

Bucklers Mead Community School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 123890 |
| Local Authority | Somerset |
| Inspection number | 314756 |
| Inspection dates | 29–30 January 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Caroline McKee |

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

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|---|--------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 985 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Carol Lamont |
| Headteacher | Michael Featherstone |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 September 2004 |
| School address | St John's Road Yeovil BA21 4NH |
| Telephone number | 01935 424454 |
| Fax number | 01935 431088 |

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|--------------------------|--------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Bucklers Mead Community School is an average-sized secondary school. It is a designated specialist technology college. It also holds the Healthy School award and has Investor in People status. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is consistently below average. Fewer pupils than average have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.

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 a number of outstanding features. It is a school where every person matters and is encouraged and helped to grow in confidence. The headteacher's outstanding leadership is supported well by the governors and the senior management team. There is a relentless drive to bring about improvements for the pupils. The leadership team knows the school well and the recent management changes, although in their early stages, are already starting to bring about improvements. The outstanding care and support provided for the pupils ensure that they become mature young adults who are confident and proud to be a part of this school. One parent, reflecting the vast majority of parental views, wrote, 'Both my children are encouraged by the school to be the best person they can be'. The standards that pupils attained in recent years have been below average, but they are improving rapidly, especially in English. They are currently broadly average. The school recognised the need for this improvement, especially in Year 9, where pupils were underachieving significantly in 2006. The improvement, particularly in pupils' literacy skills, has helped to raise standards overall. As a result of this improvement and good teaching, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Pupils are set increasingly challenging targets and progress is tracked more rigorously in order to sustain their good progress. However, this is not done consistently across all subjects. Although the pupils know their targets, the tracking of data and the teachers' own assessments are not consistent enough to ensure pupils always know what to do to improve further. The newly instituted role of school improvement leaders is starting to have an impact and in those subjects where their work is most effective enables departmental managers to develop their responsibilities well. The quality of teaching is good and improving. Pupils say that the marking of their work helps them to improve, although they say that some teachers' comments are more helpful than those of others. The school offers a good curriculum and one that responds to the needs of pupils, whatever their ages, providing them with the skills to go on to the next stages of their education or working lives. The very good range of additional activities broadens their horizons and enlivens their experiences. Pupils are excited about their learning. Pupils' personal development is outstanding because of the school's excellent care, support and guidance. Their attitudes to learning, their behaviour and relationships in the school community are all of a high standard. A few parents expressed concerns about some poor behaviour, but pupils say that although this may occasionally occur, the staff are quick and effective in managing these situations. Pupils feel safe and show a mature approach in how to manage their lives in the face of possible dangers in life. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to reflect on matters that affect them both socially and culturally. They show a very healthy approach to life. Participation in sport is very good and pupils have been keen to ensure the canteen provides healthy food. Pupils are consulted more and more on school issues and the school and sports forum help to bring about positive changes to school life. One pupil said, 'If I want something done, I just go to the headteacher and he will sort it out'. The school has sound systems in place to seek the views of parents. The school's technology college status has a positive impact on raising standards and is used well across the school, although pupils are not achieving as well as they should in individual technology subjects. The school is promoting technology effectively in the local community and primary schools. The school has improved considerably since the last inspection and has good capacity to improve further. Leadership promotes innovative approaches that have a positive impact on the school and local community. The pupils are at the heart of all that it does.

What the school should do to improve further

- What the school should do to improve further
- Ensure that all subject leaders track pupils' progress rigorously.
- Ensure pupils know what they need to do to improve further, particularly in technology subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in GCSE examinations. The school has worked successfully to improve standards, which are now broadly average, and pupils currently in Year 11 are on target to meet their predictions for GCSE. The most progress recently has occurred in English, with pupils who entered for the November GCSE examinations exceeding their challenging targets. Whilst progress overall is good, it is still too slow in design and technology because pupils are not sufficiently aware of what they need to do to improve. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress throughout the school because of the good support they receive. Pupils in Year 9 made good progress in the 2007 national tests, a considerable improvement from the previous year when pupils underachieved significantly. The results in 2007 were broadly average. The increasing number of pupils who do not have English as their first language are given effective specialist support when withdrawn from lessons, but do not always make this same good progress in their other lessons. By using data more effectively and improving teaching, the school has worked successfully to raise standards in mathematics and English. They have set challenging targets for pupils, both in Year 9 and Year 11. Pupils are on track to meet these targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are proud of their school. Their enjoyment and good attendance, which continues to improve, have a positive impact on their achievement and personal development. They take full advantage of the wide range of exciting extra-curricular activities, for example, participating in the Ten Tors challenge and educational visits abroad. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to be safe and are confident that adults in school will support them for work or personal issues. Behaviour around school and in lessons is excellent. Pupils say that the rare incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly. Punctuality to lessons is very good and exclusion rates are low. The wide range of sporting activities and healthy food options encourage pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils are prepared well for the world of work and make good progress in their literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Relationships reflect an ethos of trust and respect amongst staff and pupils. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community and are fully involved in the life of the school and the local community. For example, they enjoy training as mentors for supporting younger pupils in the school and in local primary schools. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to explore issues of living in a multicultural society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and in a minority of lessons, it is outstanding. Teachers bring enthusiasm and expertise to lessons. They plan a variety of activities using interesting resources. As a result, pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. In most cases, the focus of the lesson is clear, so that pupils understand the purpose of what they have to do. One Year 10 pupil commented, 'We always know where we are in the lesson'. Usually, pupils have a clear idea of the level they have reached in their work and how to improve it. This gives them a sense of continuity in learning. Many pupils make links with previous lessons and develop their skills progressively. Pupils' books show a good rate of work and coverage in individual subjects. There are good examples of pupils being involved in assessing their own progress, for example, in physical education and in the accelerated reading programme in English. Teachers' assessment is regular, but some teachers do not give pupils enough feedback on how to improve. Occasionally, teachers do not give precise instructions about what pupils should note down as key learning points for their future reference. The school is developing strategies to assist pupils who are learning English as an additional language when in lessons, but a consistent approach has not yet been established.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, with some outstanding features. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have an effective range of support and resources in lessons and a very good variety of extra tuition builds the confidence of these pupils to help them cope with the main curriculum. Specialist technology status has had a good impact on the information and communication technology (ICT) resources used throughout the school but further developments are required in the specialist subjects of technology and ICT. A wide range of courses extends the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. For example, many pupils study vocational courses at the local college and effective careers advice and work-related experiences ensure they are well prepared for their chosen pathways. A well-thought-out individualised programme helps selected pupils to remain in full-time education. A wide variety of out-of-school sport and other activities, including opportunities for catch-up work and a large number of educational excursions, extend pupils' horizons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care provided for pupils is a very strong feature of the school, with parents agreeing that their child is safe and making very good progress in their personal development. Requirements for safeguarding and child protection are in place and regularly reviewed. The school promotes pupils' well-being very effectively through its own provision and its work with a number of outside agencies. The school follows up absences swiftly and provides very good support for pupils and their families when absence becomes a cause for concern. Arrangements for the transition of pupils from surrounding primary schools in to Year 7 are good, and the school is putting in place structures to support the needs of pupils learning English as an additional language. Academic guidance is good. The school provides pupils with thorough guidance on

their choice of courses for GCSE and teachers offer beneficial advice through mentoring and after-school sessions.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership, which is a major factor in the school's success. He is effectively supported by a very able, purposeful and energetic senior management team. Together they provide clear educational vision and direction, which are communicated effectively to staff. Senior leaders have created a united and orderly school with a clear sense of purpose that values pupils. A new management structure is beginning to thrive, and is bringing a more rigorous approach at middle management level. New processes for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning are helping to raise standards. As a result, the school has clear targets for further improvement. The school has successfully established itself as a specialist technology college. Specified targets are used effectively to raise standards overall and the opportunities presented have empowered teachers and opened up opportunities for pupils. It has outstanding links with other services and providers that support the work of the school. The school is frank in its evaluations and accurate in nearly all cases. It is setting increasingly challenging targets but has not yet ensured consistency across all departments in this process. Systems at whole school and middle management levels are mainly good but inconsistencies occur in their implementation at class level. The school is aware of these inconsistencies and is in the process of addressing them. Accommodation is constantly upgraded, and resources and specialist equipment are very well deployed, especially those associated with technology college funding. This greatly enhances learning. Financial management is secure and budgets tightly controlled. The governing body is very effective in shaping the school's direction and holding it to account. The extremely good leadership of the chair of governors has led governance to thrive through an innovative operational structure involving joint working with senior managers and staff to provide the school with challenge and direction.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
|---|----------------|

Overall effectiveness

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

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? | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 1 |
| 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? | 1 |

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

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| 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 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 | 1 |
| 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

- 31 January 2008 Dear Pupils Inspection of Bucklers Mead Community School, Yeovil BA21 4NH Thank you all very much for the way you welcomed the inspection team to your school. We enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and hearing your very positive views. You are clearly proud of your school and I thoroughly enjoyed my tour of the school with you. This letter is to tell you what we found. Your school is providing you with a good and improving standard of education and it has many outstanding features. The headteacher continues to provide outstanding leadership and the senior management team are dedicated to providing the best that they can for you. Leadership and management are good overall. School leaders have a clear view of how the school can improve further and are putting strategies in place to do this. Currently, the standards you attain are broadly average. You make good progress from when you enter the school in Year 7 and achieve well because of the good teaching and a good curriculum. The school's outstanding care, support and guidance are helping you to become mature young adults who are growing in confidence and are well prepared for future life. As a result, your personal development is outstanding. We were impressed with how warmly you spoke about your school and how you felt that the staff were there especially for you and how much you appreciated that. You are clearly enjoying the range of activities on offer to you and the challenges that these bring. You have a very good understanding of how to stay safe and to live healthy lifestyles. We also enjoyed hearing about how you can make a difference to improving the school and that you are confident that your ideas will be heard, and acted upon. In order for the school to improve further, we have asked the senior management team to do two things.
- Make sure that your progress in all subjects is monitored rigorously.
- Ensure you know what you need to do to improve further, particularly in technology subjects. We feel sure that you will be able work together to improve further. With every best wish for your future. Caroline McKee Lead inspector

Annex B



31 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bucklers Mead Community School, Yeovil BA21 4NH

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- Ensure you know what you need to do to improve further, particularly in technology subjects.

We feel sure that you will be able work together to improve further.

With every best wish for your future.

Caroline McKee
Lead inspector