

Inspection of The Blandford School

Milldown Road, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 7SQ

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 April 2024

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	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's core values of REAP: respect, effort, attitude and perseverance underpin all aspects of school life. The school strives to provide the same high-quality education to all pupils. Leaders work to overcome any challenges that pupils face. For example, the school's work alongside 'MYTIME' has enabled young carers to thrive.

The school provides strong pastoral support. Staff take time to get to know their pupils well, and relationships are positive. There are high expectations for pupils' behaviour. The vast majority respond well to these. Classrooms are almost always calm and orderly. Pupils are safe here and know who to talk to if they need help or guidance. They understand what bullying is and think staff take bullying seriously.

The school offers pupils many clubs and activities including coding, debate, and climate club. Pupils from all years speak excitedly about the upcoming performance of 'School of Rock'. They are also proud of the success of the netball teams. However, many pupils do not take part in these activities. Sixth-form students lead the student forum. This group meets once a fortnight. Together, they have overseen changes to the school. For example, they introduced a new one-way system and altered the school uniform.

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

The school offers a broad and ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The key stage 4 curriculum offers all pupils the chance to study the full range of subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate. In the sixth form, a wide range of academic and vocational courses are offered, even when only a small number of students choose to study them.

In recent years, the school has improved its curriculum. It is now well-sequenced. This is particularly well-designed and implemented in the sixth form. The school clearly identifies the key subject content that pupils need to learn and when. This helps teachers build on pupils' prior learning. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They present information to pupils clearly. They model and scaffold concepts to pupils effectively. This enables pupils to produce high-quality work. In history, for example, pupils produced extended work and writing to a high standard.

In some subjects, teachers make effective use of assessment methods to check what pupils know. However, sometimes, the systematic checking and addressing of pupils' knowledge and understanding lacks precision. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge that are not identified and acted upon. This means that sometimes pupils are not fully ready to learn new content.

Pupils with SEND are very well supported in school. The school is quick to identify additional needs. It carefully plans support to help pupils overcome barriers to

learning. Staff know pupils well. They adapt learning for individuals effectively. They do so based on provided information about any additional needs.

The school is developing a culture of reading. The library is a key part of this and is a vibrant and welcoming space. Pupils read widely through structured tutor sessions. The books are carefully chosen for these sessions. They enhance pupils' understanding of different backgrounds. There is a keen focus on supporting pupils who struggle to read. A range of interventions are provided to these pupils. Staff are well-trained to deliver this support. As a result, pupils' reading ability improves. The support also boosts their confidence and fluency when reading aloud.

Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and attitudes to school. Most pupils attend school regularly. Staff are tenacious in accessing additional support from other agencies, where necessary. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. They are based on clear routines and positive relationships. Learning mostly takes place without disruption. However, occasionally low-level disruption is not dealt with quickly enough. This distracts pupils from their learning. Behaviour at social times is sensible. Pupils respond respectfully when reminded by staff of the school's expectations.

Pupils are successfully prepared for their next steps. The well-thought-out careers provision helps pupils to link subjects with careers. Pupils' aspirations are high. In the sixth form, students receive appropriate support for their next steps whether that be for higher education, apprenticeships or employment. The school provides many opportunities for pupils' wider development. The carefully considered personal development curriculum helps to grow pupils' understanding of society. Pupils are accepting of difference. They say that derogatory language is not tolerated in school by staff or pupils.

Governors have an accurate insight into the school. They support the school well and challenge it to be better. All staff have access to high-quality professional development. Staff value the support the school gives them. It helps them manage their workload and develop their expertise.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teaching does not use assessment strategies effectively to check how well pupils have learned the curriculum. As a result, some pupils' misconceptions and gaps in knowledge persist. The school should further develop systematic checks to ensure pupils have learned the intended content so that any gaps in pupils' learning can be addressed.

- Many pupils do not participate in the wide range of enrichment activities available to them. As a result, the interests and talents of some pupils are not developed. The school should further encourage pupils to take part in these rich experiences so that more pupils benefit.
- Low-level disruption is not always managed quickly enough. This means that pupils' learning is sometimes disrupted. The school must ensure that all staff address low-level disruption consistently so that pupils can focus on their learning.

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	113888
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10322215
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1108
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	James Vaughan
Headteacher	Sally Wilson
Website	www.blandfordschool.org.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	2 February 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses two registered and one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) 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.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with school leaders at all levels.
- Inspectors also met with staff, representatives from the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors viewed a range of school documentation, including minutes of the trust board and the school's self-evaluation documents.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: design and technology, English, history, maths and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about 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 inspection team 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 considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also viewed the responses to the pupil survey and the staff survey.

Inspection team

Frances Bywater, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Helen Kerr	Ofsted Inspector
Alun Williams	Ofsted Inspector
Deirdre Fitzpatrick	Ofsted Inspector
John Weeds	Ofsted Inspector

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