

Bitterne Park School

Copsewood Road, Bitterne Park, Southampton, SO 18 1BU

Inspection dates 10–11 June 2014

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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Most students achieve well. They make good progress from their starting points in most subjects.
- Teaching is consistently good and improving. Teachers are knowledgeable and plan lessons well so that students can make good progress.
- Teaching is very well managed and teachers are committed to their own professional development.
- The headteacher and her team provide outstanding leadership.
- Governors provide very strong leadership, they support and challenge the school effectively and have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. They are courteous and polite and arrive at lessons on time and ready to learn. They confirmed that the school is a safe place.
- The range of subjects and topics studied by students is broad and balanced well between academic and work-related courses.
- The sixth form is good. Students are taught well and the curriculum meets the diverse needs of the students.
- Students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is promoted very well through assemblies, lessons and a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- The gap in achievement between students receiving additional funding and other students is closing too slowly.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding. Some activities planned by teachers do not enable all students to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers' marking does not always inform students how to improve.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 47 lessons, 34 of which were jointly observed with a member of the senior leadership team. They made a number of shorter visits to other lessons and observed two assemblies and tutor periods.
- Inspectors held meetings with several groups of students, members of the senior leadership team and subject leaders and looked at other aspects of the school’s work. The lead inspector met with the Chair of the Governing Body and chair of the governors’ teaching and learning committee and held a conversation with two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors discussed lessons they had seen with teaching staff and examined a range of documents including the school’s self-evaluation and improvement plan, data about students’ progress and standards, and documents relating to pupil premium funding, exclusions, students’ attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors looked at a range of students’ work in lessons.
- Inspectors took into account 85 responses to Ofsted’s online Parent View questionnaire, one letter from a parent or carer and questionnaires completed by 68 members of staff.

Inspection team

Jackie Jones, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Steven Edwards	Additional Inspector
Michael Elson	Additional Inspector
Helen Pennington	Additional Inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than average-sized, non-selective secondary school. It opened a sixth form in September 2011.
- The school has specialisms in performing arts and applied learning. Since September 2013 it has been a teaching school, leading the Bitterne Park Teaching School Alliance of five schools. The headteacher is supporting a school which was placed in special measures.
- The proportion of students from a minority ethnic background or who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and students known to be eligible for free school meals, is just above the national average.
- About 27 students are eligible for catch-up funding which is for pupils who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above the national average, as is the proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. The most common needs relate to moderate learning difficulties.
- The school has a dedicated Additional Resource Base (ARB) which supports five students who are on the autistic spectrum.
- Sixty-two students attend off-site provision with Hillier Garden Centre, Eastleigh College, the Ageas Bowl and two attend the Compass Pupil Referral Unit.
- 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?

- Speed up the progress of students eligible for the pupil premium so that their achievement matches that of other students.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that all teachers:
 - provide tasks and activities for students that are appropriately matched to their abilities
 - mark students' work so that they always know how well they have done and what they need to do to improve.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are broadly average. The proportion of Year 11 students who attain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is above the national average. Achievement is not yet outstanding because not all groups of students consistently make the progress of which they are capable.
- The progress students make across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, is good. Their attainment in 2013 was particularly high in biology, chemistry, physical education, art and design, English and English literature. Students did not make such good progress in history, resistant materials and food technology and the school has made changes to the leadership of these departments.
- The most-able students' achievement overall is in line with that of other students. It is not yet outstanding, because they do not meet the national expectations for this group in mathematics.
- About half of Year 11 move on to the sixth form, and the prior attainment of these students as they enter Year 12 is lower than the national average. Students' attainment in the sixth form is improving, but their results are currently just below the national average at both AS and A level.
- On the measure of those attaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, there is a significant gap between students eligible for additional funding and other students in the school. These students currently leave the school around half a grade behind their peers in English and a grade behind in mathematics. Evidence provided by the school suggests that this gap is closing.
- Year 7 catch-up funding has been used to provide students with extra literacy and numeracy support. This has resulted in most students making better progress in English; improvements in their progress in mathematics have not been so marked.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve in line with national averages so are closing the attainment gap with other students. They are making progress in line with other students in English and mathematics.
- The school enters students early for GCSE English and mathematics and they do well. In 2013, all students sat GCSE English at the end of Year 10 and 71% attained A* to C grades. In November 2013, around 20% of students were entered for GCSE mathematics and of these the majority attained A* to C grades.
- The provision in the ARB is very good. Students who experience this provision achieve well. They are also supported effectively to access lessons in mainstream classes. The students attending alternative provision outside the school are carefully monitored, and also achieve well.
- When inspectors scrutinised students' workbooks, they found work of variable quality. Poor presentation in a few books suggests that not all students take a pride in their work.
- Nevertheless, most parents and carers who responded to the Parent View survey felt that their children are making good progress.

The quality of teaching

is good

- There are excellent relationships between students and their teachers. Students respond well to teachers' high expectations, which help them to make good progress.
- Teachers use effective questioning to probe students' understanding, assess their knowledge and deepen their learning. In all subjects, they provide good opportunities for students to develop their literacy and numeracy. In a food technology lesson, for example, students successfully worked out the number of scones that could be made from different quantities of ingredients.
- Most teachers use information on students' progress to inform their planning and to provide suitable activities for the range of ability levels in their classes, including the most able.

Occasionally, however, the work set does not enable students to make the progress of which they are capable. For example, in a geography lesson, worksheets given to students did not allow all students to make the appropriate progress in their understanding of earthquakes.

- Students in the ARB make good academic and social communication progress as the result of skilled teaching and good provision. Additional adults support students effectively in the classroom.
- Teachers' marking of students' work is sometimes superficial and does not give students clear guidance as to how to improve. When marking is thorough, students clearly understand what they have done well, know how to improve and respond suitably.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding around the school and in class. In lessons, regardless of subject or year group, students show interest in their learning. This is a factor in their good achievement. Students work hard, are keen to do well and achieve highly. They enjoy school. As one student said, 'I look forward to coming to school.'
- Students who are disabled or have special educational needs enjoy their lessons in the school's integrated programme and said that they make progress because of smaller classes and teachers' help.
- Students conduct themselves thoughtfully and politely and their behaviour in the assemblies observed was exemplary. They move around the school very sensibly and arrive punctually to lessons. Students socialise well at break and lunchtime and are considerate towards visitors, holding open doors and willingly engaging in conversation. There is no litter around the school and the facilities are respected.
- Attendance has improved and is now average. The school carefully monitors the attendance of the students who attend off-site provision.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students said that they feel entirely safe in the school and the curriculum supports them very well in learning how to stay safe. During the inspection, Year 8 students worked with an outside speaker on the subject of internet safety.
- There are few fixed-term exclusions. The school has taken action to provide alternatives to exclusion by establishing an integrated studies curriculum and an alternative provision, which offer a bespoke curriculum for students who need additional support, for example with anger management.
- Students reported that the rare incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and firmly. The numbers of bullying incidents are small. They are recorded meticulously, and monitored before and after resolution. There is very little racist or homophobic bullying.
- The vast majority of respondents to Parent View considered that students' behaviour is managed well, that their children are happy at school and that they feel safe there; staff thought the same.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and her team are working hard to improve the already good level of students' academic achievement. The gap in achievement between students eligible for additional funding and others in the school, which is preventing the school from the overall outstanding grade to which it aspires, has been recognised and measures are in place which are beginning to close the gap.
- The school's self-evaluation is robust and accurate. It informs an outstanding school improvement plan that has measurable outcomes.

- Senior and middle leaders have created a culture of high expectations and aspiration. Early examination entry is used strategically in English and mathematics so that students can achieve the best grade possible at GCSE. The vast majority of students leaving in Years 11 to 13 progress to education, employment or training.
- Teaching is very well managed so that it is consistently good and improving. The school's judgements on the quality of teaching are accurate and informed by rigorous monitoring across the school by senior and middle leaders. The performance management of teachers is well organised and relates fully to the Teachers' Standards. Salary progression only occurs when merited by good performance.
- The professional development of teachers and other staff is particularly effective. The Bitterne Park Teaching Alliance ensures that staff have the opportunity to work with other schools and colleges, so improving their practice and students' learning and progress. Leaders from the school support other schools to improve their teaching through the alliance.
- The curriculum is outstanding. It is broad and balanced, providing a good mix of academic and vocational subjects. Students have outstanding opportunities to engage in a wide variety of activities outside the classroom. These include the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and visits abroad, including trips to New York, Kenya and Morocco, and volunteering and helping schools in Morocco
- Students have many opportunities to develop their leadership. They can become prefects, senior prefects and sports leaders working with local primary schools as well as with younger students at the school. The School Council works closely with the school leadership on a number of projects within the school; for example the recycling of paper and raising £10,000 for charity in one year.
- The school ensures that all students have equality of opportunity and that there is no discrimination. If needed, additional funding is used to support students' participation in activities provided by the school. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well.
- The school works closely with the local authority which has supported the school in developing the care and guidance of its students.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body provides very strong leadership. Governors make sure that all safeguarding and child protection requirements are met and that all appropriate policies are in place and implemented effectively. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses.
 - Governors manage the school's finances well, including the additional funding. They check that this funding is spent wisely and contributes to each student's success. They spoke confidently about the quality of teaching and how this has led to students' good achievement.
 - Governors are ambitious for the school, and recognise the impact that teaching school status has had on staff development. They show a detailed understanding of students' achievement and are fully aware of the relatively weaker performance of students in some subjects. Governors are fully involved in the performance management arrangements of all staff. They know what the school is doing to reward good performance and how it tackles the rare cases of underperformance.
 - Governors critically review their own performance and act on any weaknesses. Following the previous inspection, for example, they developed their understanding of data in order to challenge the school more effectively.

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	116458
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	439441

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,650
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	127
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Turner
Headteacher	Susan Trigger
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2009
Telephone number	02380 325200
Fax number	02380 325222
Email address	info@bitterneparkschool.org.uk

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