

Beechen Cliff School

Kipling Avenue, Bath, Somerset BA2 4RE

Inspection dates

22–23 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Too often, low-level disruption in lessons interrupts pupils' learning, especially in key stage 3.
- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Leaders' monitoring of teaching is weak. Consequently, the quality of teaching is not consistently strong across the school.
- Leaders and governors do not monitor the impact of additional funding effectively, including the pupil premium and special educational needs funding. As a result, pupils who are eligible for this funding are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders' responses to a recent serious safeguarding incident have been insufficient and too slow. In addition, leaders did not tell inspectors about a recent racially motivated incident.
- Safeguarding is ineffective. Leaders' and governors' poor understanding of the principles and practice of safeguarding and child protection puts pupils at risk.
- Leaders do not refer serious child protection issues immediately to the local authority. This exposes pupils to unnecessary risks.
- Leaders misuse extended study leave in Year 11. This is a form of unlawful exclusion used as a way of dealing with very poor behaviour. This places the most vulnerable pupils at risk of harm.
- Leaders do not have effective systems to monitor the attendance and achievement of pupils taught in alternative provision. As a result, leaders do not know if vulnerable pupils are safe and making progress in their studies.
- The 16 to 19 study programmes require improvement, as the progress pupils make on A-level courses is not yet good, especially for girls and those with an average grade of B or below at GCSE.
- Leaders and governors do not have secure procedures for safely recruiting staff. Therefore, pupils' safety is compromised.

The school has the following strengths

- The progress that pupils make in some subjects at key stage 4 has been consistently above average, especially in mathematics.
- Students in the sixth form receive strong guidance to help them to make informed choices about their future education and employment.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - rapidly establishing a robust culture of safeguarding across the school
 - making certain that safeguarding and child protection concerns are well managed, especially those that are judged to be worthy of referral to the local authority
 - ensuring that the principles of safer recruitment are rigorously followed
 - ensuring that the analysis of the impact of additional funding, including the pupil premium, is rigorous, so that it identifies precisely the impact that planned interventions have on pupils' outcomes.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment, by:
 - improving the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and its impact on the progress pupils make, including in the sixth form
 - ensuring that teaching precisely meets the needs of all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils from a minority ethnic background, so that they make at least good progress.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - processes and procedures to keep pupils safe are robust and implemented effectively by all staff
 - low-level disruption in lessons, especially in key stage 3, is eradicated swiftly.
- Improve the quality of the 16 to 19 study programmes, by
 - ensuring that teaching more successfully meets the needs of female students and those students who enter the sixth form with average attainment of B or below at GCSE
 - reducing the wide variation in outcomes in some individual subjects that students with similar starting points achieve on A-level courses.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders, including governors, have not put secure policies, procedures and practices in place to ensure that pupils are safe and protected.
- School improvement planning is weak. In places, planning is a set of vague aspirations with no identified actions to turn them into reality. Consequently, leaders are not tackling the key issues for improvement successfully. For example, safeguarding systems are ineffectual and poor behaviour persists.
- Leaders have not monitored the quality of teaching, learning and assessment with precision and depth. They do not pay sufficient attention to the progress that pupils and groups of pupils make over time. As a result, teaching is not improving quickly enough and pupils are not making the progress that they could across a broad range of academically rigorous subjects.
- Leaders have failed to deal with poor behaviour in key stage 3, despite recognising that it is a concern. The disruption in lessons interferes with pupils' learning and, consequently, they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders have unlawfully excluded pupils by misusing study leave. Senior leaders were unable to tell inspectors during the inspection how many pupils were on study leave. This puts pupils at potential risk. The school uses alternative provision for a small number of pupils. This came to light late in the inspection. However, leaders do not visit these sites, have no understanding of the quality of education provided and do not have up-to-date information on attendance. This places pupils at serious risk.
- Leaders do not ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well, as they do not monitor the impact of the pupil premium precisely. Too many teachers do not know which pupils are disadvantaged. Leaders' analysis of the use of the pupil premium is perfunctory. No attempt is made to tease out which actions are working in order to refine them. Consequently, these pupils underachieve at this school.
- Similarly, the use of the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium is not monitored well. Leaders and middle leaders cannot explain the impact of the use of this funding. As a result, this funding is not helping pupils to catch up and make better progress in English and mathematics.
- Leaders do not use additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities effectively. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) focuses on organising access arrangements for public examinations. Improving learning for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is not done well. Leaders do not monitor the progress, attendance and behaviour of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and do not know what impact interventions are having and whether these pupils are making good progress.
- School leaders are unclear about the precise number of pupils in the school who speak English as an additional language. Also, they are unsure of the progress that they make. Leaders do not monitor the impact of the support they receive from a specialist teacher. Consequently, these pupils are not receiving their entitlement to the wider curriculum. Teachers have not received specific training in order to

understand and meet the needs of these pupils. Some of these pupils are eligible for the pupil premium too but are not on track to achieve the required grades in Year 11 because of the poor oversight of the funding. This is compromising their future choices.

- Leaders do not keep detailed records of exclusions. The root causes of exclusions are not analysed effectively and so repeat offences persist. Information recorded in the exclusions log is cursory. It does not provide the basis for a strategy to halt the rise in exclusions. As a result, fixed-term exclusions continue to rise.
- In 2017, a third of Year 11 pupils did not study qualifications considered by the government to be worthy of inclusion in the school's accountability measures. Moreover, despite leaders' assertions that the school provides 'a strong academic curriculum', only a third of boys study separate sciences at GCSE. Leaders are not providing a curriculum with a broad range of suitable courses to be studied at GCSE.
- The time devoted to personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) in the formal curriculum is very limited. Consequently, pupils are not sufficiently well supported to live in modern Britain.
- The school offers a very wide range of extra-curricular opportunities to pupils. Sport is a central part of life at Beechen Cliff, which has links to Bath Rugby and Southampton FC for its elite athletes. There are also a variety of trips and cultural activities, including musical ones. As a whole, the school's extra-curricular programme makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- School leaders are successful in recruiting specialist teachers, even in subjects in which it is notoriously difficult to do so. For example, all the teachers of science are specialists in their individual subjects of biology, chemistry or physics. Outcomes in science are stronger than in some other subjects.

Governance of the school

- Governors do not ensure that the school's safeguarding policies, procedures and training are effective. They do not have due regard to the statutory guidance. This puts pupils at risk. Governors' monitoring of safeguarding is not fit for purpose, as it has not identified the many aspects of the school's work in this area that are ineffective, such as the school's systems to ensure that staff are safely recruited. This is placing pupils at risk of harm.
- Governors do not monitor additional funding well. This includes the evaluation of the impact of the pupil premium, the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium and special educational needs funding. As a result, pupils in these key groups do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Although governors analyse academic outcomes at the end of key stages 4 and 5, they do not hold leaders stringently to account for the progress pupils make. Therefore, pupils, particularly the key groups such as disadvantaged pupils, pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, are not achieving as well as they could.

- The governing body makes an important contribution to the careers education and guidance provided to students in the sixth form, especially via the school's own Future Horizons programme.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Leaders, including governors, have not established a strong culture of safeguarding at Beechen Cliff School. This is because they have a poor understanding of how to keep pupils safe.
- Leaders do not ensure that staff have the statutory training to protect pupils. As a result, they do not have a good understanding of how to keep pupils safe. For example, safeguarding referrals are handled poorly. This includes both child protection referrals to children's services and the management of allegations against staff. Leaders and staff, without relevant training, knowledge or understanding, make inappropriate safeguarding decisions, often without prior consultation with the school's designated safeguarding lead or the local authority. In addition, the school did not tell inspectors about a recent racially aggravated safeguarding incident. This weak practice relating to referrals and allegations places pupils at risk of harm.
- The language that leaders and governors used during the inspection to describe a recent serious safeguarding incident gives serious cause for concern. They still do not appreciate its true gravity and little appears to have been learned from the way that this issue was handled, as the ongoing poor practice with regard to referrals demonstrates. The school's current plans to improve safeguarding are weak.
- Leaders do not practise safer recruitment with the necessary rigour. In particular, leaders have allowed staff to start work without the completion of the required checks. Their risk assessments in these instances are poor and do not mitigate any potential concerns effectively. Leaders' processes to ensure that prospective employees have suitable references are insecure.
- Leaders and governors do not ensure that staff are appropriately trained in methods of restraint. Their understanding of this aspect of keeping children safe is very weak and puts pupils at potential risk.
- The school is using a form of unlawful exclusion. A number of pupils in Year 11 are on extended study leave to avoid exclusions. These pupils are at risk, as they are not subject to the same monitoring and checks that go with formal exclusions. Leaders are not following their statutory obligations to inform the local authority. The school's procedures and record-keeping for monitoring pupils who are on the school's roll but not currently receiving education on site, either as a result of being placed on extended study leave or attending alternative provision, are of a particularly poor quality. This, too, places pupils at unnecessary risk.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. Teaching does not enable all groups of pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.

In addition, teaching does not develop the habits of effective learning successfully, especially in key stage 3. This hinders the progress that pupils make.

- Teachers do not consistently plan teaching that meets the needs of pupils with differing starting points. Often, pupils do the same work. Those who finish early either wait for the rest to catch up or simply move on to another similar task. This practice does not provide the challenge that pupils need to make the best possible progress and realise their full potential.
- Teaching does not meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils effectively, with the result that they do not make good progress. Despite some training this year, teachers do not ensure that their practice is adapted to the needs of disadvantaged pupils. As a result, disadvantaged pupils do not make the progress that they should. This is especially true of disadvantaged pupils from ethnic minorities.
- Not all teachers have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. In addition, in some lessons, too much low-level disruptive behaviour goes unchallenged or is not dealt with successfully. In some cases, pupils' work is scrappy and poorly presented, including in the sixth form. Such work does not provide a useful resource to consolidate learning or revision. In key stage 3 in particular, teaching does not promote and embed the habits of successful learners, which limits pupils' progress.
- Leaders do not monitor the quality of teaching effectively to ensure that it improves across the school. This impacts negatively on pupils' progress over time. Recent training, for example on teaching disadvantaged pupils, is not having the desired impact to improve their progress rapidly.
- Where teaching is most effective, it is characterised by teachers' strong subject knowledge, effective planning and a good level of challenge. Where these features are not present, pupils lack engagement and do not behave appropriately, especially in key stage 3. Teaching of older pupils promotes better levels of engagement, especially in the sixth form.
- Some teaching uses questioning effectively to assess, probe and develop pupils' understanding. At other times, it is less refined and targeted, focusing on simple factual recall. This approach is not effective in developing pupils' depth of thinking or understanding.
- Middle leaders are beginning to tackle the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in their subjects. Many of these endeavours are works in progress and have yet to reveal their full impact.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Leaders have failed to establish an effective culture of safeguarding. This puts pupils at risk of harm. This means that they are not safe, either at school or at alternative placements. This is also true for pupils who are not receiving education on the school

site as a result of the misuse of extended study leave as a form of unlawful exclusion.

- The school's bullying log and racist incident log are not well maintained by school leaders. This is not enabling the school to address incidents swiftly and effectively as they arise.
- The school has been a Stonewall champion school for some time, and is now working with local organisations such as SARI (Stand Against Racism and Inequality) and the Black Families Education Support Group. The school has set up a pupil-led equalities team that is working to raise awareness of issues relating to equality and tackle any prejudicial behaviour, such as the use of derogatory language. However, the school's responses to recent incidents confirm that this work is not yet having the desired impact. There is further work to do to ensure that pupils are well prepared to live in a modern and diverse society.
- Careers guidance is improving. Pupils in Year 11 are helped to make better choices about courses in the sixth form. As a result, more students complete two years in the sixth form. Careers education in the sixth form is a strength of the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Low-level disruption in some lessons is common. This is most noticeable in key stage 3 or when teaching is not characterised by effective behaviour management. Calling out, talking over the teacher, whistling and failing to follow instructions occur frequently. Teachers' strategies to deal with poor behaviour are not effective regularly. Older pupils respond more positively to the school's behaviour management systems. Leaders recognise that pupils' behaviour in key stage 3 is a concern. Despite this, leaders have failed to take the actions required to address these concerns successfully.
- The number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions has risen sharply in recent years, indicating a decline in the standard of behaviour. Compared to their proportions in the school population, disadvantaged pupils, pupils from a minority ethnic background and pupils who have an education, health and care plan are over-represented in the exclusion record. Leaders have failed to take the actions required to improve this for the most vulnerable pupils.
- A significant minority of pupils express concerns about the behaviour of their fellow pupils. In the survey of pupils' opinion, 30% did not agree that behaviour around the school was good most of the time.
- Overall absence has risen this year to date and is now higher than the national average. The absence of disadvantaged pupils remains a serious concern. It currently stands at over 9%. On the other hand, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent has declined, although it is still too high.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement because the school is not ensuring that

pupils in key groups, such as disadvantaged pupils or pupils from a minority ethnic background, make good progress. In addition, the school has a much higher proportion of most-able pupils on entry. However, not all pupils with high prior attainment are making good progress in a wide range of high-quality courses.

- Analysis of information provided by the school indicates that current disadvantaged pupils in Years 7 to 11 are underachieving. Disadvantaged pupils who are from a minority ethnic background are performing poorly. School information analysed by inspectors indicates that the majority are not on target to achieve well. These pupils have underachieved for the past five years. While there have been some recent improvements in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, they continue to underachieve and not realise their full potential.
- The school's 2017 key stage 4 results are below the government's floor standard. Leaders made a decision to enter all Year 11 pupils for the iGCSE in English language and literature. This qualification has not provided the level of challenge appropriate for pupils with significantly higher than average prior attainment. As a result of the decision not to enter pupils for the new GCSEs in English language and literature, no pupils in the school achieved the English Baccalaureate in 2017.
- Results in the open element of Progress 8 were in the bottom 20% of all schools in both 2016 and 2017. This indicates that pupils are not gaining qualifications in a wide range of high-quality courses. Indeed, nearly one third of pupils in Year 11 in 2017 did not achieve the open element in the Progress 8 measurement. As a result, leaders are limiting pupils' potential to achieve well.
- Outcomes for students in the sixth form on A-level courses in 2017 were significantly below average overall and for female students, disadvantaged students and those with less than an average of an A at GCSE.
- Leaders do not have effective processes to monitor the learning and progress of pupils on extended study leave or who are using alternative provision. Consequently, they have a very limited understanding of how well they achieve.
- In certain individual subjects, current pupils are making strong progress. Consequently, mathematics outcomes are very good and have been for a number of years. Similarly, science outcomes for the last three years at GCSE are above average. Outcomes in languages have improved and are now above average. However, the strong outcomes achieved in some subjects mask the underachievement of individual pupils and key groups, such as disadvantaged pupils.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching on the school's 16 to 19 study programmes does not ensure that students taking A-level courses make consistently good progress from their different starting points. The most able students who enter the sixth form with an average GCSE result of an A or higher attain at the national average. Students with lower average GCSE scores, however, are not reaching national average levels of attainment, especially those with a prior average attainment of B. This represents underachievement.
- In the 2017 A-level results, students with less than an average of an A at GCSE made significantly less progress than students with similar starting points nationally. The

school's own progress tracking indicates that this is still the case for those who have an average of B at GCSE.

- The school has a mixed sixth form in which a quarter of students are female. In 2017, female students made significantly less progress than the national average for students with similar starting points. The school's own progress information indicates that the progress of female students is not good enough. Other key groups of students, such as disadvantaged students, are not making good progress either.
- The progress made by the small number of disadvantaged students taking A levels in the sixth form remained in the bottom 20% of schools nationally. There was an improvement in disadvantaged students' progress between 2016 and 2017 but it remained very poor.
- Teaching is not meeting the needs of students effectively. In individual subjects, students with the same starting points often achieve widely different outcomes at the end of the course. In 2017, in mathematics students with similar prior attainment achieved grades that ranged from U to A*. This indicates that teaching is having an inconsistent impact on students' outcomes. Other subjects exhibit a similar pattern. In some other subjects, such as geography, outcomes are more consistently appropriate to students' prior attainment.
- The school has fewer students following vocational subjects than those who take A levels. Applied general examination entries made up only 6% of entries in 2017. Students make average progress on these courses.
- Very few students embark on 16 to 19 study programmes without a level 2 qualification in English and/or mathematics. For those who do, the school provides effective support. In 2017, most went on to improve their grades in these subjects when they resat them.
- Teaching in the sixth form is characterised by secure subject knowledge. However, this does not result in effective teaching for all pupils, irrespective of their starting points. Teachers are specialists in their subjects, even in subjects that are hard to recruit in, such as physics. This means that the most able are exposed to challenging work in many subjects, which develops them effectively for later study.
- Careers advice and guidance is a strength in the sixth form. A well-conceived programme called Future Horizons has been developed by the school, with significant input from governors. This programme develops students' understanding of the world of employment in the 21st century. They are helped to make good choices about immediate future study or employment and to think strategically about the middle- and long-term plans. For example, students are provided with good advice about how to make the most of their time at university to prepare them for future employment.
- Retention of pupils on two-year courses in the sixth form is improving as a consequence of better advice and guidance in Year 11. Students are better matched to their courses from the outset of their 16 to 19 study programmes. The number of students who do not carry on from Year 12 to Year 13 is reducing as a result.
- Leadership of the sixth form has a clear understanding of the areas that need to improve, such as outcomes for key groups, use of assessment and the monitoring of teaching. Leaders are beginning to have impact in these areas but there is still more

to do to ensure that the 16 to 19 study programmes are good. Development planning is not sharp enough to support this improvement. This is hindering the pace of improvement.

School details

Unique reference number	136520
Local authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	10049044

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,325
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	402
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Charles Oldham
Headteacher	Andrew Davies
Telephone number	01225 480466
Website	www.beechencliff.org.uk
Email address	headmaster@beechencliff.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 March 2014

Information about this school

- Beechen Cliff School is a larger than average-sized school. It educates boys in Years 7 to 11. In the sixth form it educates both male and female students, with the latter making up 25% of the total of sixth-form students.
- The school converted to be an academy in April 2014. It is not a member of a multi-academy trust.
- Pupils who enter the school in Year 7 do so with significantly higher prior attainment than the national average at key stage 2.
- The proportions of disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and

pupils who speak English as an additional language are all below average.

- The school's deprivation indicator places it among the least deprived schools in the country.
- The school is a member of the Bath Education Trust, a partnership of education providers and businesses in Bath.
- The school uses one alternative provider, Aspire Academy in Bath.
- The school does not meet the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at key stage 4.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at no notice. It took place because Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector had concerns about safeguarding, leadership and management and the quality of education in the school.
- This education inspection was aligned with an inspection of the school’s boarding provision.
- Inspectors visited lessons to observe pupils’ learning and to talk to them about it. They also scrutinised examples of pupils’ work across a range of subjects and year groups, including the sixth form.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, other staff, governors and groups of pupils. They also spoke to the local authority children’s services.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation relating to the school, including safeguarding records, achievement information, key policies, governors’ minutes and development plans.
- In making their judgements, inspectors took into account the 245 responses to Parent View, including 240 free-text comments. They also looked at the 117 responses to the staff survey and the 501 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

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