

The Beaconsfield School

Wattleton Road, Beaconsfield, HP9 1SJ

Inspection dates 8–9 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	This inspection:	Requires improvement 3
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils	Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students who enter the school in the higher and middle ability groups do not perform well enough.
- The progress of lower attaining students in Key Stage 3 is not good enough.
- The achievement of students in GCSE subjects, other than English, mathematics and science, is too variable to be good.
- Some teachers do not plan work which ensures students make the progress of which they are capable.
- The quality of work in students' books is too variable. There are too many tasks which require students to provide brief answers rather than deepening their understanding.
- Marking is inconsistent. Some teachers do not mark work frequently enough or give specific guidance to help students improve.
- Students' behaviour is not yet good because it differs too much between subjects and groups.
- Some poor behaviour during lesson changeover is not challenged by all teachers.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has single-mindedly moved the school forward. Staffing issues have been resolved, the leadership team is at full complement, and the majority of parents support the school.
- Results show that the proportion of students achieving five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, has risen.
- The sixth form is good. Students' progress is broadly in line with national average and in some subjects is above average. Over the past three years standards have risen.
- Teachers' checks on the progress of sixth form students are rigorous. Changes made to sharpen sixth formers' attitudes to studying are helping them make more rapid progress.
- The school's work to keep students safe is good and attendance has improved.
- Changes to the curriculum are helping students to contribute positively to their local and wider community.
- Governors hold the school to account effectively, using their relevant expertise to challenge the school to improve.
- The majority of parents are very positive about how caring the school is.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 37 lessons; five were joint lesson observations with senior leaders, including the headteacher.
- Inspectors also conducted short visits to a number of classes. The headteacher accompanied the lead inspector on short visits made on the second day of the inspection.
- Inspectors undertook a scrutiny of work, some of which was from the previous academic year.
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of documents including recent unvalidated GCSE results, information about students' current progress, teachers' planning, records showing leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to students' safety.
- Inspectors talked to students informally and met with groups of students from different year groups. Inspectors considered 28 questionnaires completed by staff, 208 responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire for parents) and additional comments from a small number of parents.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, members of staff, parents and representatives from the governing body.

Inspection team

Sarah Hubbard, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Glen Goddard

Additional Inspector

Janice Howkins

Additional Inspector

Jason Wye

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Beaconsfield School converted to become an academy school on 1 March 2013. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- The school is a smaller-than-average sized non-selective secondary school in a local authority which operates a selective system.
- Most students are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium funding is additional government funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children that are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs who are receiving school support is below average. The proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is in line with the national average.
- A small number of students are educated off site at Chiltern Skills Enterprise Centre.
- The school's sixth form works in partnership with The South Bucks Partnership Consortium.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so it is good or better by ensuring that teachers:
 - make better use in their planning of information about the progress of middle and higher attaining students
 - take greater account when asking questions of the knowledge and understanding different students' need in order to make rapid progress
 - raise their expectations of how much and how well students are required to write in class, openly sharing these expectations with students and regularly checking the quality of students' writing
 - when marking students' work, consistently provide subject specific guidance about what students need to do better and monitor students' responses to questions
 - continue to share the expertise some teachers have in ensuring their students make progress with those whose students make less progress.
- Improve achievement by ensuring that:
 - the higher attaining and middle attaining students make enough progress to achieve the targets set for their GCSE grades
 - improvements in achievement in GCSE English are replicated across a wider range of subjects
 - the progress of lower attaining students is consistently good or better in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 3
 - students produce work of the highest quality and are challenged when their work is not good enough.
- Improve behaviour so it is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring teachers communicate their expectations of students' behaviour, both within the classroom and in the corridors, and take appropriate actions when students fail to meet them.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has made substantial changes to the school over the last three years which have played a crucial role in moving the school forward. He has changed the timetable, altered the curriculum, streamlined the middle leadership team, strengthened the senior leadership team and made significant changes to staff. The school is now in the right position to ensure more recent improvements, focused on raising achievement, are successful.
- Inspection evidence shows that leaders have been too generous in their written evaluation of students' achievement. Too much emphasis has been placed on improved achievement in English and mathematics 2014 GCSE examinations.
- Regular checks on teaching by leaders enable them to identify which teachers need support and guidance. This support is well tailored to meet their individual needs. As a result, teaching is improving.
- Leaders have recently organised training sessions for teachers to review students' books collectively. Seeing how effectively some of their colleagues mark books has begun to sharpen up the written feedback teachers provide for students. However, teachers' marking is not yet consistently good.
- Middle leaders use information on students' progress in an increasingly refined way to hold the teachers they manage to account for how much progress is made by the students they teach.
- Most middle leaders, including the head of sixth form, are regularly challenged by senior leaders to do better. This has led to improved GCSE results in some subjects and better progress in the sixth form.
- Procedures for managing teachers' performance are robust. The small number of teachers who have not performed to agreed standards have not received a pay increase. Teachers who are on a higher pay scale make an enhanced contribution to improving the school. The headteacher and governors' decision to review teachers' targets and set new ones at the end of the summer, rather than during the autumn term, means that teachers have the right focus for improving their work from the start of the new term.
- The school has used the pupil premium grant to fund tutors to work with small groups of students to help them achieve five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics. In English and mathematics GCSE, the gap in achievement between students eligible for additional funding and other students has closed significantly since 2012.
- The school is promoting reading skills and a love of books through a dedicated reading lesson for students in Years 7 and 8. Reading scores have improved. Teachers are not consistently using new whole school approaches to improve writing.
- Senior leaders have changed the curriculum recently. Adjustments have been well thought out to ensure students gain the skills they need to secure the best grades they can in English and mathematics. The changes also provide students with enhanced study skills, greater enjoyment and respect for other cultures.
- Leaders carefully monitor the numbers of rewards and sanctions given by teachers to students. They use this information to identify precisely where extra support is needed. As a result behaviour is improving.
- Leaders' work with students whose behaviour is more challenging has not led to a substantial drop in the number of students being excluded for a fixed number of days. However, good use is made of alternative provision to ensure students who find it difficult to manage in a school environment continue their education.
- Extra-curricular activities develop students' understanding of the world. For example, a Holocaust survivor recently talked to students who confirmed that it helped them to build up their knowledge of the past and the world they currently inhabit.
- The school promotes tolerance and diversity effectively. It has been identified as a local centre for global learning. Students are given the chance to become school prefects, visit non-European countries, as well as support charities such as Amnesty International and Stonewall. As a result, students show high levels of tolerance to members of the school community and understand that they can, and should, make a positive contribution to improving their school and the wider community.
- A small number of students are educated off site at The Chiltern Skills Enterprise Centre. These students benefit from carefully planned activities, including the effective use of film and music, which are closely tailored to their different needs. As a result of this approach and the school's careful monitoring, students educated off site make good progress.
- The school provides a comprehensive programme of careers information and guidance across all three key stages. External careers advisers conduct one to one meetings with Year 11 students and targeted students from Years 9 and 10. As a result of this well-targeted support the number of students not accessing education, employment or training when they leave is very low.

- The vast majority of parents who shared their views with inspectors, either in person, via email or through the online questionnaire (Parent View), praised the care and support the school gives its students. They particularly value the approachability of the headteacher, who is on duty at the school gate at the start of the school day. The high visibility of leaders at the end of the day means students conduct themselves well as they commence their journey home, whether by foot or public transport.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The school’s governors have successfully challenged the headteacher to improve the English and mathematics GCSE results. They have analysed the 2014 GCSE results and, as a consequence, rightly set new targets for the headteacher based on improving the achievement of middle and lower attaining groups.
 - By carefully scrutinising the school’s checks on the quality of teaching, governors have a clear view of where it needs to improve. They have recently started to use information which tracks students’ progress to check whether the school’s judgements on the quality of teaching are accurate.
 - The governors play a very active role in managing the performance of middle and senior leaders. The Chair of the Governing Body has relevant experience which is helping ensure policies on teachers’ pay progression are adhered to rigorously.
 - The governing body has recruited a new, governor with relevant experience to focus on safeguarding. The school’s work to keep children safe is good.
 - Governors carefully check how effectively the school uses its additional pupil premium funding to raise achievement. The gap between the achievement of those eligible for additional funding and their peers is closing.
 - Governors support the school in caring for its students and interviews Year 7 students to check how well they have settled in. Governors have challenged the school to provide activities that enhance students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural knowledge. This aspect of the school’s work is a strength.
 - The governors have worked extensively with the headteacher to make the changes necessary to place the school on a better financial footing. They have brought their professional expertise to bear on ensuring changes make the financial savings that are required.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement because although it has improved, it is too inconsistent to be good.
- The school’s leaders have implemented new systems to enable teachers to manage students’ behaviour in class. Students who spoke with inspectors said that teachers use lower level sanctions more consistently than more serious ones. In a minority of classes, teachers allow students to break agreed codes of conduct without any consequence so some behaviour prevents students from learning well, particularly in lower sets.
- The behaviour of students on the top floor of the school is not always as good as that on the other two floors, most noticeably at the change of lessons. Some older students indulge in horseplay on the corridor. A number of teachers pay insufficient attention to managing students’ behaviour in the areas outside their classrooms.
- Where teachers’ planning fails to ensure students are kept busy doing well thought-out tasks, students’ behaviour and their attitudes to learning are noticeably worse than in well-planned lessons.
- Attendance has improved for all students due to closer monitoring by senior leaders. Groups of students identified as having poor attendance in 2013 had better attendance in 2014.
- The staff at the offsite provision teach students how to exercise greater control over their own behaviour. The behaviour of students while attending the provision is calm and focused as result of this direct approach.

Safety

- The school’s work to keep pupils safe and secure is good because senior leaders have a very detailed knowledge of the help and support each vulnerable student needs in order to remain safe. The school makes good use of the police, charities and external providers to work directly with students who are exposed to risks that require expertise to protect them from harm.
- The school’s leaders are aware that the local authority’s services for children in need of help and protection were recently judged as inadequate. The school’s leaders rigorously monitor how well the local

authority keeps the students they refer to them safe. If they are concerned that this is not good enough they challenge the authority to do better.

- Leaders ensure that the systems and policies in place to keep students safe are detailed and updated regularly. Planning for school trips is thorough; it includes prior visits where appropriate to check on potential risks and a detailed briefing pack for staff accompanying the trips.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is improving, but is still too variable to be good. Some teachers' planning places insufficient focus on ensuring the work set for higher and middle attaining students is challenging enough.
- In too many classes, teachers are not planning questions carefully. The questions they pose do not ensure individual students make the rapid progress needed to meet their targets. When students answer questions, too many teachers settle with the reply they are given and do not probe students' understanding further.
- In some subjects, noticeably English and history, teachers carefully check students' progress throughout the lesson. They tailor their questions and the work they set in response to these checks. In one Year 7 history class, the teacher's close questioning revealed a confusion regarding the word 'centurion'. The teacher carefully guided students, helping them to iron out any misconceptions and make valuable connections with other words that use the same Latin root.
- The amount of writing students do is sometimes limited by the over use of worksheets that do not require students to write at length. Consequently, students do not develop the higher level skills to enable them to achieve the top GCSE grades. In a philosophy and ethics class, students were squeezing answers to big questions, such as 'Why do humans need to suffer?' into small boxes. As a result, the students did not have the opportunity to grapple with the complexities of the question.
- The quality of writing in some students' books is not good enough. Teachers do not routinely challenge students to express their ideas with greater clarity and use subject specific language to better effect.
- Teachers' marking is inconsistent and teachers are not sufficiently clear about the school's minimum expectation. Some teachers' marking, especially but not solely in English, identifies precisely what improvements students need to make. Marking that focuses on general areas for improvement is less helpful.
- Students' English and mathematics exercise books from when they were in Year 6 have been passed on to this school. English teachers have used them to gain a very comprehensive picture of their Year 7 students' skills and abilities. Consequently, the work they set for students is pitched at the right level and does not repeat what they have already done.
- New plans in place to improve students' use of accurate grammar, punctuation and spelling in their writing are not yet embedded.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics has improved but it is not as consistent as in English. In some classes teachers provided extra challenges such as extension problems for more able students to solve. Teachers' marking in mathematics does not always provide students with specific guidance on how to do better next time. Some books contain too many work sheets that require students to simply fill in the answers rather than explore how they reached them.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The proportion of students achieving five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics has risen. Achievement requires improvement because the average GCSE grade of students who enter the school in the higher and middle ability groups is not high enough.
- In 2014 some students had the chance to re-sit a number of their GCSE examinations. The proportion of students gaining the very highest grades on their first attempt was too low and did not improve significantly on their second attempt.
- This year the school has set more ambitious targets for all students to drive the rapid progress needed to achieve better average GCSE grades. However, some current teaching is not good enough to ensure these more aspirational targets will be met.
- The achievement of most able students is too variable. The proportion of students attaining A* or A grades in the 2013 GCSE examinations was below average. Unvalidated 2014 results show improvements in the proportion of students achieving the highest grades in some subjects, including English. However this was not consistent across all subjects.

- In 2014 the proportion of lower attaining students making greater than expected progress in Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science was too low. Not enough was done to close the gap between their achievement and the achievement of other groups of students.
- In 2013 compared to national averages, students in receipt of additional funding did not do as well as those who were not receiving it. Based on 2014 results, the gap within the school is closing between the proportion of students achieving five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, eligible for this funding and those who are not.
- In 2014, unvalidated results show students' made good progress in English GCSE. The gap in the rate of progress between the small number of students who receive additional pupil premium funding and other students in English GCSE closed completely.
- The progress of students in Key Stage 4 who are disabled and have special educational needs is in line with that of other students. This is due to well targeted literacy and numeracy help. At Key Stage 3, the progress of this group of students is more variable across subjects and year groups.
- The school has provided extra lessons for students who enter the school in Year 7 eligible for additional catch-up funding. The school's own information showed that last year the majority made enough progress to meet their end of year targets. Those who did not meet their targets continue to receive extra help.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The overall attainment of students in the sixth form has risen over the last three years and the quality of teaching is good.
- In 2014, there was variation in the attainment of students in different subjects at A' level. Students' attainment in some more academic subjects, such as English literature, dipped. In other more vocational subjects, students' attainment improved. The school has raised the minimum GSCE grade required to take specific A' level subjects to ensure students can cope with the demands of the subject and reduce this variability.
- Overall students' make good progress, including students who are eligible for additional funding. Students' progress is carefully monitored by subject teachers, subject leaders and the head of sixth form. If students fall behind in several subjects they are placed on a comprehensive support programme. This approach is having a positive effect on helping students to catch up.
- Teachers use rigorous methods to check how well students are doing. Examination questions are set to test students' understanding so teachers have an accurate picture of students' progress. As a result, extra support is well-targeted.
- Teachers have high expectations of the way students use specific subject terminology. Teachers challenge students when they answer questions without using the correct terms. When research is set for homework, teachers ensure that students link what they find out to the theories they are taught in class.
- The school's leaders have raised their expectations of the amount of work they expect from students. The sixth form common room has become a study area. Although this has not been a popular decision with students, the school's recent tracking information indicates this is helping to improve students' achievement.
- The school has sought to make the sixth form more viable. By joining The South Bucks Partnership Consortium it is able to offer a wider choice of subjects.
- Students receive effective guidance when deciding on their next steps beyond school. The school's annual university and careers fair kick starts the process of applying for higher education or employment. As a result, students are making more informed decisions about their next steps.
- Those who have not achieved a grade C or above in English and mathematics GCSE examinations resit these subjects in the sixth form. An above average proportion of these students, when compared to national figures, achieve the minimum grade or above.
- The school provides sixth form students with many opportunities to gain the skills needed to be successful in the next phase of their life. They organise social events and prefects help staff to keep younger students safe at lunchtime. As a result the vast majority of students who leave in Year 13 progress to higher education or employment-related training.
- A small number of students leave at the end of Year 12. The school supports these students effectively. Consequently all of them either start employment or access courses at local colleges.
- The behaviour and safety of students in the sixth form are good. Students show consistently positive

attitudes to learning and cooperate well with their teachers to facilitate purposeful lessons. Many sixth formers have been trained as 'listeners' so they can support younger students who are concerned about bullying or other issues. Sixth form students act as role models within school and ambassadors within the community.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	139367
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	426552
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy Converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	880
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Roger Peacock
Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Fletcher
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
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