

# Bedminster Down School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109283
<b>Local Authority</b>	City of Bristol
<b>Inspection number</b>	337261
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 September 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Tom Winskill HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1010
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Palmer
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr M Frank
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 September 2006
<b>School address</b>	Donald Road Bedminster Down Bristol BS13 7DQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	0117 3532800
<b>Fax number</b>	0117 3532811
<b>Email address</b>	office@bedminsterdown.com

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Manchester M2 7LA

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 37 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and students. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including school monitoring records, improvement plans and 365 parents' questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the quality of learning and teaching in a range of different subjects
- how well the school's provision for potentially vulnerable students improves their learning, progress and well-being
- how well different aspects of the curriculum promote learning and raise students' aspirations for their future
- how effectively the school promotes good behaviour and attendance.

## Information about the school

This average-sized specialist technology school serves the Bedminster Down area of South Bristol. The majority of students are of White British heritage with just over 5% of students from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of students whose first language is not English is low. Two per cent of students have a statement of special education needs, which is close to the national average. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly above the national average. The school is part of the government's National Challenge programme, which is aimed at raising standards in secondary schools. The school is a member of the South Bristol 14 to 19 Partnership.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

### Main findings

This is a satisfactory and improving school. Although attainment is low, it is rising much faster than attainment nationally. The upward trajectory of attainment is mirrored by a range of other improvements since the last inspection. Students' learning and progress are satisfactory and getting better as a result of improvements to all aspects of provision. Students make good progress in English, and in design and technology, which is one of the school's specialist subjects. In most subjects, students make satisfactory progress.

Improvements to the curriculum, together with effective guidance, mean that individual students' needs are well catered for. The quality of care and support is such that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. In addition, students with social and emotional difficulties are supported well to remain focused on their education. Teaching and learning are improving as shown by the increasing proportion of teaching which is good, particularly in the school's specialist subjects, although there is little outstanding teaching. There are too few opportunities in lessons for students to learn in great depth or to develop their ability to be less reliant on the teacher.

The good behaviour exhibited in lessons and during breaks and lunchtimes is a real success for the school. It has employed a range of effective methods to improve behaviour and these are coming to fruition. Relationships between students, including those from different backgrounds, and between students and teachers are generally good. Action taken by the school has improved attendance but it remains low and is a barrier to learning for many students. In particular, too many students are persistently absent.

Older students themselves are able to point out many of the improvements since the last inspection. This pattern of improvement in much of the school's work demonstrates its strong capacity for improvement. This is built on effective self-evaluation which permeates through all areas of the school's work. The headteacher and, increasingly, the governing body provide strong leadership and a clear vision for improvement which underpin the work of the school.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further by ensuring that learning and progress are consistently good across a wide range of subjects.
- In order to ensure that students' learning and progress improve from satisfactory to good, the school should improve the quality of teaching so that learning and

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progress are good or better in 75% of lessons by July 2010 by: providing more opportunities for students to undertake extended guided discussion and extended written work enabling students to take more responsibility for their own learning so that they are less reliant on continuous direction from the teacher to make progress enabling teachers to develop and apply the skills needed to increase the proportion of teaching which is outstanding.

- To ensure that attendance improves from being low to broadly average, the school should raise overall attendance to at least 92.3% by July 2010 by: further reducing the percentage of students who are persistently absent consistent and sustained application of strategies proven to improve attendance tackling key groups of poor attenders.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

In lessons, students are generally attentive and keen to learn. When harnessed in the right way, students' positive attitudes result in good learning and progress. They respond well to lively, enthusiastic teaching which uses activities that interest them and challenge them to think. In a history lesson, students were keen to respond to the teacher's challenge to provide a plausible interpretation of a complex picture. Students in a geography lesson worked well in pairs to discuss how the sea erodes the coastline and then selected their own method of recording their understanding in their books.

In some lessons, however, students work through tasks and activities which are closely controlled by the teacher. This enables the great majority of students to make satisfactory progress. They still respond well but some students' learning is inhibited because they are not given time to discuss, or write about, the topic in sufficient depth. As a result their learning and progress remain satisfactory rather than good. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities do particularly well as a result of, for example, good use of modified learning materials and good support from teaching assistants.

Improvements in learning and progress are bringing about improvements in attainment. In 2008 the school's GCSE results reached the government target of 30% five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics for National Challenge schools. Students' attainment continued to improve in 2009.

Students make good use of the healthy options provided in the dining hall and many participate in a wide range of different sporting and physical activities. In a Year 9 boys' physical education lesson, students worked enthusiastically to raise their levels of fitness through well-organised and safe circuit training. They feel safe in school and understand threats to their health and safety. For example, in one effective lesson on e-safety Year 11 students learned about the dangers of posting personal data on social networking sites. Students, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, are able to seek support when it is required. They are confident that the school will deal with problems, including bullying, should they arise. Students respond well to the wide range of opportunities the school presents for developing the knowledge and skills required when they leave school. As a result, an increasing

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proportion of school leavers are choosing to enter further education. However, weaknesses in basic skills and attendance mean that the preparation for the next phase of students' education and training is limited for some.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching has many strengths; where they feature in lessons they bring about good learning and progress. Such lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, and are well planned using test and other data about students' progress to pitch work at the right level. Teachers ensure students are clear about what they are expected to learn and check how well students are doing in lessons. Teachers use data effectively to set realistic but challenging targets for individual students. Students know what they need to do in each subject to achieve those targets. Effective support in classrooms helps students with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make good progress. Where learning and progress are less strong, assessment information is not always used fully to help plan more challenging work for the most able students. In addition, lessons are often too tightly structured so that students are not able to develop their ideas or record their

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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work in sufficient depth.

The curriculum is under constant review and modification to meet the needs of students as well as possible. The provision for students of different abilities and aptitudes is a particular strength. For example, the school makes good use of a range of partners, both locally and city-wide, to provide highly personalised programmes for some individual students, including those at risk of exclusion. As a result of the well-planned curriculum and effective independent advice and guidance the proportion of students who leave school and do not go into further education, training or employment is low. An innovative aspect of the curriculum which enables students to make a strong contribution to the community is the weekly community placement programme undertaken by Year 10 students.

The school provides a wide and effective range of support to ensure potentially vulnerable students are managed in education and enabled to make good progress. For example, work to help improve reading and spelling to enable students to access the curriculum better is effective. The school has set out strategies which have improved behaviour, as shown, for example, by the reduction in the numbers of exclusions and referrals to senior staff. Students' expectations of their own and each other's behaviour have been raised.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

### **How effective are leadership and management?**

The school is increasingly gaining the confidence of students and parents. School leaders and managers, including governors, have suitably high expectations of staff and students. High quality monitoring ensures that underperformance is identified and action is taken to bring about improvement. For example, the proportion of inadequate teaching has been reduced significantly in the last two years. School leaders are implementing plans to tackle the small amount of residual inadequate teaching. The school is crystal clear about what it needs to do to improve further. Improvement plans are based on detailed monitoring of performance with a particular focus on students' attainment and progress. This focus has been sharpened by the school's involvement in the National Challenge programme. Whole-school targets are suitably challenging and provide a genuine stimulus for improvement.

The promotion of equality of opportunity is central to the work of the school. It has a well-honed understanding of the performance and well-being of different groups and

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individuals. School leaders take action to tackle inequalities and to ensure that barriers to learning for different groups are overcome. For example, the number of racially motivated incidents is low and students from different backgrounds generally feel safe in school. The school provides effective support for those students with social and emotional difficulties. It works effectively in partnership with other agencies to support looked after children so that their progress is at least in line with that of other students, and so their attendance is often above the national average.

The school is working successfully to emphasise the importance of good relationships between members of the school community. As a result, the school community itself is becoming highly cohesive. The school has a good understanding of the south Bristol community it serves. Students are actively and successfully involved in local community projects, initiatives and activities which help to promote community cohesion. Activities and planning to develop links beyond the local community are limited.

Safeguarding arrangements are well established and effective. The governors have a good understanding of the school's performance and are becoming increasingly adept at holding the school to account. For example, the governing body has made it clear to the school that attendance is not rising quickly enough.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

**Views of parents and carers**

The parents' generally positive views of the school are in line with those found in the most recent surveys carried out by the school. They show a considerable improvement in parents' satisfaction with the school overall over the last three years. Many parents of



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younger students spoke highly of the school's effective procedures for helping students make the change from primary to secondary school. The main concern, expressed by a minority, related mostly to behaviour, and the inspection evidence showed marked improvements in this area.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bedminster Down School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 365 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1010 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	110	30	228	63	17	5	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	129	36	210	58	13	4	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	103	28	204	56	19	5	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	94	26	217	60	17	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	99	27	233	64	6	2	3	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	76	21	241	66	20	6	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	82	23	240	66	21	6	1	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	92	25	223	61	11	3	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	93	26	234	65	10	3	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	90	25	210	58	22	6	5	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	57	16	231	64	21	6	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	107	30	226	62	7	2	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	129	36	208	57	9	3	1	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



18 September 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Bedminster Down School, Bristol, BS13 7DQ

We inspected your school recently and I am writing to inform you of our findings. Thank you for making us welcome, particularly those of you who helped us with the inspection.

Bedminster Down School is satisfactory and improving. The school's examination results are improving although they are low compared with many schools nationally. Students make good progress in English and design and technology, and satisfactory progress in other subjects. Your behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. You have told us that you have high expectations of your own behaviour, which is improving all the time. You feel safe in school and generally get on well with one another. Many of you attend well but others are absent from school too often.

You work well in lessons where you get on well with the teacher. Lessons are generally well planned and well organised. In some lessons you are not given enough time to learn in depth by yourselves. The school provides a good range of subjects. You are guided well to choose the subjects that are right for you. The school is well run by the headteacher and his staff, who have your best interests at heart.

We have set out below how the school should improve.

- Further improve examination results by ensuring that students make good progress in all subjects, not just a few.
- Raise the quality of teaching by providing students with more opportunities to discuss their work in depth and write about it fully and in detail in lesson times. You can help by making sure you are prepared to work by yourselves without so much direct instruction by the teacher.
- Improve attendance, particularly for those students who do not attend regularly. You can help by making every effort to come to school every day.

Best wishes for the future

Tom Winskill HMI

Lead inspector

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