

The Bishop Bell Church of England Mathematics and Computing Specialist School

Priory Road, Eastbourne, BN23 7EJ

Inspection dates 21–22 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The executive headteacher, strongly supported by the headteacher, has been instrumental in moving the school forward.
- Students achieve well and GCSE results compare very favourably with schools nationally. Results have risen markedly since the last inspection.
- Gaps in performance between those who may be more disadvantaged and others have reduced considerably.
- Most students contribute to this success by their willingness to learn, their above-average attendance and their positive interaction with each other and with the staff.
- Students behave well and feel safe.
- Teaching is good; an increasing proportion is first class. Teachers are confident and competent in their subjects. They plan activities and ask skilful questions which bring out the best in the students.
- Leaders work well together. They are respected and valued by the staff. Performance management is rigorous and is linked closely with improving the quality of teaching.
- The school is highly successful in school improvement work with other schools.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of GCSE A* to C grades is not high enough in a few subjects.
- Some more able students and some who have special educational needs do not achieve as well as they should.
- Marking is not consistently good. Some comments are not specific enough to let students know how to improve.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out without notice. Five inspectors observed the school's work. They scrutinised documents, performance data and students' workbooks. They held discussions with members of staff, representatives of the governing body, and senior officers from the local authority and the police. They looked closely at the school's safeguarding procedures.
- The inspectors observed 41 lessons; eight of these were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with students about their work and listened to their views about aspects of the school, including teaching, learning, behaviour and safety.
- The inspectors considered the views of 71 parents from the on-line Parent View survey and the two parents who made direct contact with the inspection team. The inspectors also took account of the views of staff, including those expressed in 78 inspection questionnaires.
- Inspectors were aware during this inspection that serious allegations of a child protection nature were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. Whilst Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the incidents were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Aelwyn Pugh

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Andrew Cook

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Charlotte Evers

Additional Inspector

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Full report

Information about this school

- The Bishop Bell School is larger than the average-sized secondary school. Most students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled students and those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average, although it is increasing. The proportion of students supported through school action is larger than the national average.
- A below average proportion of students, around 12%, is entitled to support from government additional funding, known as the pupil premium. This funding is for children in local authority care and students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The executive headteacher, who is a National Leader of Education, is also responsible for a local secondary school and a local primary school. In addition, the school provides significant support to a local academy. The executive headteacher works closely with the headteacher in leading and managing Bishop Bell School.
- The school has had specialist status in mathematics and computing since 2002.
- Since its last inspection the school has achieved a number of awards including Investors in People Gold Standard and the International School Full Award. The school gained National Support School status in 2012.
- No students attend courses with other providers. A small number attends vocational courses managed by the school, such as horse care and motor vehicle services. The school also delivers some post-16 advanced apprenticeship courses to former students and others.
- The governing body manages an on-site nursery for children from birth to five years.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - marking consistently gives students precise feedback about how they can improve
 - students with special educational needs, especially in Year 7 and Year 8, receive sufficient support and guidance in lessons to help them make the same rate of progress as others
 - more able students, especially boys, make the most of their potential
 - teaching in all subjects is consistently good.
- Ensure that safeguarding practice is first class by:
 - putting into practice any learning which comes from the external review the school has commissioned.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students achieve well from their broadly average starting points when they join the school. The proportion of students achieving five GCSEs, including English and mathematics at grade C or above, has risen significantly over time and is above average. Almost all students gained five A* to C grades in 2011 and 2012.
- Higher proportions of students make expected progress in English and mathematics than is the case nationally. Students who take vocational courses are also very successful.
- Students are keen to learn. Many make excellent progress in some subjects. For example, around half of the students who sat GCSE examinations in English in 2012 made exceptional progress.
- The proportion of students achieving at the highest levels has risen. The school rightly identifies that there is further room for improvement, for instance in the number of boys gaining A*/A grades. The recently introduced mentoring programme for boys, who underachieved in Year 8, has helped them get back on track. It is too early to measure the impact of this action over time.
- The school has been successful in improving subjects such as art, history, French and science where performance was below par in 2011. However, performance in some of these subjects is not yet as strong as in other subject areas.
- Students develop very well in the key work-related skills such as information and communication technology, literacy and numeracy. Those with less developed skills make good progress because of the additional teaching support they receive in Year 7 and Year 8. Some students have also improved their reading ability because they are helped to check for themselves on how well they are doing.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve well by the time they leave the school. However, a minority does not make good enough progress in Years 7 and 8.
- School leaders have used pupil premium funding to good effect by providing extra, intensive support in English and mathematics, and additional help for students who struggle with managing their behaviour or attendance. Students supported through pupil premium funding make expected levels of progress, on a par with the national averages for all students. The gap between these students and their peers in school has closed significantly. In 2011 the gap between those who gained five or more GCSE grades including English and mathematics was 28%; in 2012 it was 9.4%.
- Students take GCSE mathematics examinations early. The school ensures that students go on to study for the international GCSE mathematics qualification. This helps them prepare for taking A levels in due course.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is usually of good quality and there is more inspiring and first-rate teaching than when the school was last inspected. This is at the heart of the improving trend in students' achievement.
- Teachers are confident and skilled in their subject knowledge. They use this skill to inspire students to become confident learners. In a Year 10 physical education lesson, the teacher inspired students to develop their aerobic skills by her skilful demonstration and tailored coaching.
- Typically, lessons are places where there is a positive level of interest and involvement by students. There is a positive rapport between students and with teachers. This helps students feel able to ask for help when they need to check if they are on the right track.
- Students respond well to the many opportunities they have to evaluate their own work and that

of their classmates.

- Teachers know the needs and capabilities of learners and plan different and lively activities which challenge students at all levels. Occasionally, there are too many verbal instructions for students with special educational needs to understand what they need to do.
- Teachers and teaching assistants ask skilful and probing questions. This encourages students to develop their ideas, correct misconceptions and think deeply. In a Year 9 English lesson the teacher gave students time to develop their ideas by drawing on evidence as to what might happen later in one of Steinbeck's novels.
- Teachers in all subjects focus on the development of students' literacy skills. This can be seen in the emphasis they place on helping students use subject-specific language.
- In some lessons, teachers do not pay sufficient attention to the quality and presentation of students' work. Their written feedback, while very supportive, is insufficiently precise to help students know how to improve. Teachers sometimes miss the opportunity to encourage students to check on the accuracy of spelling and grammar.
- On occasions, teachers talk too much and plan too many activities. As a result, the students do not have sufficient time to complete their tasks, think for themselves and be more confident in their learning. Some of the more able students are not stimulated enough in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students say they feel safe in the school. This view is supported very strongly by the vast majority of parents and the staff. Students are aware of how to keep themselves safe.
- Most of the students clearly understand how to identify and manage risk, for instance, on social networking sites.
- Students are mostly polite, tolerant and respectful. Most show willingness to listen and learn in lessons. Occasionally, when teaching is not good enough, students become inattentive and restless and take part in idle chatter.
- Students' social development is strong. This is reflected in the quality of their interaction, respectfulness and tolerance of each other. Students indicate that teaching helps them develop a good understanding of other cultures and religions. Regular 'newsflash' sessions during tutor time help students reflect on topical moral and social issues, such as a recent media item about talented children in fear of being bullied.
- The school's management of behaviour has had a significant impact in reducing exclusions and in helping students to better manage their own behaviour. Responses from parents and staff are favourable about most aspects of the school. Consistency in the management of behaviour is one of the few areas where responses from parents and staff are slightly less positive.
- Attendance has been rising year on year and is above average. The number of persistently absent students has fallen; however, it is higher for some students with special educational needs.
- Inspectors find that systems are in place to report, record and follow through incidents of bullying. Where appropriate, the school works successfully with outside agencies, such as the police, to tackle particular incidents.
- Students indicate that bullying is rare. They know how to report it and are confident that bullying, including cyber bullying or racism will be dealt with quickly. Very few racist incidents are recorded and there are no examples of homophobic bullying. Recorded incidents of bullying have declined.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher provides strong leadership. He is highly regarded and has been very successful in leading the school over a considerable period of time. He works effectively with the

headteacher and a range of very competent leaders.

- The staff are very positive and proud about the impact of the work and the quality of the support they receive. They feel valued.
- The promotion of equality of opportunity is reflected in the strong emphasis the school places on ensuring that there are 'no more gaps' in outcomes for disadvantaged students.
- School leaders have very robust systems for managing the performance of teachers. Clear targets are set which are linked to school priorities and to general teaching and subject-specific issues. Performance reviews are closely related to teachers' standards. Teachers have to meet clearly defined criteria before they are allowed to progress through the salary scales.
- The school provides teachers with a rigorous, wide-ranging and varied programme of personal and professional training and coaching. This includes opportunities to observe outstanding teaching in other schools. Leaders carefully monitor and evaluate the impact of any training.
- The curriculum places a strong emphasis on helping students to achieve well in academic subjects and is effective in this regard. The two-year Key Stage 3 curriculum helps students develop key literacy and numeracy skills. Students who undertake the limited range of vocational subjects engage well because it meets their interests.
- The school has a very detailed and comprehensive safeguarding policy, updated in May 2012, that is aligned with local authority procedures. Additional staff policies set out clear expectations relating to behaviour, for instance in relation to contact and communication with students.
- Designated teachers and other teaching, support and administrative staff receive regular safeguarding training appropriate to their levels of responsibility. The training includes a focus on professional boundaries and the importance of reporting concerns to senior staff. Recruitment and vetting arrangements are thorough and meet statutory requirements as set out in current government guidance.
- The two designated child protection members of staff have a secure understanding of their role and work in partnership with external agencies to safeguard students at risk and those who have child protection plans.
- Senior leaders are working closely with the local authority and other agencies in relation to child protection. School leaders have commissioned an external review of its safeguarding arrangements from the local authority. A date has yet to be identified for this to take place. The school is keen to identify what it can do to improve upon its current practice.
- The school reaches out locally and globally. It is highly influential and effective in supporting school improvement work within the local authority and in a number of schools. The International Schools Full Award reflects its work on global partnership with schools in Africa.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body was completely restructured in January 2012. It has established a committee structure which holds managers to account well. The governing body undertakes rigorous performance management of the executive headteacher and headteacher. Governors are tough, but fair, in asking questions about performance data and the quality of teaching, and how this is linked to salary progression. They work very closely with school leaders on the school's regular evaluation of its work. As a consequence, governors have an accurate view of current strengths and what remains to be tackled. Governors understand the importance of their responsibility to safeguard children. Detailed information about the pupil premium is published on the school's website. While governors have a good overview of how this funding is being used, they have not asked searching questions as to how well it is targeted on those who are entitled to benefit from it.

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	114613
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	404212

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,040
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Godby
Headteacher	Terry Boatwright and Nigel Jewell
Date of previous school inspection	17–18 May 2010
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