

# Avonbourne School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113904
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bournemouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	338266
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 January 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sheila Nolan

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>	Modern (non-selective)
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1063
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sarah Manners
<b>Headteacher</b>	Debbie Godfrey-Phaure
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Harewood Avenue Bournemouth BH7 6NY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01202 398451
<b>Fax number</b>	01202 304876
<b>Email address</b>	admin@avonbourne.bournemouth.org

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 52 lessons and held meetings with the chair of the governing body, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, analysed 185 questionnaire responses from parents and carers, looked at the data collected by the school about the students' progress, the records of the quality of the monitoring of teaching, and sampled students' work in classes.

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

- the impact of the school's actions to raise the students' attainment in mathematics and science and to eliminate the considerable variation in performance between subjects
- how well the school meets the learning needs of the students with special educational needs and provides for those who are most able
- the impact of the curriculum and of the business and enterprise specialism on the students' attainment
- how successful the school has been in its efforts to engage parents in their children's education and in improving the students' attendance.

## Information about the school

Avonbourne School, a specialist business and enterprise college and a Trust School, serves a socially and economically diverse community. Families in the area have ready access to a range of selective and non-selective schools. The overwhelming majority of the students are of White British or European heritages. There are 20 students at the very early stages of learning English, mainly Polish and Portuguese. The proportion of the students eligible for a free school meal is similar to that found nationally, as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These special needs relate to a range of barriers to learning, including emotional, social and behavioural difficulties, as well as moderate learning difficulties. The school offers a wide range of additional services extending beyond the school day. Among other awards, Avonbourne has won the International School Award and been accredited as a Thinking School.

**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?**

**2**

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

**2**

## Main findings

Avonbourne is a good school that has made steady progress each year since its last inspection. Most importantly, it is driving up the students' attainment so that from their starting points they make good progress. At the same time, it has not merely sustained its good practice in supporting their personal development but has strengthened the care, guidance and support it provides to students and to their families. This is now outstanding and has resulted in a truly inclusive ethos through which the school strives successfully to keep vulnerable students in full-time education.

The school has also developed excellent partnerships with a wide range of support agencies and with many and varied organisations and institutions, at home and overseas. This has benefited its students in many ways, not least in enabling them to contribute outstandingly well to their own school community and also to local and international communities. Students are particularly enthusiastic about their work for charities at home and abroad. The school's efforts to make all families and pupils feel valued have brought about improvements in parents' engagement with students' learning. Parents are particularly appreciative of the mentoring process and of the progress meetings. 'I feel my child is treated as an individual. The regular progress meetings make her progress clear to me,' noted one parent, expressing the views of many. Nevertheless, although there has been genuine improvement in the students' attendance this term, there are still too many who are casual about absence and still families who take time out of term for holidays.

Students are achieving well in their learning because the school has very high expectations. It has made real strides in eliminating the disparities in students' performance between subjects. However, despite steady improvement, students do not yet do as well in science and mathematics as they do in English. Able students also do not always achieve the highest grades expected given their starting points. The pioneering work to develop thinking skills is not fully embedded in the otherwise good teaching. There are still too many lessons in which students' understanding and reflection are insufficiently challenged, despite some very good practice in checking students' learning in lessons. Opportunities here are missed both within and across subject areas.

Avonbourne is well equipped to sustain further improvement because of the collaborative working of senior leaders with the staff team. All are ambitious for the students and determined to take the necessary steps to build on hard-won recent gains. The accomplishments of the past three years point to a good capacity to improve further. The school honestly evaluates the many steps it takes to bring about improvements and consequently has a generally accurate assessment of its strengths

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and areas for development.

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

- Raise the performance of able students so that their examination grades more truly reflect their potential by:
  - ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to articulate their understanding of concepts, think for themselves in all lessons and have the space to reflect on their responses to tasks and questions.
- Ensure that the good practice in some subjects on checking students' day-to-day learning is disseminated across all areas of the curriculum and used consistently by all teachers.
- Work more intensively with families to improve attendance further by:
  - ensuring they do not take extended breaks in term time
  - developing even more worthwhile rewards for consistently good attendance.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

The quality of learning and progress in lessons is good overall. The school has been particularly successful in encouraging the students' enjoyment of learning. This was very clear in a Year 7 graphics lesson, for example, where the good rapport between students and teachers spurred them on to ask questions enthusiastically. In a Year 9 lesson, which introduced students to background information on Shakespeare in preparation for studying *Romeo and Juliet*, the use of a range of techniques, some involving new technologies, and even 'smells', increased the students' excitement in their work. As a result, they learned well. Those students with particular learning needs are mainly supported well in advancing their understanding of tasks. This was clear in a Year 10 mathematics group where difficulties from the previous lessons were revisited carefully. However, in this lesson, able students marked time as the whole class covered the same material. Those students with previously challenging behaviour have mostly bought into the school's drive to help students achieve because of rewards and encouragement.

In 2009, the school gained its highest ever GCSE results, continuing the improving trend since the last inspection. From generally below average starting points, students' overall performance by the end of Year 11 has been regularly average despite some continuing variation across subjects. In the most recent GCSE examinations, just over half of Year 11 students gained five or more higher grades that included both English and mathematics. The proportion of the students gaining A\* and A grades, however, is still below the school's challenging targets. Through changes to the curriculum and the systematic monitoring of the work of departments, unevenness in subject performance has been partially eliminated. Students' performance in mathematics, for example, has improved, as has that in science, although not yet on a par with the sustained above average English results.

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The small number of students at the early stages of learning English make rapid gains in fluency but their examination success is less than that of their peers nationally because these students mostly joined the school in Years 10 and 11. A small group of students with complex needs also attain less well than similar groups nationally, mainly because, although on the school roll, they are educated elsewhere. A few are also hindered by poor attendance.

Overall, students achieve well by the end of Year 11, particularly in both English and mathematics. They are especially successful in the specialist subject areas, particularly in applied information technology courses. Although no group of students makes less than satisfactory progress, there is some variation in the achievement of different groups. Able students achieve less well than other groups in relation to their starting points because the school has concentrated more on those students who find it challenging to reach GCSE grade C.

Students report their satisfaction in the work of the active school council in getting things done. For example, they have been influential in refurbishing toilets, in changing some carpets and the uniform and in designing the Islamic garden. Most are exceptionally keen to take on responsibilities and are committed to their fair trade activities, their work as sports and dance leaders in local primary schools, their efforts as peer mediators, and their tasks as buddies for younger students. Students have a genuine sense of their role as citizens and, for example, badgered local authority officials to initiate a sustainable schools strategy, 'Clean up the World'. The majority of students prepare well for their future training, education and employment, developing their enterprise and basic skills and attending regularly. There is a hard core, however, of poor attendees and some who adopt a too casual approach to daily schooling.

In discussions, students demonstrate that they are very clear about how to stay safe and that they feel safe in school. They understand well the importance of a healthy lifestyle and participate regularly in sporting and other activities. High numbers regularly take part in extended school activities. Students behave well, including those few with previously challenging behaviour. 'Teachers respect, support and really listen to you' is a view echoed by the majority of students.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<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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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Avonbourne's specialist status as a business and enterprise college has had a very positive influence on the curriculum which has been well adapted to boost the students' examination performance. Enterprise activities permeate all subject areas. Vocational provision has expanded, both on and off site, and citizenship as well as thinking skills is well embedded at both key stages, an improvement since the last inspection.

Particularly strong features of the curriculum include the very extensive range of out-of-hours activities, the emphasis on the international dimension and the preparation of the students to become global citizens. The flexible pathways from Year 8 provide for all students to gain access to worthwhile accreditation best suited to their stages of development and needs. World literacy and applied numeracy in Years 7 to 9 provide a further emphasis on key skills but are not yet fully effective in helping to support basic skills.

The school has effective systems to evaluate the quality of teaching. However, there has been more emphasis on teachers' performance than on the quality of students' learning in recent evaluations. Students who have particular learning barriers are supported well because staff focus sharply on their needs. The majority of teachers strive to ensure work matches earlier learning and many strive to develop students' thinking skills. Nevertheless, recent training here is not yet fully reflected in the students' learning, particularly in that of the most able, as observed in a Year 9 geography class on the effects of the tsunami in south-east Asia. Students were clear as to what was expected of them because of careful planning. However, able students were not extended as much as they could be because questioning did not probe deeply enough or encourage

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them to explore ideas as fully as possible for themselves. There are, nevertheless, real strengths in some classrooms in the way teachers check pupils' learning and in the way they use new technology to enrich lessons. Working relationships between pupils and staff are excellent.

The most vulnerable students benefit greatly from the school's strong links with external agencies and the generally excellent care, guidance and support. Arrangements for inducting students into the school at all stages are carefully thought out so that newcomers settle quickly. Those who have been absent are supported considerably to help them catch up with their work. Avonbourne does its level best to support both students and their families. Nevertheless, there are still some parents who are hard to engage in the academic progress of the students and who defeat the school's best efforts to promote regular attendance by taking students on holiday in term time. Arrangements for students to move to the next stage of their education are managed smoothly and effectively.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<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>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's determination that 'children come first at Avonbourne' is at the heart of the school's drive for improvement. In this she is very well supported by the senior team. Working together, they have engendered a genuine desire among staff to improve the school and do their best for the students. Staff feel valued and their development is a high priority. Middle leaders are particularly well supported so that they can play a full part in the school's development. Weaker classroom practice has been tackled robustly. Regular monitoring and moderation of students' work and of teaching is helping to eliminate variations in the progress of groups of students.

There is a carefully orchestrated approach to managing the safety of the students both throughout the school day and in the many out-of-hours activities. Systems to assess risk are good and collaborative working with external agencies to support students is a real strength of the school. The school has been successful in persuading considerable numbers of parents to attend performances and mentoring meetings about students' progress. The governing body is highly committed to supporting the school and to challenging its performance. It is fully involved in supporting the school's work to improve attendance and to engage hard-to-reach parents in the students' education. Self-evaluation is generally accurate so that the school has an honest picture of its



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effectiveness. While acknowledging the challenges facing many of the pupils, the school does its level best to cater equally well for all and to ensure that no member of its community suffers discrimination. The strong pastoral care and innovations in the curriculum actively promote access for all students to a good education. The school promotes community cohesion successfully. It understands its place in the neighbourhood well and strives to promote students' awareness of their relationship to the global community, and less formally to the national community.

*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>1</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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaires are very supportive of the school. A small proportion, however, have concerns about how effectively the school manages students' behaviour. Inspectors found no evidence to suggest that behaviour was other than good and agreed with the school that some parents and carers found the school's determination to keep every student in full-time education by careful placements difficult to accept.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Avonbourne 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 185 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1063 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	29	109	59	12	6	5	3
The school keeps my child safe	52	28	119	64	10	5	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	52	28	120	65	8	4	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	52	28	111	60	16	9	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	35	19	127	69	16	9	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	29	16	123	66	23	12	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	14	129	70	17	9	4	2
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)	33	18	118	64	15	8	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	18	124	67	17	9	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	15	103	56	37	20	10	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	11	122	66	20	11	5	3
The school is led and managed effectively	35	19	127	69	14	8	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	23	124	67	13	7	2	1

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.**



13 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Avonbourne School, Bournemouth, BH7 6NY

This letter is to thank you for welcoming us to your school and for taking the time from your breaks to talk to the inspectors. We really enjoyed meeting you and seeing you at work. We came to find out as much as we could about your school and now we would like to tell you what we said in the report we have written.

We found that you go to a good school and that you clearly enjoy your lessons. Staff provide you with many exciting opportunities to learn and lessons are mostly good. You are very fortunate to be able to participate in the many clubs and events the school organises and to share in the wide range of enterprise activities open to you.

We were particularly impressed by the way you all get on together. We could see that you and your teachers share a culture of mutual respect and care for each other. Most of you behave very well. It was good to know that you all feel safe in school and that you take seriously the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Your commitment to your own and other communities is excellent and a clear reflection of the outstandingly effective way the school looks after you.

By the time you reach the end of Year 11, most of you are doing well and getting really useful GCSE results. Nevertheless, the most able of you can do even better and we have asked your teachers to help you on your way to attaining the highest available grades. We have also asked your teachers to make sure that you always fully understand work in class and support you even more in developing how you think about your work. Most of you attend regularly but there are some of you who take too much time off school, including holidays in term time. We would ask you to do your best not to miss school. Staff will be trying even further ways to promote good attendance and to help your families to understand its importance.

We wish you and the school all the best for the future and hope you continue to work hard with your teachers.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Nolan

Lead Inspector

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