

Beechwood School

Long Readings Lane, Slough, Berkshire SL2 1QE

Inspection dates

25–26 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' progress in GCSE examinations in recent years has been significantly below that of other pupils nationally in many subjects.
- Governors do not have a clear enough vision for the educational experience that they want for pupils.
- Pupils' literacy levels, especially in lower sets, remains weak. As a result, these pupils do not make enough progress.
- Too few pupils are taking subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), particularly modern foreign languages. As a result, the curriculum is too narrow for many pupils.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable. As a result, current pupils' progress remains too variable, both within and between many subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have created a positive culture based on the 'Beechwood values'. As a result, the school is a calm and orderly environment.
- Parents are positive about the continued improvements within the school.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well and the school is very inclusive. Pupils are tolerant and respectful of other pupils' differences.
- Trustees and governors have addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection well. Furthermore, they manage the school's budget effectively.
- Leaders have worked tirelessly to overcome the difficulties in recruiting teachers. Teacher recruitment remains a challenge for leaders.
- Safeguarding is highly effective. Pupils feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe. Staff are trained consistently in safeguarding procedures.
- Pupils make good progress in science, geography, media, and philosophy and ethics, as teaching is effective
- The majority of pupils behave well and they have positive attitudes to learning.
- The sixth form is a strength of the school. Students are supported skilfully and they make progress in line with other students nationally in their A-level and vocational courses.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Governors and leaders need to improve pupils' achievement, by:
 - ensuring a greater consistency in the quality of teaching in all subjects
 - sharing the effective teaching and learning that exists in science and other strong subjects more widely in the school
 - making sure that all teachers apply the school's assessment policy more consistently so that all pupils know how to improve their work
 - improving the quality of boys' workbooks so they have a meaningful resource to learn from
 - improving the standards of literacy for all pupils.
- Trustees and governors need to have a clearer vision of the educational provision for pupils to enable them to challenge leaders more effectively over standards.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have developed a positive culture across the school through the 'Beechwood values'. Parents are largely positive about all aspects of the school, especially in relation to the support and guidance their children receive. One parent said, 'The school has nurtured my daughter, as well as educating her to a high standard.' The headteacher's philosophy of 'be the best you can be' resonates across the school community.
- Leaders identify strengths and weaknesses in learning accurately. As a result, they are able to support teachers well who need to improve the quality of their teaching.
- Leaders have acted to ensure that previously low numbers of pupils taking a broad and balanced curriculum increases. In key stage 4, very few pupils were taking subjects that make up the EBacc, especially a modern foreign language. While pupils had the opportunity to study subjects such as French, geography and history, they did not choose them. Leaders have improved the support and guidance given to pupils, so that now more pupils recognise the importance of taking a broader range of subjects. Consequently, around a third of pupils are studying a modern foreign language in Year 9. However, numbers taking the EBacc remain well below the government's ambition for the majority to take EBacc subjects.
- Middle leaders speak positively about the changes which senior leaders have made in recent years. They value the support from the trust in developing the quality of teaching and the opportunities to share good practice with colleagues. As a result, there is greater accuracy in the assessment of pupils' work. Staff responding to Ofsted's online survey were largely positive and they feel trusted to take risks and innovate in ways that are right for the pupils. However, a minority of staff commented that there were too many initiatives.
- Middle leaders are a strong team and they meet individually with senior leaders on a regular basis to ensure consistency in their work. Leaders provide challenge and support to middle leaders, who have a clear vision for improving learning.
- Pupils' progress has been well below that of other pupils nationally. Leaders' actions have led to improvements in current pupils' progress, although inconsistencies remain both within and between subjects.
- Recruitment of teachers has been a challenge for school leaders, especially in mathematics and modern foreign languages. Leaders have worked tirelessly to ensure that pupils have a teacher for all subjects. Recent appointments of staff in some subject areas have strengthened the teaching team.
- Leaders have developed the systems to manage pupils' behaviour. Consequently, pupils' behaviour has improved, leading to a reduction in fixed-term exclusions. Furthermore, leaders' actions have improved pupils' attendance so that it is similar to that in other schools nationally.
- The school is inclusive and supports disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND very well. The special educational needs coordinator is effective in identifying pupils' needs and putting in place appropriate support. Consequently, pupils are now making

effective progress from their starting points. Pupils who join the school with below-average literacy levels make strong progress when they receive targeted intervention.

- Leaders make effective use of the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have clear and detailed plans to ensure that the funding is supporting pupils in their learning and in providing additional educational opportunities, for example taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Consequently, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is now similar to that of other pupils in the school. Leaders use Year 7 catch-up funding to target pupils who need most support. Accordingly, the reading ages of these pupils has improved significantly. Those pupils who do not receive specific support do not make strong enough progress.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported effectively through the 'Beechwood values', the tutor programme and the school's personal, social, health and economic programme. For example, the school has a strong reputation in supporting the local community through fundraising activities. Furthermore, pupils are encouraged to develop their understanding of a wide range of religions and religious festivals. As a result, pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- Governors and trustees are ambitious for the pupils in the school. They have been thorough in addressing weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. However, they do not have a clear enough vision of the educational experience that they want for the pupils.
- Governors and trustees manage the school finances effectively. They are thorough in challenging school leaders on the priorities for spending. Consequently, the governors and trustees ensure that the financial recovery plan is on target to improve the school's finances.
- Governors do not challenge leaders well enough over the leaders' curriculum planning. As a result, only a few pupils were following an EBacc curriculum.
- Governors understand fully their responsibilities in the safeguarding of children. Governors have undertaken appropriate safeguarding training, including in safer recruitment.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders ensure that staff receive regular training and know how to support pupils effectively. Leaders are tenacious in following up referrals to outside agencies so that pupils receive the appropriate support.
- Strong and effective relationships between staff and pupils underpin safeguarding practice. Leaders have ensured that there are robust processes for recording, referring and following up safeguarding concerns.
- Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They are confident that there is an adult who they feel able to speak with, if they have any concerns. Pupils have a strong understanding of how to stay safe when online. Regular fire drills and

lockdowns are appreciated by pupils. The safety of pupils attending alternative provision is very effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning remains too variable both within and between subjects. Consequently, pupils do not make enough progress or achieve a high enough standard in their GCSEs.
- Where teaching is strong, as in science, pupils develop their knowledge and deepen their understanding of the topics they study. Teaching in science has a convincing focus on how pupils learn, which is leading to pupils' thinking and understanding being fully developed. Strong and effective questioning by teachers, for example in mathematics, guides pupils skilfully so that their misconceptions are challenged and pupils' understanding is deepened.
- While effective teaching exists within the school, it is not consistent enough in all areas to improve pupils' overall progress. Occasionally, in lower sets pupils are not provided with work that engages them well enough. As a result, a minority of pupils disrupt the learning of others.
- Leaders have implemented a clear policy for teaching and learning. Where subject leaders apply the policy well, pupils are provided with a well-planned curriculum. For example, in philosophy and ethics pupils receive appropriate and timely feedback and opportunities to develop their writing and oracy skills.
- Literacy is a school priority but it is not consistently applied across all subjects. In geography, pupils are provided with key subject vocabulary that ensures they can understand geographical texts. Unfortunately, not all teachers ensure that opportunities are provided for pupils to develop important literacy skills. Pupils who do not receive additional literacy support often struggle to understand the curriculum content. They regularly make errors with spelling and grammar, especially those pupils in lower sets.
- In the main, teachers' feedback to pupils, when used skilfully, and following the school's policy, helps pupils to understand what they do well and how they can improve their work further. Not all teachers are following the school's marking and feedback policy closely enough. As a result, not all pupils know how to improve their work.
- The workbooks of boys of different abilities do not have the level of care, commitment and detail seen in those of girls of similar abilities. Overall, boys do not have workbooks that they can use to learn from effectively.
- Pupils with SEND are supported well in the classroom and when taking examinations. They are provided with appropriate resources and where teaching is strong their work is suitably broken down so that they can work sequentially through tasks. Learning support assistants are skilful in guiding and supporting pupils with SEND so that they improve their learning and make progress in line with other pupils.
- Communication with parents is effective and the majority feel that they are kept well informed of their children's progress. Homework is set regularly, although a minority of parents do not like the new online homework system.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The majority of pupils are attentive, show positive attitudes and take pride in themselves and their work. Typically, pupils respond quickly to teachers' instructions. Consequently, the school is a calm and well-ordered environment.
- A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities is available to all pupils. Leaders work hard to encourage everyone to take up those opportunities, for example the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, eco prefects or contributing money, food or time to the local community. There is a strong focus on service and giving that is helping to develop not just good but caring citizens.
- Pupils are well-prepared for lessons and they are fully aware of what they need to have with them to support their learning. Leaders' strong drive on punctuality ensures that lessons start promptly.
- Pupils are safe and feel safe at all times. They have been taught how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations including when online and, recently, within relationships.
- Leaders have set high expectations for pupils' social development. Incidents of unkind behaviour are not tolerated. As a result, incidents of bullying are rare, as is aggressive or derogatory language. Pupils believe that this is a tolerant school where it is alright to be different. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender pupils are accepted by staff and pupils.
- A small number of pupils attend Haybrook College, the local authority pupil referral unit. Pupils follow a core curriculum in English and mathematics to improve their literacy, numeracy and information technology skills. As a result, pupils are able to secure employment and access further education. Leaders are meticulous in tracking pupils' progress and liaising with the college. Furthermore, leaders work closely with pupils' families to ensure that pupils attend consistently.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Behaviour of pupils between lessons and at break and lunchtime is positive. Pupils play and chat happily around the school site, creating a pleasant atmosphere.
- In recent years, there has been a marked improvement in behaviour, particularly in key stage 4. However, a minority of pupils in key stage 3 have found it difficult to adapt to the school's expectations of behaviour and they need regular reminding by teachers. As a result, a small minority of pupils disrupt the learning of others.
- Leaders have ensured that effective systems are in place to support the behaviour of pupils. Consequently, the number of fixed-term exclusions of pupils has reduced.
- Attendance is improving but still remains just below the national average. Leaders' strategies to improve boys' attendance has been very effective. The attendance of

those pupils who are frequently absent due to long-term illnesses is very low. Leaders are working hard to engage with pupils and parents to provide support to encourage better attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Historically, pupils' progress at GCSE has been significantly below that of other pupils nationally across the majority of subjects, including mathematics and science. Although there has been improvement year on year, it has not been strong enough. Leaders' own forecasts suggest that current Year 11 pupils are unlikely to achieve significantly better than in previous years.
- Too often, pupils chose a narrow range of GCSEs. As a result, very few pupils attained the EBacc qualification. Leaders have recognised that too many pupils are not accessing a broad enough curriculum, so they have ensured that more pupils in Year 9 are taking EBacc subjects.
- Current pupils in school are mostly achieving the standard expected for their age. However, where teaching is less strong pupils are not making strong enough progress. Typically, in the lower sets where pupils have lower prior attainment they do not make as much progress as others.
- Pupils are making better progress, for example in science, geography, media, philosophy and ethics, due to carefully planned learning, effective questioning and constructive feedback to pupils. In English and mathematics there is too much variation in pupils' progress between groups, being particularly weak in the lower sets.
- Pupils' standard of literacy varies considerably. Where pupils are supported effectively and where teachers follow the school literacy policy, pupils are able to use spelling and grammar effectively. However, the inconsistent approach by a minority of teachers results in too many pupils continuing to repeat spelling and grammar errors.
- The most able pupils do not achieve as well as other pupils nationally from similar starting points across the majority of subjects at GCSE. In addition, disadvantaged pupils' progress remains well below that of other pupils nationally. Leaders are beginning to address weaknesses, so current pupils' work indicates stronger progress.
- Teachers' effective support and guidance for pupils with SEND helps them to make progress in line with their peers.
- Leaders have developed a clear strategy for planning, reviewing and implementing an effective careers programme, benchmarked against national standards for careers education. Leaders have included careers links into subject planning to provide pupils with work-related contexts. Pupils have opportunities to visit universities, for example Oxford, to raise their aspirations.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The sixth form is a strength of the school. Students make effective progress and their achievement at A-level and in vocational qualifications is similar to that of other students nationally.

- The sixth form leader articulates a clear vision for the sixth form which entails increasing enrolment and raising the academic aspirations of students. Students' progress is monitored closely and support is precisely targeted. Consequently, attainment has risen for all students, including for disadvantaged students.
- Students speak very positively about their sixth form experience and the support they have received from the school in preparing them for the next stage of their development. As a result, a high percentage of students continue their studies into higher education. Leaders have raised students' aspirations and they have provided strong careers advice and guidance. Consequently, the proportions of students continuing into education, employment or training are higher than the national averages.
- Courses are tailored to the needs and prior attainment of individuals, with a variety of pathways, both academic and vocational, available to students. In addition, students are able to develop a broader set of skills through work experience and by having opportunities to support younger pupils in the school. For example, students mentor and help younger pupils with their reading to improve literacy. Furthermore, students undertake extended projects that help to develop and demonstrate a range of valuable skills through pursuing their interests and investigating topics in more depth.
- Students are very smart, articulate and positive about life in the sixth form. They are good role models for younger pupils in the school. Students appreciated the opportunities that they had been afforded and they were all ambitious for the future. Students' attendance has improved and is in line with that of other students nationally. They feel safe and talk positively about how thoroughly they are prepared for life in modern Britain. Students value the opportunities to develop their independence and they appreciate the knowledge acquired of tax, the world of work and current affairs.
- Those students who did not gain a standard grade pass at GCSE in English and/or mathematics are supported consistently. Consequently, they make stronger progress than other students nationally from similar starting points.

School details

Unique reference number	143327
Local authority	Slough
Inspection number	10102012

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
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	845
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	95
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Paul Rowley
Headteacher	Kathleen Higgins
Telephone number	01753 579 632
Website	http://www.beechwood.slough.sch.uk
Email address	kathleen.higgins@beechwood.slough.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 May 2016

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller-than-average secondary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with a proportion of minority ethnic groups above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- Currently, a small number of pupils (four) attend alternative provision at Haybrook College, the local authority pupil referral unit.
- The school is part of Schelwood Trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 45 lessons, including a number of short visits to tutor groups. The majority of lessons were visited jointly with senior leaders. During visits to classes, inspectors looked at pupils' work in books.
- Inspectors examined a selection of pupils' work from pupils in key stages 3, 4 and 5.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and staff, including newly qualified teachers and academic senior and middle leaders. Inspectors took account of 49 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors met a representative group of trustees from the trust and governors from the local governing body.
- Inspectors took account of 23 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as written comments submitted by 13 parents.
- The lead inspector spoke to the local authority school improvement partner.
- Pupils' views were gathered from meetings with pupils from Years 7, 8, 9, 10, and the sixth form. Informal conversations with pupils took place around the school and at different times in the school day.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation. This included leaders' evaluations of the school's performance, the school development plan, information about standards and pupils' progress, information on the school's website, records of pupils' attendance, governors' minutes, and a range of policies and information, including those relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Christopher Lee, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Suzanne Richards	Ofsted Inspector
Anne Turner	Ofsted Inspector
Patrick Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Keith Pailthorpe	Ofsted Inspector

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