



Beaumont School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117514
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280102
Inspection dates 1 March 2006 to 2 March 2006
Reporting inspector Ms. Margaret Jones LI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Oakwood Drive
School category	Community		AL4 0XB
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01727 854726
Number on roll	1166	Fax number	01727 847971
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Peter Vine
Date of previous inspection	2 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Elizabeth Hitch

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 1 March 2006 - 2 March 2006	Inspection number 280102
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Beaumont is a larger than average school situated in the east of St Albans. In 2003, the school achieved language college status and it seeks to promote global citizenship whilst retaining a broad and balanced curriculum. Attainment on entry is above the national average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. There is a below average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a Statement of Special Educational Need. A distinctive feature of the school is the presence of wheelchair users and facilities for them. Beaumont has a large sixth form and works closely with local schools in a consortium. The school has a Sportsmark and is working towards Artsmark and National Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with aspects of its work which are outstanding. The school is well led and managed. The headteacher provides effective leadership and vision to raise standards. There is a very good team spirit among the staff and governors, who are well motivated and want to do their best by the school and all its students. The school has a creative, innovative approach to the curriculum which is responsive to the needs of students. The move to specialist language college status has had a positive impact. There are excellent working arrangements with local schools. Teaching is good and students enjoy learning. As a result, they make good progress and reach high standards by the end of Year 11. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well because of the good support they receive. Students' personal development is good. They have many opportunities to take on responsibilities and participate in an outstanding range of enrichment activities. Students understand the need for healthy lifestyles but the range of food in the dining hall does not encourage healthy eating choices. The school's self-evaluation is accurate, enabling both staff and governors to identify what needs to be done to improve provision further. Monitoring of teaching is robust, and middle management has improved since the last inspection. The school is developing its systems for assessing progress but these are not consistent throughout departments. Most parents are happy with the school. Their views are taken into account regularly and they are kept informed of developments. The school's capacity to improve and raise standards further is good. It provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Students make good progress because they are well taught and take a positive approach to study. Standards are significantly above average and in some subjects, notably photography and art in 2005, results can be exceptionally high. Students' learning is greatly assisted by the excellent range of courses provided by the school and its partners in the local consortium. This very successful collaboration ensures a close match between students' interests and the courses available, leading to extremely high levels of satisfaction amongst students. Their personal development is good, reflecting effective care and guidance from tutors. Monitoring of academic progress, while less effective, is satisfactory and improving. The many strengths in sixth form provision are indicative of good leadership and management and this is confirmed by the quality of current planning for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement further by using data more consistently as a diagnostic tool, to set individual targets and track students' progress. - Develop better opportunities for students to eat healthily.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students in the main school achieve well. They enter with above average attainment and reach standards at GCSE which are significantly above national levels. The school sets challenging targets and these are met. This is partly the outcome of good teaching, but also owes much to the students' good behaviour and attitudes. The vast majority show a keen desire to learn. Introducing vocational courses for students in Years 10 and 11 has helped the school motivate students better by reducing areas of disaffection. In the core subjects, English, mathematics and science standards at the end of Year 9 are above average. In 2005, test results show good progress in mathematics, satisfactory gains in science and slower progress in English. Students are making good progress in lessons. Both English and science promote much stronger progress in Years 10 and 11 and both areas have also put strategies in place which are helping younger students make greater gains. At GCSE, students attain particularly high standards in several subjects. The school supports all students well so that there are no significant differences in the progress different groups of students make. Students achieve well in the sixth form and reach standards which are significantly above average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The students' personal development is good. Students enjoy most of their lessons and attendance is above average. Occasionally, some arrive late to lessons. Most students work hard and behave well. One Year 9 pupil said, 'This is a very welcoming environment.' Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. They like taking responsibility such as being members of the school council (Beaumont Pupil Committee) which has been successful in creating a new summer uniform. Students have a good understanding of different beliefs and cultures, such as Muslims and Buddhists. Students' acceptance and tolerance of 'difference' in others is impressive. Most students contribute willingly to the community. They were very proud of their fund raising activities to support national charities. Students understand how to stay safe in many situations. Most students lead satisfactorily healthy lifestyles. All students have two physical education lessons a week. A high proportion of students take part in sports' clubs. However, many students do not take the opportunity of the healthy eating choices on offer each day. They are effectively prepared for the world of work with well developed levels of knowledge and understanding in English, mathematics, social skills and work related learning. Sixth formers are particularly mature and socially confident. They show an exceptional level of enjoyment in their courses. Effective development of sixth formers' personal skills allows them to contribute well to the school and wider community. For example, they mentor younger students and run the Beaumont Pupil Committee.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning in the main school is good. In the best lessons, the brisk pace and strong intellectual challenge engage students' interest and enable them to participate fully and make rapid progress. Planning is good and a variety of resources are used. Teachers have high expectations of the students drawing well on their previous learning. Lessons are lively and enjoyable and there are very good relationships between the students themselves and with the teacher. For example, in part of a lesson judged to be outstanding, groups of Year 10 students happily competed to improve their pronunciation skills in response to 'quick-fire' images shown on the electronic whiteboard. In lessons that are less good, the students are not as actively involved and make less progress. Learning is very strongly at the heart of the school improvement plan. Working groups of teachers are currently focusing on gifted and talented students, lesson design for the lower attaining students and assessment for learning strategies. The latter is being trialled as part of a new whole school assessment policy. Assessment data is beginning to be used proactively as a tool to track pupil performance and inform lesson planning. In the sixth form the quality of teaching and learning is good. In the best lessons the teachers' good subject knowledge is used effectively to plan varied and challenging lessons. A variety of teaching strategies are employed that aid student's personal development and confirm their thinking. Objectives are made very clear at the outset and reviewed at the end. In less good lessons, students are too dependent on the teacher: teachers talk at length while students listen passively and take notes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The quality of the curriculum and other activities in the main school and in the sixth form is outstanding. All statutory requirements are met. The curriculum is dynamic and flexible and meets the needs of different groups of students. All students in Years 7 to 9 follow the National Curriculum with an opportunity for Fast Track French. Year 10 students can access a range of GCSE and vocational courses. The BeauSandVer consortium of schools provides vocational options in specialist subjects and is an effective pathway to further education. The variety of extra curricular activities are extensive and a strength of the school. The majority of students regularly take part in sporting, arts and other activities. School trips, both local and international are well supported and there is a rich diversity of annual events. The curriculum is enriched by a programme of activity days, work experience, specialist theme and study skills days which students have evaluated positively and twilight options such as Latin and statistics. These provide many opportunities for students to develop maturity and valuable work related skills. The school offers a wide range of sixth form courses and enrichment options. The consortium partnership enables all students to study a variety of subject combinations to AS and A2 level. There is innovative provision for less

academic Year 12 students, originally set up through the European Social Fund, to support them on accredited pathways leading to employment or further training.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

A real strength of the school is its high level of commitment to all students and outstanding inclusive nature. It is a large school but it is not anonymous because there are good systems and networks to support individuals. These systems are not infallible but are supported by the strong mutual respect that exists between staff and students and the good relationships which underpin both the formal learning and the many informal enrichment activities undertaken by the school. The school excels in the way it meets the specific needs of students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Teaching assistants are highly skilled and links with specialist teachers and other agencies to support students are excellent. Systems are now in place to track academic progress but the effective use of data is not a consistent feature yet across the school. There is strong pastoral support. Students feel that they can turn to an adult in school if they have a problem. However, a significant minority of parents felt that not all staff listened to students enough. Arrangements for safeguarding and child protection are secure. The health and safety of students is taken seriously but the condition of the toilets is a concern for some students. Students in the sixth form feel that there is a good balance of freedom and support. All students have access to high quality careers and higher education advice. Students felt they are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is dynamic. She leads the school well with energy and determination. She has a clear vision of the high standards she wishes the school to attain and has successfully communicated these aspirations to the whole school community. The views of parents are taken into account appropriately. The leadership team work together well and are a good blend of relatively new members with more experienced staff. They know the school well and have accurately identified areas for development in a succinct and well targeted school development plan. Governors are supportive of the school and are fully involved in setting priorities and evaluating outcomes. There is good capacity to improve further. A clear system of line management is in operation and managers at all levels understand what is expected of them. Middle management has been strengthened through effective professional development. Accurate evaluation of teaching has taken place and inspectors agree with the school's judgements. Regular evaluation of the work of departments now takes place and is having a positive impact. This represents good improvement since the last inspection. The specialist language college status has been successfully used to improve uptake and standards in languages, provide better accommodation and introduce curriculum innovation such as Fast Track French for Year 9 students. The accommodation is well-maintained and provides a stimulating

learning environment, although facilities for science and physical education are limited. The school had a large under-spend but this funding has now been used for building projects. All statutory requirements are met with the exception of the daily act of collective worship.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	No
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for all the help you gave the inspectors when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you, learning about your enthusiasm for school and finding out how much you value all that it has to offer. You told us that you are proud of Beaumont and we think you are right to be so. It is a good school with aspects of its work which are outstanding. This is what was good about your school: - it is well led and managed and there is a very good team spirit among the staff and governors. - there is an exciting curriculum with lots of different courses to suit different students such as Fast Track French, vocational courses with the college and a wide range of choice in the sixth form. - you enjoy the wide range of activities that are provided for you, especially sport; becoming and language college has brought big advantages. - the consortium and links with other schools work very well and this means students can choose from an excellent range of options. - teaching is good and you achieve well in most of your subjects. - students with learning difficulties and disabilities receive the help they need. - relationships between staff and students are very good and you told us how important this is to your enjoyment of school and to your learning; and - most of you behave well and enjoy attending school. These are things we thought could be improved; - more work needs to be done on tracking your progress and setting you individual targets to improve your results; and - there are chips on offer every day in the dining hall and this does not encourage healthy eating choices. We wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.