

Inspection of Bideford College

Abbotsham Road, Bideford, Devon EX39 3AR

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 June 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

The headteacher has made a significant difference to the school in the past few years. With her leadership team, she has created stronger links with parents and the local community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leaders have heightened expectations of pupils and staff. Most pupils respond well to these goals. Learners in the sixth form are strong role models and ambassadors for the school. They typify positive characteristics and set a good example for younger pupils.

Leaders have created a safe environment for pupils. Staff consider the emotional health and well-being of pupils carefully, recognising that the past years have been a turbulent and disruptive time. Local community police officers are a weekly presence in school. They are a listening ear, as well as a source of advice and guidance for pupils.

There are some pupils whose behaviour does not meet expectations. Leaders are taking steps to re-establish routines and the consistent application of behaviour policies. When bullying takes place, staff deal with it promptly. However, pupils are not always well informed about the steps that have been taken.

Pupils participate in visits to cities to widen their cultural understanding. Staff provide a variety of extra-curricular activities that cater for many talents and interests.

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

Trust leaders have supported leaders to continue the improvements made in recent times. Together with governors, they have supported and challenged school leaders effectively.

Leaders have put a broad curriculum in place for every pupil. They have increased uptake in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) continuously. More pupils study a language in key stage 4, and this has helped. As a result, pupils can access a wider range of opportunities in the future.

Subject leaders have thought considerably about the concepts that pupils need to learn over time. They understand how knowledge needs to deepen and build on prior learning. In most subjects, teachers implement the curriculum well. Nonetheless, there are a few areas where teachers accept work that is of too low a standard, especially from younger pupils.

Many pupils arrive in Year 7 with reading ages that are well below their chronological age. As a result, they find it difficult to follow the full curriculum. Skilled teachers provide appropriate support through a well-devised approach to the teaching of phonics. Pupils speak proudly of their improved learning in reading since

arriving at the school. Leaders are expanding the choices of texts that pupils read. In every subject, academic texts are used. In English, pupils read literary heritage texts, such as Shakespeare. Staff have introduced new systems for ensuring that younger pupils read challenging texts for pleasure.

Assessment is used effectively to help pupils recognise the knowledge they have gained, as well as areas for improvement. In a minority of subjects, misconceptions are not corrected, so a few pupils continue to make errors in their work.

The special educational needs coordinator ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive adapted curriculums when necessary. Consequently, most pupils with SEND achieve their potential, including in the sixth form. Equally, the leader for pupils receiving pupil premium funding competently targets the many ways these pupils need help. Despite the setbacks during the COVID-19 pandemic, disadvantaged pupils are catching up with their peers.

There is very little disruption to learning and, when it happens, teachers control it well. There are, though, some pupils who lack motivation in their learning. Too often, these few pupils sit and do nothing without being challenged. Most pupils are happy and feel safe. However, some younger pupils expressed concerns about other pupils' disrespectful behaviours and inappropriate name-calling. Staff constantly reinforce the importance of pupils showing respect and tolerance and staying safe when online. However, there are a persistent few who choose to ignore them.

Pupils benefit from a comprehensive personal, social, health, citizenship and economic education. Pupils receive effective careers advice, and staff track the destinations of pupils when they leave. This avoids pupils not being in education, training or work. 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. Through the curriculum, pupils develop their character and confidence well over time. They say that the school equips them effectively for the future.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding lead is vigilant in her duties and protects pupils well. Staff receive regular and up-to-date training. They know how to identify and report any concerns about pupils who may be vulnerable. Leaders make sure that external support is provided at the right level to keep pupils safe.

Recruitment checks are undertaken thoroughly.

The school has suitable policies in place to raise awareness among staff and parents about the dangers of sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence. Pupils are aware of safeguarding risks.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, a minority of teachers and pupils have expectations of standards that are too low. This means that pupils' work, behaviour and attitudes are not good enough. Leaders need to maintain their diligence in this area so that teachers and pupils have the highest expectations consistently.
- Some pupils shared concerns about disrespectful behaviour and feelings of intimidation. The school deals well with any reported disrespectful behaviour, which can be intimidating for younger pupils. However, leaders must ensure that pupils receive clear follow-up communication about this so that they can be confident that the issue has been dealt with effectively.

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	142540
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10227500
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1362
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	167
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trustees	Elaine Marshall
Principal	Claire Ankers
Website	www.bidefordcollege.org
Dates of previous inspection	16 and 17 October 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The principal was appointed in June 2019.
- The chief executive officer was appointed in March 2022. He took up his post on a full-time basis in June 2022.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the chief executive officer of the trust, and the chair and vice-chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, modern foreign languages, geography, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum 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 safeguarding leader. 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, Ofsted Parent View, and to the staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Kathy Maddocks, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Daniel Mather	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Collins	Ofsted Inspector
John Weeds	Ofsted Inspector
Stuart Wilson	Ofsted Inspector

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