

Bodmin College

Lostwithiel Road, Bodmin, Cornwall, PL31 1DD

Inspection dates

28–29 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- All students make good progress and, from starting points that are below average, attain GCSE passes that are a little above average.
- Almost all groups of students achieve very well. This includes both boys and girls, those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, and those eligible for the pupil premium.
- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use resources, notably information and communication technology (ICT), very well to enhance students' understanding with interesting tasks.
- The Greenfield Centre provides outstanding teaching and support for students with profound learning and other difficulties. As a result, they make excellent progress.
- Students are friendly, polite and very keen to learn. They get on well together, and have high levels of respect for their teachers.
- There is good evidence that bullying is uncommon and is dealt with effectively. Students have a good understanding of issues such as the dangers of misuse of electronic media.
- The Principal, together with senior and middle leaders, is very effective in bringing about improvements to teaching and students' achievements.
- The curriculum is a strength of the college, especially in the provision of a very wide range of vocational courses that are relevant to students' aspirations.
- The sixth form is good. Students achieve very well on almost all courses. Almost all proceed to higher education or training for challenging careers.
- The governing body has a good understanding of the college and is effective in challenging senior leaders to bring about improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Some more-able students do not make as much progress as they should, including in English and mathematics. This is because of inconsistencies in the marking of written work, and confusion on the part of some students about the targets they are aiming for.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the teaching of 47 teachers in 50 lessons. About one quarter of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. A number of shorter observations were made to pursue themes such as the development of literacy and the quality of vocational provision.
- Inspectors reviewed documents, including those relating to students' attainment and progress, behaviour and safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with staff, groups of students, members of the governing body and an external consultant.
- The views of 57 parents and carers who submitted them on the Ofsted online Parent View questionnaire, and of staff who completed a questionnaire, were analysed and taken into account.

Inspection team

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Full report

Information about this school

- The college is larger than the average-sized secondary school. It serves the town of Bodmin and the surrounding rural area.
- Bodmin College converted to become an academy school on 1 January 2011. When its predecessor school, also called Bodmin College, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding.
- The college hosts specially resourced provision for students with special educational needs. These include profound learning disabilities, such as autism, and physical disabilities. The base is called the Greenfield Centre and has 36 places. It is funded separately by the local authority, which allocates places to students from a wider area.
- In the college as a whole, the proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs and are supported through school action is above average, while the proportion who are supported through school action plus or who have statements of special educational needs is broadly average. Most of these students have moderate learning or behavioural difficulties, although some have more profound difficulties such as autism.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is broadly average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for children in local authority care, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families.
- The college meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The college has developed a centre for vocational education and training, known as the Woods Browning Centre, which is located close to the main college site.
- The Principal was appointed to his post in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress of more-able students, including in English and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that students know how to produce high-quality notes and other written work through informative marking
 - for each subject studied, providing each student with a single clear, challenging and achievable target at which to aim.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' achievements have improved rapidly since the appointment of the current Principal. The proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including in English and mathematics, was well below average in 2011 when it only marginally exceeded the government's floor standard. In 2013, the proportion of Year 11 students attaining this standard was above the national average.
- In English, the proportion of students making the progress expected of them between Years 7 and 11 was above average in 2013 and as a result the proportion attaining at least a grade C in the subject at GCSE was well above average. However, the proportion exceeding this level of progress was lower, especially among those who attained highly at the end of Year 6, so the proportion attaining grades A* or A was much lower. This pattern of achievement is seen in a number of subjects. However, inspection evidence shows that the achievement of the more able students is rising in response to effective action taken by school leaders.
- The high proportion of students who start the college in Year 7 with below-average skills in literacy and numeracy make good progress in catching up, especially in their reading. This is because effective use is made of the funding provided for this purpose to provide additional support, such as one-to-one teaching.
- In mathematics in 2013, the proportion of Year 11 students who had made good progress since Year 7 was lower than it should have been. However, evidence from the school's records of current students' progress and scrutiny of their work shows that they are making much better progress and that the current Year 11 are on course to attain higher GCSE grades.
- Students achieve very well in sport and physical education. Many take part in competitive events including association football, rugby union and netball. Teams and individuals have achieved success in national and regional competitions.
- Other subjects in which students achieve particularly well on GCSE courses include science, art and design and media studies. They also achieve well in a range of vocational courses.
- In the Greenfield Centre, students make excellent progress, usually from very low starting points. By the end of Year 11, most succeed in Entry Level qualifications in English and other subjects. All students with special educational needs or who are disabled achieve well, but those who study at the Greenfield Centre achieve especially well because of the skilful and highly intensive support they receive.
- All students are screened for dyslexic tendencies in Year 7 and those identified make good progress because staff are alert to their needs and provide additional support as required.
- Students who are eligible for the pupil premium also achieve well. Their attainment in GCSE examinations, including in English and mathematics, rose in line with that of other students between 2011 and 2013, and so is now closer to national averages. Evidence from inspection shows that these students' progress is now accelerating and that the college is well placed to close gaps in their attainment relative to other students at the college, which in 2013 were more than one grade in both English and mathematics.
- In the sixth form, students achieve well on almost all courses, including those leading to both A-level and vocational qualifications. Many achieve highly and some gain places at universities with very demanding entry requirements, such as Oxford or Cambridge. Others move directly into challenging careers.
- One exception to this pattern of good achievement is in English at AS and A level. There is evidence that this relative weakness is linked to the weaker progress made by more-able students in the subject in Years 7 to 11, so they lack the skills necessary to do well at A level.

The quality of teaching is good

- There have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching at the college in the recent past. Inspectors' observations confirmed the school's analysis that almost all is at least good, with a significant proportion that is outstanding.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they impart to students with skill and enthusiasm. A good example was seen in a mathematics lesson where more-able students in Year 11 learned about circle theorems. The teacher's excellent questioning skills enabled students to work things out for themselves. She also gave a detailed and very clear explanation of the meaning of the term 'subtend', which enhanced students' literacy skills. This lesson was also a good example of the positive impact of the college's work to enhance the achievement of more-able students in mathematics.
- Teachers are adept at spotting when students need help and then providing it. A good example was seen in a Year 9 physics lesson where students were carrying out calculations concerning energy. Slow progress was quickly spotted and help given so that all students continued to make outstanding progress during the lesson. Teaching assistants also have the skills to intervene effectively when necessary.
- Teachers make very good use of the resources available, much of which is state-of-the-art. In a sixth form beauty therapy session, students used professional spa equipment to learn skills relating to facial treatments, hairdressing and make-up techniques. Sophisticated use of ICT was seen in a range of subjects including photography and design and technology.
- Teaching in sport and physical education is a strength of the college. Coaches in rugby union and association football are former professional players who enable students to achieve at the highest levels.
- Lessons are planned to meet students' needs and are often imaginative and enjoyable. Year 7 students with emotional and behavioural needs took part in a 'Victorian tea party', where they developed social skills associated with eating in company in a relaxed and enjoyable environment. This was an example of the college's good promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Lesson planning draws teachers' attention to students' special educational needs, and also to those students eligible for the pupil premium. Currently, most teachers are more skilled at adapting their plans for the former group than the latter, especially when these students are of higher ability.
- College leaders have planned well to improve students' literacy. Reading is well developed and most students read widely across many subjects. The development of writing is more patchy, due to inconsistencies in marking and in teachers' expectations. For example, approaches to correcting spellings are inconsistent, even in English, and routine notes made by students, for example in science, are not sufficiently well monitored to ensure they are of good quality.
- In an imaginative approach to promoting numeracy, students nominate teachers for an award for making good use of numeracy in a lesson. Teachers proudly display their awards, small fluffy 'bugs', in their classrooms. Overall, teaching of numeracy is good.
- School leaders have made a number of positive changes in approaches to setting challenging targets for students. However, some students, especially in Years 10 and 11 and to some extent the sixth form, are unclear about their targets and about how to achieve them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding, including in the Greenfield Centre. They are exceptionally polite and well behaved in all situations, demonstrating the college's success in fostering good relationships. They are keen to learn; lessons were observed where students made continuously good progress even when there were minor weaknesses in the teaching, because of their enthusiasm.
- Teachers and other staff have high expectations of students' behaviour and apply policies

consistently. As a result students, including those who might be prone to anger, remain calm and learning is not slowed by poor behaviour. The number of fixed-term exclusions, formerly quite high, is reducing rapidly as a result of consistency of approach among staff.

- Staff, parents, carers and students themselves are all unreservedly positive about other students' behaviour and express few concerns. Students can cite occasional examples of bullying such as through inappropriate text messages, but are confident to report such occurrences and say they are dealt with very effectively by staff. The school's records confirm that such incidents, which have never been commonplace, are becoming increasingly rare, and students are very well informed about the dangers of misuse of electronic media.
- Staff do not allow the use of any racist, homophobic or other language that suggests intolerance, and students themselves are active in combatting any they may hear. Students are taught with other students with profound disabilities, fostering tolerance towards disabled people and demonstrating the college's active promotion of tolerance and refusal to accept any form of discrimination.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. The many sporting and outdoor activities are carefully assessed for risk and are led by well-trained and experienced staff. This and other features, such as the well-managed and rigorous procedures for child protection, make a strong contribution to students' safety and security.
- School leaders have worked hard to improve attendance, which is now above average. The proportions of students susceptible to long-term illness, or who live in remote locations and are reliant on occasional buses and reasonable weather to get to college, are higher than in most schools. Arrangements have been made to ensure that such students are fully included by the college.

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal and his senior team have a strong vision for the college to be outstanding, and have succeeded in creating a very positive ethos in which good teaching and outstanding behaviour flourish. They rightly identified, through effective self-evaluation, that the improvement of teaching is their highest priority and have brought about improvement through rigorous management of teachers' performance and a comprehensive programme of professional development.
- Judicious appointments have greatly strengthened middle leadership. Subjects in which there was previously underperformance, such as mathematics, modern foreign languages and geography, now have dynamic leadership which is bringing about rapid improvement in students' achievement in these subjects.
- The college uses increasingly effective analyses of data to identify slower progress among groups of students or individuals, so that it may be rectified.
- There is a comprehensive development plan that correctly identifies key priorities, such as a need for more systematic external analysis of the college's effectiveness, as only occasional such exercises have been carried out since the college converted to academy status. Other good plans exist, such as that to promote high achievement among students eligible for the pupil premium.
- The curriculum is a major strength of the college which is much appreciated by students and parents and carers. They especially value the high quality of sport and physical education and the wide range of courses, including vocational courses, available in Years 9 to 11 and in the sixth form.
- Sports and Physical Education remain at the heart of the College and support the diverse range of wider opportunities available to students.
- Provision for students with special educational needs or who are disabled, including in the Greenfield Centre, is very well led so that these students make very good progress and are fully included in college life, demonstrating the college's success in enabling equality of opportunity.
- The sixth form is well led, a particular strength being its many links with higher education. For

example, those with an interest in a medical career can work alongside undergraduates on advanced studies, such as one concerned with the impact of diabetes on pregnancy.

- College leaders have taken action to improve the achievement of more-able students and to clarify the process of setting targets. While there is evidence that this is having a positive impact on the achievement of current students, it has not yet led to a significant improvement in results.
- Until 2013, the practice of entering students early for GCSE was used extensively in mathematics. This had some positive impact in identifying where students had gaps in their knowledge but left some, especially those attaining grades B and C, confused about how they might obtain a higher grade. Early entry is no longer to be used by the college.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have a good understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses and of how its performance compares with other schools' nationally. They have a good overview of teaching quality and the college teachers' performance and of how these relates to their pay and responsibilities. Governors challenge senior leaders to improve and monitor the impact of their decisions, such as the impact of spending the pupil premium on raising the achievement of the relevant students. Governors meet their statutory responsibilities, such as that for keeping students safe, very well. They are well trained, for example on safe recruitment of staff. However, in a few areas their understanding lacks depth because of limited external analysis of the school's performance, or due to lack of rigour in the analysis of the data.

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	136383
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	441109

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,464
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	333
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jason Coad
Principal	Brett Elliott
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01208 72114
Fax number	01208 78680
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