

# Bideford College

Abbotsham Road, Bideford, Devon EX39 3AR

## Inspection dates

16–17 October 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Year 11 pupils' attainment and progress in 2018 were well below the national average. The progress of current pupils is significantly better.
- Year 11 disadvantaged pupils' progress was particularly weak last year. Better attendance is leading to improved progress for disadvantaged pupils currently in the school.
- Historically, the most able pupils have not made the progress of which they are capable. Teaching is now more challenging and so these pupils are beginning to make better progress.
- Although it is improving, teaching is not yet consistently good. Some teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' work are not yet high enough.
- Teachers do not help key stage 4 pupils develop their literacy skills effectively and so too many pupils' English skills remain weak.
- Pupils' conduct in lessons is compliant and so classrooms are well ordered, but behaviour around the school is sometimes too boisterous.
- Pupils are not confident learners. A residue of low aspiration remains among some.
- Senior leaders have improved the rate of pupils' attendance. However, it is still too low.
- Senior leaders' strategy for improving disadvantaged pupils' progress is not yet consistently applied across the school.
- The leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is not effective enough. The progress of these pupils is not consistently good.
- Teaching in the sixth form does not enable the most able students to deepen their knowledge and so attain the highest grades at A level.

### The school has the following strengths

- This is an improving school. The trust has provided significant support to enable this.
- The principal demonstrates tenacious leadership. She has successfully steered the school through a period of turbulence in staffing and financial difficulty.
- Senior leaders use Year 7 catch-up funding well. The curriculum helps key stage 3 pupils to develop basic skills quickly.
- The local governing body is clear and resolute in its expectations of senior leaders to improve pupils' progress.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievements by:
  - sustaining improvements in teachers' practice, so that it is consistently good across all subjects
  - ensuring that the level of challenge for the most able pupils, and students in the sixth form, continues to rise so they deepen their knowledge and skills quickly
  - supporting disadvantaged pupils more effectively so their progress improves further and is close to that of other pupils nationally
  - making sure that teachers have high expectations for all pupils, especially in the quality of work produced and its presentation
  - helping pupils, particularly in key stage 4, to develop their reading and writing skills rapidly in all subject areas.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - further developing pupils' self-confidence and raising their aspirations
  - raising the rate of pupils' attendance to at least the national average
  - ensuring that all staff deal consistently and robustly with boisterous behaviour around the school at break- and lunchtime.
- Improve the leadership and management by:
  - implementing consistently the strategy for raising disadvantaged pupils' progress across the school
  - planning appropriate support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
  - ensuring that all staff have the knowledge they need to help pupils develop literacy skills swiftly.

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

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Since the school opened in its current form two years ago, the principal's determined leadership has brought about improvement in pupils' behaviour and attendance. She has stabilised the school and earned the respect of pupils and parents and carers.
- Senior leaders have secured a calm, orderly environment at the school. However, they have not yet established consistently good teaching, and so some groups of pupils still do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- The leadership of the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is not effective in helping these pupils make good progress from their starting points, particularly in key stage 4.
- Middle leaders are ambitious and highly skilled. They have a clear understanding of the improvements that need to be made. Although they have made a positive impact on current pupils' progress, they were not able to secure good progress for the pupils who left last year.
- Middle leaders are developing the curriculum quickly in their subject areas. This is leading to rapid improvement in the quality of teaching. For example, in science and expressive arts, teachers are given strong direction and support and so their expectations of pupils are rising quickly.
- Teachers are given frequent opportunities to share good ideas and to study for further qualifications. Most staff are supportive of the changes taking place at the school. The majority who replied to the Ofsted survey said that they enjoy working at the school and feel they receive good professional training. Newly qualified teachers are supported well by their mentors and other teachers.
- The curriculum enables pupils in key stage 4 to study a wide range of subjects at GCSE. A high proportion of pupils take the opportunity to study the English Baccalaureate suite of academic subjects. The key stage 3 curriculum has been adapted to better develop pupils' basic skills in English and mathematics. Consequently, current pupils are given a good grounding in these skills when they join the school in Year 7.
- The curriculum prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils understand the importance of democracy and the rule of law. As a result of pupils' tolerant attitudes, the school is a welcoming place for newcomers no matter what their background.
- Senior leaders provide advice and guidance for pupils about their future careers through a range of activities. However, they have not established an overarching plan that brings this work together and gives it direction.
- Pupils enjoy several sporting and cultural extra-curricular activities, such as netball, athletics and the school choir. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is popular. Even so, some pupils believe that the range of activities is too limited.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well because senior leaders take time to listen to pupils' and teachers' views about the effectiveness of the curriculum. For example, senior leaders take note of pupils' opinions in council

meetings and subsequently modify the teaching programmes.

- Senior leaders' use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils has not been effective in the past, and so these pupils have struggled to make the progress of which they are capable. Leadership of this area of the school's work has improved recently. Current disadvantaged pupils are receiving better support and so are making better progress. However, senior leaders' work in this area is still at an early stage of development.
- Senior leaders ensure that Year 7 pupils who need to catch up with their literacy and numeracy skills are encouraged and nurtured from the moment they join the school. They initially follow an 'accelerated curriculum' in Year 7. This programme builds their self-confidence and self-esteem well.
- The trust has provided significant support to the school since it opened. This has been a critical factor in improving the school. The principal and senior leaders are able to focus their attention on improving teaching, learning and assessment as a result of this support.
- The majority of parents who responded to the Parent View survey believe that the school is well led and managed and would recommend the school to other parents.

### **Governance of the school**

- The chair of the governing body has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. He ensures that the governing body is well trained and well informed about the impact of senior leaders' actions. He is acutely aware of the need to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and so raise pupils' attainment and progress.
- Governors are committed to the success of this school. They are ambitious for pupils and passionate about the school's role in raising their aspirations and opportunities. The governing body ensures that the school meets its statutory duties to safeguard pupils.
- The governing body recognises that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, pupils in Year 7 who need to catch up and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has not been well used in the past. They have challenged senior leaders effectively over these issues. As a result, senior leaders have changed their strategies.
- The trust board oversees the work of the governing body effectively. The backing of the trust has provided the school with stability and enabled senior leaders to begin to restore the confidence of staff and parents.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Senior leaders ensure that safeguarding is a priority at the school. Appropriate checks are made on all staff to make sure that they are suitable to work with children.
- Senior leaders keep accurate records of any concerns staff have about the welfare of pupils and the subsequent actions that they take. Staff are well trained and kept up to date by regular safeguarding briefings. Consequently, all members of staff understand

their responsibilities and are vigilant.

- The school works successfully with other agencies to make sure that pupils receive suitable support at times of greatest need. Senior leaders have expanded the number and range of opportunities pupils are given to express their opinions about the school, including how safe they feel. This has encouraged an open culture. Pupils are willing to raise concerns when they feel worried or anxious.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Requires improvement

- Teaching is improving. Middle and senior leaders have high expectations of staff. However, teaching still requires improvement because there is a wide variation between the least effective teaching and the best. For example, while most teachers set high standards for pupils' work, some teachers accept low-quality or incomplete work from pupils.
- Teachers know their pupils well. They use information about the different groups of pupils in their classes effectively. For example, they are very aware of the need to help disadvantaged pupils overcome the barriers to learning they face. These pupils' progress is improving because of this.
- Teachers understand the need to plan learning activities that stretch the most able pupils and deepen their learning. Most teachers do this successfully and so these pupils' progress is beginning to rise.
- Teaching is not helping key stage 4 pupils develop their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills quickly. Many key stage 4 pupils' literacy skills are weak. Teaching is not helping these pupils improve quickly enough. Teachers help pupils to develop reading and writing more effectively in key stage 3, particularly in the Year 7 accelerated curriculum group.
- The majority of lessons are taught by specialists in the subject and so pupils have confidence in their teachers' subject knowledge.
- Teachers have positive relationships with their classes and have high expectations of behaviour. As a result, classrooms are well ordered and teaching is able to proceed without interruption.
- A large majority of parents who responded to Parent View believe that pupils are well taught. Pupils who responded to the survey agree. Pupils believe that their teachers go out of their way to help them do their best.

### Personal development, behaviour and welfare

### Requires improvement

#### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Many pupils are enthusiastic learners. They enjoy lessons and commit to working hard. However, too many pupils are not self-assured. They are compliant in lessons, but they are not self-confident and do not show initiative.

- Pupils are given many opportunities to take on positions of responsibility in school. For example, senior leaders' introduction of a house system has given pupils the chance to be house captains.
- Pupils feel safe at school. Older pupils said that they have noticed a marked difference in pupils' conduct since the school opened in its present form. Pupils are taught how to stay safe when using the internet or social media. They understand other risks, such as the threats posed by gang activity or the misuse of drugs. Consequently, pupils know how to avoid these risks.
- Senior leaders have raised expectations of pupils' conduct in general and they have taken a strong stand against bullying. Pupils who responded to the Ofsted survey said that bullying does sometimes happen, but that it is dealt with quickly by teachers. Inspectors spoke with many pupils about this issue. The large majority feel safe and trust staff to deal effectively with incidents of bullying.
- Teachers take account of pupils' health and emotional needs well. Pupils say that they always have an adult they can talk to if they have any concerns, including trained counsellors. They are confident they will be listened to.
- Teachers give pupils advice about their future careers through a series of activities. However, these have only recently been drawn into a cohesive programme. This programme has not yet raised pupils' career aspirations.
- Pupils attending the school's off-site alternative provision are well supervised and well cared for. Consequently, they are kept safe at all times.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils respond positively to teachers' instructions. Their compliant conduct results in calm, orderly lessons. Learning is rarely interrupted or disrupted. However, around the school site at break- and lunchtime, pupils are less well mannered. Some pupils use disrespectful or derogatory language.
- The rate of pupils' attendance at school is rising rapidly. Senior leaders apply a variety of strategies to encourage pupils to attend school regularly. They have been very successful. Nevertheless, the rate of pupils' attendance is still below the national average.
- Pupils understand the school's behaviour policy. Although some pupils feel that it is not consistently applied by all teachers, the great majority believe it is a fair and effective system.
- Senior leaders' efforts to help and support pupils who find it difficult to behave well are often successful. The rate of fixed-term exclusions has reduced since the school opened.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Year 11 pupils' GCSE examination results in 2018 were poor. These pupils' progress, and especially disadvantaged pupils' progress, were affected by a legacy of weak

teaching and low aspiration over their five years in secondary education.

- Current pupils are making better progress than that indicated in the published information for 2018. Year 11 pupils' progress in GCSE English and mathematics is stronger than last year because the quality of teaching in these subjects has improved. Even so, pupils still do not make consistently strong progress in these subjects and so outcomes for pupils require improvement.
- Disadvantaged pupils' attendance was very low in the past. This significantly affected their learning. In the last two years, their attainment in Year 11 has been low. Current disadvantaged pupils attend more regularly. They are making better progress and their attainment is rising quickly.
- The most able pupils are responding well to the increased level of challenge teachers present them with. Their progress still varies too much across different subjects. However, they are making good progress in some, such as GCSE science and humanities subjects.
- Most pupils in Years 7 to 9 have developed good attitudes to study and so they are making strong progress across a range of subjects.
- Pupils in key stage 3 who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. However, support for these pupils is not as effective in key stage 4 and so some do not learn as quickly as they should.
- Pupils in Year 7 who have weak basic skills when they join the school are given extra help in an 'accelerated curriculum' group. These pupils thrive. Their confidence in English and mathematics grows quickly as a result of this nurture and support.
- The small number of pupils who attend the off-site provision run by the school are supported well and make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils in the recent past have not been well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment because too few of them have attained at least a grade 4 (formerly grade C) in both GCSE English and mathematics. Current pupils are on course to be in a better position when they leave.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

**Requires improvement**

- Sixth-form leaders are well organised and capable. They have high ambitions for students' academic attainment and their personal development. They have recently implemented a new system for tracking students' academic progress and so students' progress is now monitored closely against their targets.
- Most students make good progress on a range of academic courses. Last year, students' progress was strong in A-level English language and geography. A small number of students take applied general and technical level qualifications. Students' attainment in these qualifications was in line with the national average in 2017 but was lower in 2018.
- Students have a good understanding of the university application process because the school provides an effective programme of tutorials, visits and assemblies on this subject. Students engage in some work-related activities. These are not coordinated effectively, and so some students' employability skills are not well developed.

Nevertheless, all students secure places in higher education, employment or training when they leave.

- Relationships between students and their teachers are positive. Students hold their teachers in high regard. They recognise the care and commitment of their teachers, and this motivates students to work hard. Although teaching in the sixth form is more consistent than in the main school, the most able students are not challenged sufficiently.
- Students feel safe and well looked after at school. Through the tutorial programme, sixth-form leaders ensure that students know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. Even so, many students are not aware of the risks they face from people attempting to spread extremist ideologies.
- Students' attitudes to study are good. They enjoy their study programmes. Consequently, they behave well and attend regularly. A high proportion of students continue to Year 13 to complete their qualifications.
- Students take on responsibilities willingly, for example by taking part in the student leadership team. Many students help younger pupils in the main school or in local primary schools. These activities help to build students' confidence.
- Those students who join the sixth form without attaining at least a grade 4 in GCSE English and/or mathematics receive extra help and so the large majority gain a higher grade when they re-sit these examinations.



## School details

Unique reference number	142540
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10048414

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1,300
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	141
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Elaine Marshall
Principal	Lyndsey Kane
Telephone number	01237 477611
Website	<a href="http://www.bidefordcollege.org">www.bidefordcollege.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:mail@bidefordcollege.org">mail@bidefordcollege.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Bideford College opened on 1 March 2016 following the conversion of the predecessor school, of the same name, to academy status. The school is a member of the Launceston College Multi Academy Trust.
- The chief executive officer of the trust provides support for the principal and senior leaders. He is based at the school approximately two days each week. Several other senior leaders are employed directly by the trust and work across all of its schools.
- The work of the school is overseen by a local governing body. The chair of governors sits on the trust board.

- The school is much larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through pupil premium funding is around the national average.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. There are very few from minority ethnic groups and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The school runs an off-site centre based in a local hospital close to the school. This provides short-term support for a small number of pupils who have additional emotional or behavioural needs.
- The school does not use any other alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the chair of the local governing body, the chief executive officer of the trust, the principal, senior leaders and middle leaders.
- Inspectors observed learning in a wide range of subjects and across all age groups, including in the sixth form. Most of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- A wide range of pupils' work was considered. Samples of pupils' work were evaluated, both during lesson observations and in formal book scrutiny activities.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including minutes of governing body meetings, development plans, analysis of pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour logs, safeguarding documents and the school's review of its own performance.
- An inspector visited the off-site centre and spoke with pupils there.
- Meetings were held with pupils from all year groups and of all abilities and backgrounds.
- An inspector visited a group of pupils who are following the Year 7 accelerated curriculum.
- Inspectors took account of 134 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, 92 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 80 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The lead inspector considered one letter from a parent.

## Inspection team

Paul Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ray Hennessy	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen McShane	Her Majesty's Inspector
Gill Hickling	Ofsted Inspector
Ann Cox	Ofsted Inspector

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