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe. Record-keeping is robust and detailed, and shows that concerns are followed up appropriately with external agencies when required.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching across subjects and ability groups is inconsistent. Although teachers are aware of who their disadvantaged pupils are, too often they do not make provision for these pupils in lessons. Not enough teachers assess what pupils already know before carrying out an activity. Consequently, on occasions, tasks are not at the right level to help pupils learn.
- In English, teaching is variable. Some teachers plan interesting lessons at the right level for pupils' ability, check understanding, provide accurate feedback and give pupils time to act on it. Where this is the case, these pupils make good or very good progress in lessons. However, where this is not the case, activities are either too easy or too hard.

- Teaching has improved in mathematics. Although there are some inconsistencies, these are fewer than in other subjects, and do not have such a significant impact on pupils' progress. Typically, lessons are planned at the right level to meet pupils' learning needs and concepts are explained clearly. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are supported effectively to make progress.
- Leaders are rightly aware that teaching in science is not good enough. Although there is some strong practice, overall not enough pupils are taught well. Often pupils stop listening because teachers talk for long periods of time or work is repeated. Consequently, outcomes in science are below, or well below, expected standards, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- In some of the more practical activities, such as drama and design technology, pupils enjoy lessons and do well. In the lessons seen, tasks involved pupils well and moved them forward in their skills and understanding.
- In modern foreign languages, pupils do not get as many chances to practise speaking as they could. This is the case in lessons and on visits.
- Teaching of disadvantaged pupils is erratic. In the strongest lessons, teachers take account of these pupils specifically, check their understanding, tackle misconceptions and challenge them at the right level. Where this is the case, these pupils demonstrate strong progress. However, many teachers do not systematically meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils in lessons. Consequently, some of these pupils do not make the rapid progress they need to and a few fall further behind.
- Teaching of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. They are taught in carefully planned and appropriate groups, often supported by additional adults. Activities are planned carefully at the right level to meet pupils' specific needs. Teachers and teaching assistants ask questions to enable them to learn, rather than completing tasks for them. As a result, these pupils do well. Teaching assistants across the school provide similarly effective support.
- ICT is used effectively to support learning. Each pupil has access to a tablet, which is used in a range of ways to support lessons and other activities. For example, pupils can complete and submit work for teachers to mark online, use their tablets as whiteboards for quick-response questions and use them instead of textbooks. Pupils find it motivating and enjoyable using tablets, and say that the instant feedback it can provide is really helpful.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Staff know pupils well and treat them as individuals. This leads to positive, respectful relationships between staff and pupils.
- Pupils are confident about who to speak to if they have a concern. The dedicated support team was described as being very helpful, and most pupils felt they could also speak to their tutors if they were worried.
- Pupils develop a good understanding about being healthy and staying safe. Lessons include e-safety, grooming and sexual health, as well as learning about healthy lifestyles and the benefits of exercise.

- The guidance and support pupils receive for academic and career choices are very good. Prior to transitions between key stages and leaving the school, pupils have interviews with the well-informed careers counsellor. They visit universities and listen to speakers to gather a broad perspective on what is available. Pupils very much appreciate the advice and support given.
- Pupils demonstrate respect for themselves and their school. They take pride in their uniform and the environment, which is clean, uncluttered and appealing.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. In the lunch hall, when unsupervised, large numbers of pupils behave calmly and respectfully. When moving between lessons, pupils walk sensibly and quietly, and so transitions are smooth and prompt. The school recognises that there is a small minority of pupils who do not behave quite so well and do not treat staff with the same levels of respect as others, which they are taking appropriate action to resolve.
- The new system for managing significant incidents and using internal exclusions has ensured that behaviour is good and more pupils are in school.
- Pupils across the school say they are not aware of bullying taking place. They say that pupils look out for each other and that, even across year groups, they support one another. Pupils described the school as a friendly and enjoyable place to be.
- Overall attendance is broadly in line with other schools nationally. Persistent absence was slightly higher than in other schools and is now improving as a result of a focus on specific pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Year 11 outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are consistently lower than for other pupils nationally.
- In 2016 GCSE results, pupils did not achieve as well as other pupils across the country in some subjects, including science and modern foreign languages.
- In English, many pupils achieve the expected standard and make good progress. However, this is not consistently the case. Middle-ability pupils do not make the same steady progress as either the lowest- or highest-ability pupils, reflecting the quality of the teaching they often receive. Work in books is similarly variable. Pupils do well when teachers provide work at the right level and assess learning to make sure pupils are making progress. Pupils make less progress when work is not set at the right level and teachers do not adapt activities as required. Pupils make better progress in speaking and listening, which is developed well through sharing their ideas and debate. Pupils are encouraged to discuss and refine their responses.
- Pupils read well. They are assessed accurately and any pupils that do not have the necessary skills to be independent and fluent readers are supported to develop their skills further. However, in one support group, although pupils regularly read aloud to adults, they are not developing the necessary decoding skills to become better at reading.
- Pupils are catching up in mathematics so that they are working at or near to the expected standards. Improvements in teaching have brought about better achievement.

- Progress and attainment in science and modern foreign languages are weak, reflecting historical issues with teaching and turnover of staff. Although some teaching in these areas is now effective, too much continues to be ineffective and so pupils are not doing as well as they should.
- In design technology, pupils make good progress and achieve well; this is also the case for disadvantaged pupils. In humanities, pupils achieve broadly the same as other pupils in schools across the country, but this is not the case for disadvantaged pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils across the school are beginning to show signs of catching up in some subjects and classes but this is not consistently the case. The percentage of most-able disadvantaged pupils is disproportionate and not enough disadvantaged pupils achieve the higher levels.
- Historically, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities did not make as much progress as they should. However, outcomes for these pupils have improved as a result of the accelerated progress they are making in many areas of English, mathematics and science.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels is equal to other schools across the country.
- In books, the quality of work is inconsistent. When expectations are high and teaching is effective, work is of good quality, well presented and shows good or better progress. However, there is too much variability in the quality of the work and teachers' expectations.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership of the sixth form is effective. Leaders know the priorities for improvement and take useful action to develop the provision further.
- In 2016, outcomes for Year 12 students were good and they are on track to achieve well by the time they take their final examinations in June. There are some variations between subjects but the numbers of students are often too small to be reliable indicators. The small number of disadvantaged pupils who stay on to the sixth form achieve at similar levels to other pupils nationally.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good and meets students' needs well. Lessons promote independent study and provide opportunities for students to share their points of view. In practical lessons, a problem-solving approach is often utilised to enable students to explore and develop their own thinking and strategies. Students are usually provided with appropriately challenging activities and, consequently, they enjoy learning and attendance is higher than the rest of the school.
- Students say they feel safe and well supported. They appreciate the increased independence and responsibilities they are given, both personally and academically, and so they have greater ownership of their study.
- Students provide good role models for the younger pupils, taking lessons seriously and treating each other and staff with respect.
- The 16 to 19 pathways are well planned and meet pupils' needs so many stay on to the sixth form. In response to feedback from pupils in the school, a range of vocational courses are now available, as well as a wide range of academic qualifications. Leaders recognise that further amendments to the range of options available will meet

students' needs even better. Students select and organise their own work experience arrangements, and support is provided if necessary.

- All students' destinations are checked and recorded when they leave Blenheim High. From year to year there is some variation but, consistently, more than half of all students go to university. Approximately a third of students go into employment or career-based training, such as apprenticeships. Almost all the remaining students are recorded as taking a gap year.

School details

Unique reference number	137906
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10024725

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 comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
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	1341
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Kitley
Interim co-principals	Simon Hillier and Robert Isaac
Telephone number	01372 745 333
Website	http://www.blenheim.surrey.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@blenheim.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 June 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Blenheim High School is larger than the average secondary school.
- The majority of the pupils are White British. Approximately one in nine pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also smaller than in other schools nationally.

- Approximately a fifth of pupils are disadvantaged, which is below the national average. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A new substantive headteacher has been appointed to start in April 2017.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out over two days. It began as a section 8 short inspection, carried out by two inspectors. In order to gather further evidence, the lead inspector converted it to a section 5 inspection. The evidence from the short inspection on day one was carried forward and day two was led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, working with six team inspectors.
- Inspectors observed 30 lessons and carried out a number of brief visits to lessons, several of which were with leaders. Leaders and inspectors scrutinised pupils' work to consider progress in books. Behaviour and conduct in and around the school were also observed, including at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with the two interim co-headteachers, the leadership team, other leaders from across the school and members of the governing body, including the chair. Inspectors also had a phone conversation with the school improvement partner from Babcock 4s, who works on behalf of the local authority.
- Pupils' views were gathered through the online survey and through meetings with groups of pupils from Years 8, 9, 10, 11 and the sixth form.
- Parents gave their views through the 162 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and one phone call from a parent. The 43 staff responses were also considered.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness, the school improvement plan, information about pupils' progress and attainment, minutes of governors' meetings, evidence of teaching over time and records relating to behaviour and safeguarding.

Inspection team

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Susan Willman	Ofsted Inspector
Anne Lewell	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Roche	Ofsted Inspector
Victoria Kirby	Ofsted Inspector
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Nicholas Simmonds	Ofsted Inspector

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