

Inspection of a good school: Belmont Community School

Buckinghamshire Road, Belmont, Durham, County Durham DH1 2QP

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 March 2024

Outcome

Belmont Community School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Belmont Community School benefit greatly from a high-quality education. The 'Belmont Way' places a clear and simple emphasis on doing the right thing. Pupils understand this expectation and rise to it. The school is harmonious. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and pleasant. Pupils are courteous and respectful. This results in lessons that are highly productive. Due to the school's high expectations and positive relationships, pupils progress well. Pupils are safe.

The school is determined to ensure that all pupils, especially the most disadvantaged, are prepared well for adult life. The school is highly aspirational for all pupils. This is reflected in the ambitious curriculum that pupils follow, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school widely promotes future study options, such as apprenticeships, A-levels and vocational qualifications. It also promotes aspirational careers. It provides pupils with effective support in lessons so that they can fulfil their potential. Public examination results in 2023 show that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve well.

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

The school's curriculum has a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Pupils understand challenging concepts and ideas. For example, in English, pupils in Year 9 talk knowledgeably about socialism and patriarchy. They apply these concepts to the books they are currently reading. In geography, pupils demonstrate secure understanding of how tropical storms are formed. Pupils' work shows that they are given regular opportunities to apply their knowledge. For example, in mathematics, from Year 7, pupils regularly apply their mathematical knowledge in problem-solving tasks.

Teaching is consistently effective. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They explain ideas clearly and they often ask probing questions. Teachers know pupils very well and

they provide appropriate support for those who need it, including those pupils with SEND. The school supports pupils to remember the curriculum through 'Fast Four', which is an activity at the start of every lesson. This activity helps pupils to remember important aspects of the curriculum that they have been taught before. Teachers use assessment well to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. Pupils with SEND who access the additionally resourced provision integrate very well in lessons. Their needs are well met. The school has planned an ambitious curriculum that is clearly sequenced.

The school has clearly prioritised reading. The school identifies pupils who are at the early stages of reading during the transition process at the end of Year 6. These pupils follow an appropriate programme that begins right at the start of Year 7. Reading for pleasure is promoted through dedicated reading lessons and author visits. Pupils recently enjoyed hearing from a local author who helped to rescue refugees from small boats in the Mediterranean Sea.

Pupils behave very well. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and follow instructions well. In some lessons, pupils do not get consistent opportunities to be independent in their learning. The school tracks pupils' attendance carefully. It has put in place a range of measures to improve attendance. The impact of these strategies is variable for those pupils who are persistently absent from school.

The school supports pupils' social and cultural development effectively. Pupils benefit from opportunities to take part in a range of clubs and opportunities. For example, the school has its own Combined Cadet Force. Pupils benefit from the school's connections with local universities. Some have recently attended a conference to mark International Women's Day. Pupils are given the opportunity to celebrate different cultures during the school's 'Global Week'. Pupils enjoy leadership roles, such as prefects, school councillors, librarians and reading ambassadors.

The school is led very well. All leaders are unified in their vision for the school. They all expect pupils to work hard, contribute to the school community and respect others. They are successful in realising this vision and are not complacent. They check and evaluate their work effectively. Leaders support staff with their well-being and workload. Governors are highly skilled and fulfil their duties well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils do not attend school often enough. This means these pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge. The school should further develop its work to engage pupils who are regularly absent from school.

- In some lessons, pupils miss out on opportunities to self-manage their learning. This means that in some lessons, pupils are not as independent in their learning as they could be. The school should ensure that pupils are given appropriate opportunities to be increasingly independent so they can self-manage their learning.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in 2019.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	114308
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10320364
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	814
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Patrick Conway
Headteacher	Paul Marsden
Website	www.belmontschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 February 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has an additionally resourced provision on site. It caters for pupils with hearing and/or visual impairment.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- A small number of pupils access alternative provision. The school uses two registered alternative providers and five unregistered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

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

- The inspection team held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers and pupils.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator.
- Inspectors met with the leaders in charge of the personal, social, health and economic curriculum and pupils' personal development.
- An inspector spoke to leaders at a sample of the unregistered alternative provisions used by the school.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed pupils during social times.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. He also took into consideration the responses to the surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

Dan McKeating, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Joanne Maw

Ofsted Inspector

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