

Avonbourne School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113904
Local Authority	Bournemouth
Inspection number	289765
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Mary Massey HMI

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	1063
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Manners
Headteacher	Debbie Godfrey-Phaure
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2003
School address	Harewood Avenue Bournemouth BH7 6NY
Telephone number	01202 398451
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Avonbourne is larger than average for a school of its type. Although it takes in a number of girls from outside the catchment area, it loses about 18% of potential pupils each year to the local grammar school. The majority of students are White British but the number from minority ethnic groups is rising in the younger year groups. The number of students learning English as an additional language is low. Students are from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and the proportion who have free school meals is just above the national average. The numbers of students with statements of special educational need and of those with learning difficulties and disabilities are below average.

The school was designated a business and enterprise college in 2003 and is a hub school for enterprise education.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Avonbourne is a good school. It is also a happy place where students are articulate, confident and considerate towards others. Most enjoy school very much and they are well prepared for their future. Older girls, in particular, value the excellent relationships between staff and students and especially appreciate those staff that give extra time to help them. One Year 11 girl said, 'They take the time to understand you and those are the ones that help you move forward most'. The vast majority of parents are satisfied with the care and education that the school provides. One parent wrote, 'We would recommend the school to anyone – we trust them completely to give our daughter a really rounded education'.

Central to the school's vision is a constant emphasis on raising achievement and standards whilst, at the same time, making sure that students are well cared for and that an effective curriculum meets the needs of each individual. Achievement and standards are good. Progress and attainment in English are outstanding. In other subjects, particularly mathematics, where GCSE examination results were below the national average last year, achievement is now much better. As a result of thorough analysis of the school's performance data, departments are set challenging targets and provided with support in order to achieve them.

Teaching and learning are good overall and there are some outstanding lessons but the variation in quality across the school is too great. This has an effect on achievement and on the degree to which students take responsibility for their own learning. In some lessons students are too dependent on teacher led activities. Senior leaders accurately monitor the quality of teaching in subject areas and this is helping to create a climate of continuous improvement. The school has designed a programme which involves teachers working collaboratively to improve performance. This ambitious project rightly identifies improving teaching and learning as the key to raising achievement. However, the present variable quality of middle management is reflected in the quality of teaching and learning, the way in which data is used to match teaching to students' needs and consequently on the achievement of students across subjects. Nevertheless, there is an optimistic atmosphere in the school amongst staff, students and governors and subject leaders are keen to learn from the good practitioners that are already in the school and to receive appropriate training.

Avonbourne is not just about academic achievement. The care, guidance and support provided for students are good and, as a result, their personal development and well-being are also good. Many girls are very willing to contribute to the school community, for example as peer mediators. They behave safely and participate enthusiastically in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. In spite of the efforts of the school, attendance remains only satisfactory, although it is improving. Individual students' progress is monitored carefully and they know how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve in most subjects.

As a result of good self-evaluation, monitoring and analysis of data, the new leadership team understands the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well and has already introduced some effective measures for improvement. The team has ambitious plans but they are aware that the pace of recent change has been fast and that new systems need time to be embedded effectively. Although the school has not made adequate progress since the last inspection, standards and achievement have improved since the appointment of the present headteacher in September 2005. These factors, together with the good progress made during the last year, indicate a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Share the best practice in teaching so that high quality teaching and learning are extended more consistently across the school.
- Ensure that students take greater responsibility for their own learning and are less dependent on activities led by the teacher.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good overall but there is variation between subjects. Students' attainment on entry is just below average and, by the end of Year 9, they make good progress overall and achieve satisfactory standards. Progress in English is outstanding and students reach standards that are significantly above the national average. Progress is good in science. Although in 2006 the results of tests in mathematics at the end of Year 9 showed that progress was below average, progress in the current Year 9 is now satisfactory. The 2006 GCSE results show a similar pattern. In English, students reached high standards and made outstanding progress, while progress in mathematics was satisfactory and standards were significantly below average. Current Year 11 pupils continue to progress very well in English. This is as a result of consistently good teaching and very good leadership in a department where the energy and enthusiasm of teachers are infectious. However, the latest mock examination results in mathematics show that pupils are now making much better progress as a result of the additional support and monitoring that have been given to the subject. The 2006 examination results showed wide variation in performance across other subjects. The current Year 11 mock examination results show that this variation is now much less pronounced and that there is improvement in subjects where underachievement had previously been identified.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups make similar progress to other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' good personal development and well-being are reflected in the positive way most of them talk about their experiences, their enjoyment of the school and their feelings of security. The well rounded education enjoyed by the majority does not, however, benefit a small minority of students. Although behaviour is good overall, this minority often misbehaves, particularly when teaching is less stimulating, and they take up a disproportionate amount of the teacher's time. Students have a strong sense of right and wrong which is fostered in assemblies and in the programme for personal, social and health education. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students have a sound awareness of global issues and cultures. Despite laudable attempts by the school, attendance remains stubbornly below average with around one pupil in five missing the equivalent of at least a day's schooling a week. Students believe that most cases of bullying and issues about friendships are successfully resolved and that the use of the principles of restorative justice and the involvement of peer mediators encourage them to develop and grow in maturity. They welcome the many opportunities to take responsibility and to be consulted, but some feel frustration that their views do not always lead to improvements in, for example, the toilets. Students have a good understanding of what it means to live healthily. Many participate in the extensive sporting activities the school offers.

Their good basic skills and their participation in many work-related and business events, enhanced by the school's specialist status, mean that they are being well prepared for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Although teaching and learning are good throughout the school, this disguises considerable variation both between subjects and within subjects. This is reflected in the 2006 examination results. In the best lessons, students' learning is good or better because lessons are well planned and teachers have high expectations. They help to develop students as independent learners and meet the differing needs of all students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. In an outstanding French lesson with less able students, characterised by carefully nurtured relationships, the teacher's skilful use of rhythm and repetition encouraged the students to respond enthusiastically in French. The work of teaching assistants helps many students to improve, as does the effective use of ICT in lessons. In less effective lessons, teachers' expectations are lower. Students are more passive and take less responsibility for their learning. Most teachers now use assessment information to plan lessons and develop students' knowledge and understanding of how to improve, although marking in students' books is not yet supporting this consistently. The school's specialist status is having a positive influence in lessons and this is valued by students.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and is both broad and balanced. A new scheme for Year 10 provides a good range of courses and allows students to choose from a flexible range of pathways. These include vocational opportunities with a strong leisure and tourism emphasis that is well matched to local need. Consequently, the curriculum caters well for the majority of students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who find a traditional curriculum less interesting. The school's specialist business and enterprise status has been well used to promote enterprise throughout the curriculum. All schemes of work, for example, contain enterprise activities and there are special curriculum days devoted to this. The school provides a wide range of other activities, such as extra-curricular clubs and an extensive programme of educational visits both at home and abroad. These are well attended by students and range from the X factor club to booster mathematics classes. The present arrangements for citizenship are inadequate because they do not provide enough dedicated teaching periods to cover the programme. The school is aware of this weakness and has in place plans both to increase the time allocation for citizenship in September and to train more teachers to deliver the programme.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Major changes to the organisation of students' care, guidance and support are leading to a more coordinated approach to the school's provision. Whilst the new arrangements are already successfully improving provision, they are taking time to become fully embedded and a few parents have expressed concerns at occasional 'hiccups' in the systems.

This is a very caring school which focuses on the development of each girl as an individual. The care starts with the good partnerships with primary schools and the good induction arrangements to ensure a smooth transfer to secondary school. Child protection procedures are exemplary. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities and the increasing number of minority ethnic students and those whose first language is not English are well supported, whilst those at risk are identified early and their progress monitored effectively. The school works well with a range of outside agencies to ensure that barriers to learning are reduced to a minimum.

Although still developing, the roles of key staff, including pastoral heads, learning co-ordinators and tutors, are now beginning to mesh together so that students' progress is thoroughly tracked, underachievement identified and strategies for improvement devised. With business and enterprise college links contributing positively, the quality of information, advice and guidance to students about courses and careers for work and study after they leave is good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school which puts the achievement of students at the centre of planning for improvement without losing a strong focus on their personal development. This is beginning to show a positive effect on students' achievement but there is still too much variation in the quality of teaching. The new senior leadership team is a strong and coherent group with complementary skills. It is now well equipped to implement the new rigorous systems to monitor the quality of the school's work. Middle managers are well supported and some have the confidence and independence to act creatively to raise standards. However, the quality of subject leadership is variable, and the school is already providing training to address this.

The school's self-evaluation is sharp and accurate. There are very effective systems at all levels for managers to monitor how well students are doing. These allow them to make well considered judgements about strengths and areas for development. There is some evidence of this is having an effect on students' progress, but not yet enough on their attainment.

Governors are supportive and loyal and challenge the headteacher appropriately. Some visit the school regularly and take part in lesson observations in order to become more fully involved.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Annex A**Leadership and management**

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 June 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Avonbourne School, Bournemouth, BH7 6NY

I am sure you will remember when inspectors came to your school in June. We were very impressed with the way in which you welcomed us and shared your views about your school and how it might be improved. I would like to share our findings with you and hope that some of you will read the whole inspection report which you will find on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Avonbourne is a good school. The teaching and support staff provide good care, and appropriate guidance when you transfer from one stage of education to the next, for example at the end of Years 9 and 11. Many of you said how much you valued the hard work that staff put in and the good relationships you have with them. We were also impressed by how many of you wanted to put something positive back into the school, for example by acting as peer mediators. It seems that you feel that the school listens to your views but are sometimes frustrated when things do not happen quickly enough and you do not always understand why.

The majority of you make good progress, particularly in English. The curriculum is very flexible in Years 10 and 11 and meets the needs of each individual student. We found that there is some very good teaching and, in these lessons, you learn well and know what you need to do in order to improve. We have asked the school to make sure that all lessons are as good as the best ones and to make sure that you learn to work independently and rely less on teachers to tell you what to do all the time.

Although most of you enjoy being at school, too many of you are away too often. Good attendance makes a difference to how well you achieve. I hope you will do all you can to make sure you attend regularly.

You have a very enthusiastic and hard working staff at Avonbourne, who want you to do as well as you can. I am sure you will support them.

Yours faithfully

Mary Massey HMI Lead inspector