

Inspection of The Blandford School

Milldown Road, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 7SQ

Inspection dates:

12 and 13 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection. They set high academic standards for pupils. Curriculum leaders have made sure that pupils are learning the right things at the right time. They have ensured that what pupils learn raises aspirations, which particularly helps disadvantaged pupils, as well as others.

Most pupils attend school regularly and are punctual to lessons. However, there are some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who do not attend as well as their peers.

While most pupils behave well in class, pupils told inspectors that there is some inappropriate behaviour at break and lunchtimes. The personal, social, health and economic education is not enabling some pupils to respect differences and understand fully what it means to be a responsible citizen.

Some pupils also expressed concerns about bullying and that they tend not to report it.

Sixth-form students are delighted to be back in school following the easing of the national restrictions caused by COVID-19. Year 13 students are keen to work with younger pupils and provide support for them. They are good role models.

Leaders deliver effective careers guidance so that pupils leave the school for appropriate destinations.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have invested in training teachers about their subjects and how to teach the curriculum effectively to pupils. Teachers, including those new to the profession, appreciate this and feel confident in their work as a result.

Senior leaders in the school have reshaped the academic curriculum successfully. They have done this with conscientious consideration of workload, which staff appreciate. Leaders have changed the options for modern foreign languages in the lower school. As a result, more pupils are choosing to study either French or Spanish, or both, in key stage 4. This enables more pupils to gain the English baccalaureate.

Leaders have a suitable programme for pupils who enter school with weak reading skills. Pupils learn to decode so that their reading becomes more fluent over time. However, leaders have not supported key stage 4 pupils' reading skills as well. This impedes some pupils' understanding of texts in English and their ability to improve their knowledge of wider issues. Pupils receive effective support to improve their vocabulary. This helps them to write about and discuss subjects more proficiently.

Students in the sixth form enjoy their chosen subjects and are diligent in their studies. Teachers use students' assessment information well to address common misconceptions.

There are clear consequences for those who interrupt learning. However, pupils' responses to teaching are variable. Most are studious, engaged and determined to succeed. However, there are some, mainly boys, who do not respond in the same way. Their work is scruffy, incomplete and does not support future learning.

Teachers know what to do for pupils with SEND and when to adapt learning. Consequently, pupils with SEND achieve well in most cases. However, behavioural strategies for pupils with SEND are not as successful. Some pupils with SEND disrupt, or disengage with, learning.

Leaders' strategies have not yet succeeded in eliminating intolerance of differences and respect for those who share protected characteristics, such as sexuality and gender alignment.

Overall, attendance in the school is above average. However, for a minority of pupils, leaders do not evaluate the attendance information they have carefully enough. For example, every year there are families who decide to educate their children at home. The school follows the correct processes, but leaders do not evaluate the reasons why this is so or the impact of poor attendance on pupils' learning. Consequently, leaders do not support some vulnerable pupils effectively enough.

Leaders are outward looking and have increased links with neighbouring schools and colleges. This provides supportive networks for staff. Likewise, it enables pupils to be aware of the opportunities post 14 and 16. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

There are new governors, including the chair, on the board since the previous inspection. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are taking the right steps to improve the school and hold leaders to account. Some actions were stalled because of the COVID-19 pandemic so it is too soon to see the impact.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and are responsive to updates from the Department for Education. Leaders work well with external agencies so that pupils with emotional and welfare issues have more specific help.

Older pupils have discussed the outcomes of Ofsted's sexual abuse review. Pupils have learned about the issues of sexual harassment, although many younger pupils do not yet fully understand these issues.

The business manager checks recruitment processes efficiently. Several leaders, including governors, are trained in safer recruitment.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils shared concerns about bullying with inspectors that they do not report. Therefore, some pupils continue to suffer because of ongoing bullying issues. Leaders must ensure that effective communication and education, that leads to a culture of trust and respect in the school, is established with urgency.
- Leaders do not analyse information about some pupils' attendance and behaviour sufficiently. This means that leaders are not able to target improvements specifically enough. Leaders must ensure that evaluation of every pupils' attendance and behaviour is more accurate and focused.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	113888
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10200971
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1043
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mario Roncaglia
Headteacher	Sally Wilson
Website	http://www.blandfordschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 and 18 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils at either one registered or one unregistered provider.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the two vice chairs of governors and one other governor. The lead inspector had a telephone call with the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, languages, history and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector checked the recruitment processes and spoke with the designated safeguarding leads. Inspectors spoke with teachers, staff and pupils to gauge their understanding of safeguarding and keeping safe.
- Inspectors looked at the responses to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, and staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Kathy Maddocks, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Benjamin Antell	Ofsted Inspector
Tracy Harris	Ofsted Inspector
Jon Webb	Ofsted Inspector

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