

Inspection of Beechen Cliff School

Kipling Avenue, Bath, Somerset BA2 4RE

Inspection dates: 21 to 22 September 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Tim Markall. This school is part of The Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Alun Williams, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anthony Wells.

What is it like to attend this school?

Respect is central to the school's ethos. Pupils sign up to the 'Beechen Cliff Charter' which sets out the importance of equality and diversity. The school aims to give everyone the same opportunities and rights. Students in the sixth form are treated with respect as young adults. They are encouraged to develop into the best versions of themselves.

Pupils behave well, both around the school and in the classroom. They know that staff expect them to uphold the school's values.

The school recognises the value of talk and the importance of developing pupils' emotional literacy. Pupils are taught how to be a good friend when their peers need them. The curriculum is designed so that mental health themes are revisited regularly. All of this has led to a culture where pupils are confident to speak about their worries and know they will be supported.

Beechen Cliff has a proud tradition of offering a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils participate well in an array of clubs, from beekeeping to the Combined Cadet Force. The school works closely with the local rugby team to develop promising players, for example. Many pupils get involved in challenges and volunteering, such as through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Pupils follow an ambitious and demanding curriculum. This is especially true in modern foreign languages and mathematics. Most pupils learn both French and a second language and then choose to study either French, Spanish, German or Italian at GCSE. Some pupils deepen their mathematical knowledge by studying a further mathematics enrichment course. In the sixth form, the curriculum broadens further to include law, politics, economics and business A Levels. Most students go on to study at university.

In each subject, the school, supported by the trust, has strengthened curriculum planning. It is clear what pupils need to learn to achieve highly and many do. However, some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) struggle to follow the curriculum. This is also the case for pupils with additional needs, such as those with significant gaps in their reading or language skills. Teaching does not consistently support these pupils to learn the subject curriculums well.

The school provides support for pupils who need extra help with their literacy and numeracy. Pupils continue to learn a broad curriculum, while spending extra time on their basic skills. The school uses assessment precisely to identify and rectify gaps in pupils' knowledge. For example, pupils in the early stages of reading learn a phonics curriculum.

The trust has helped the school to improve the way it uses assessment across all subjects. Pupils recall learning that took place some time ago. This helps them to embed knowledge. As a result, many pupils confidently explain complex ideas and vocabulary. Their knowledge builds up over time. This is evident in the sixth form, where students start Year 12 with secure knowledge, so they quickly grasp new ideas.

Most of the time, the learning environment is one where pupils concentrate well. Older pupils describe significant improvements to the standard of behaviour in recent years. Girls who join the sixth form feel welcome. They appreciate the courteous and respectful culture that exists. For example, boys in leadership roles champion the rights of women.

Pupils attend school well overall. However, the school is working with some groups of pupils to reduce absence. The school has a good understanding of the reasons why pupils miss school and offers an appropriate balance of support and challenge to families. Positive messages about attendance are communicated by the school well.

The school challenges pupils to expand their horizons and helps them to develop their confidence. For example, pupils start Year 7 with an 'off grid' residential experience where they enjoy outdoor learning with their new classmates. Trips abroad are a regular feature of school life. The careers programme is effective in helping pupils to weigh up the full range of possibilities. Pupils and students in the sixth form are supported to make choices that fulfil their potential.

The trust listens to and understands the views of all of those involved in the life of the school, including parents, staff and pupils. It has supported the school to maintain its strengths, but also to develop a healthy culture in which pupils are safe and their differences are celebrated. The trust recognises that workload has been high during a period of sustained improvement. They continue to work positively with staff to reduce workload and promote well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils with additional needs find it hard to learn the curriculum because their prior knowledge is not secure, or because information is not presented to them in a way that they understand. The trust should ensure that teaching considers different starting points, so that all pupils are supported to learn the most important curriculum content successfully.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	146972
Local authority	Bath and North East Somerset Council
Inspection number	10257088
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,284
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	400
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anthony Wells
Headteacher	Tim Markall
Website	www.beechencliff.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Beechen Cliff School is a school for boys. Girls are admitted to the sixth form.
- The school has on-site provision for boarders. There are currently 31 boys boarding. The boarding school was inspected in March 2020 under the social care common inspection framework and judged to be good.
- The school joined the Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership in 2019. This is a multi-academy trust comprising 17 primary schools, 10 secondary schools and one special school.
- A new headteacher was appointed in 2021.
- The school uses five unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the chief executive officer (CEO) and deputy CEO of the multi-academy trust, the chair of the local governing board, five other local governors and one trustee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: art, English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils in lessons and around the school. They also held discussions with pupils in small groups to evaluate pupils' behaviour and attitudes.
- Inspectors took into account the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View. They also considered the responses to the surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Lydia Pride, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Teresa Hill	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Kneller	Ofsted Inspector
David Simons	Ofsted Inspector
Sara Berry	His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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