

# Bitterne Park School

Dimond Road, Bitterne Park, Southampton, Hampshire SO18 1BU

## Inspection dates

29–30 November 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The new headteacher has had an immediate and beneficial impact on the culture of the school. Parents appreciate the efforts he has already made to listen to, and act on, their views.
- Leaders are taking effective action to address the recommendations for safeguarding emerging from the unannounced Ofsted inspection in July 2017.
- Pupils work hard and make strong progress overall because leaders and teachers have high expectations of them. Relationships are good and pupils pay attention in class.
- Leaders make careful checks on the quality of teaching and on the progress that pupils make. They hold teachers to account for pupils' progress and intervene promptly to support any pupils who may be underachieving.
- Teachers typically set challenging tasks and ask questions that probe pupils' understanding and require them to explain their thinking.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are well supported and make strong progress. Support for the most vulnerable pupils is exceptionally strong.
- The differences between outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school are diminishing rapidly.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are proud of their new school building and wear their uniforms smartly.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of clubs, educational visits and after-school activities.
- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. They are open-minded and tolerant, and understand why discrimination is harmful.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress because the curriculum meets their needs. However, the most able students do not always achieve the higher grades of which they are capable.
- Governors carry out their duties diligently and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Leaders recognise that some pupils do not make enough progress in mathematics and that here, and in some other subjects, the most able pupils do not receive enough challenge.
- Leaders have rightly identified the need to improve provision in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that pupils make more rapid gains in mathematics so that their rates of progress are at least in line with national averages.
- Support teachers in providing greater levels of challenge to the most able pupils and students so that more of them achieve strong passes at GCSE and at A level.
- Improve provision in PSHE so that pupils have a more detailed knowledge and understanding of all the topics covered, in particular the safe use of social media outside school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The recently appointed headteacher leads the school with warmth and humanity. He has quickly won the trust and confidence of the whole school community as a result of his openness and willingness to listen. Parents have responded positively to the headteacher's determination to ensure that all pupils are safe, happy and achieving well. One parent who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, wrote: 'I am extremely happy with the new headteacher. I feel I could take any issues to him and I would be listened to.'
- Leaders have managed the complex process of moving to a new school building with admirable efficiency. Staff and pupils have settled in quickly and well to their new environment. Leaders have put in place rigorous risk assessments to ensure that pupils are safe while works on new outside spaces, perimeter fences and gates are carried out.
- The new headteacher has wasted no time in tackling the recommendations of the unannounced inspection that Ofsted carried out in July 2017. At the same time, he has strengthened the systems for reviewing the quality of all areas of the school's work. As a result, arrangements for keeping pupils safe are effective and leaders have a good understanding of what the school needs to do next to further improve outcomes for pupils.
- Members of the senior leadership team make effective checks on the quality of teaching and on the progress that pupils make. In addition, they track all behaviour incidents rigorously. As a result, teaching is good and pupils across the school make good progress in their learning. The number of fixed-term exclusions, in particular repeat exclusions, has fallen sharply.
- Curriculum leaders have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the subjects for which they are responsible. They provide strong support to the teachers who report to them. As a result, staff morale is high. Almost all of those who responded to Ofsted's staff survey said that they are proud to work in the school. Most staff believe that leaders take their workload into account when planning initiatives, in particular since the arrival of the new headteacher.
- Effective use is made of the pupil premium. Leaders are skilled in identifying barriers that may prevent disadvantaged pupils from reaching their potential. Leaders check the impact of any interventions and change them if they have not had the desired impact. Consequently, the differences between disadvantaged pupils' outcomes and those of other pupils are diminishing steadily.
- Pupils in Year 7 who need help to catch up in English and mathematics make steady progress from their starting points as a result of support that is increasingly well matched to pupils' needs.
- Leaders also make good use of funding provided to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This is particularly the case for pupils who have high levels of need. These pupils make very strong progress because leaders make accurate assessments of the help needed and allocate support staff and resources to where they have most

impact. Leaders recognise, however, that a very small number of pupils who require some additional support in the classroom do not consistently receive the help they need when they need it.

- Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils say that they enjoy their learning. Pupils do particularly well in vocational subjects in key stage 4. As a result, pupils' overall progress and attainment are in line with national averages. Leaders provide well for those students in the sixth form for whom a vocational curriculum is more appropriate, leading to strong and improving outcomes for these pupils.
- Pupils in all year groups have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Leaders also ensure that activities targeted specifically at disadvantaged pupils are available. Many pupils recently enjoyed taking part in the annual drama production.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of British values is strong. Pupils have many opportunities to consider topical and ethical issues in religious education lessons, in assemblies and in their PSHE programme. Pupils learn to be responsible citizens and enjoy raising money for charity. They are tolerant of people who are different from themselves, and understand how democracy works. They firmly reject all forms of discrimination. Pupils receive timely and impartial advice to help them make decisions about their next steps in terms of option choices at GCSE and for post-16 study. However, leaders rightly recognise that the PSHE programme does not cover all topics in enough detail. For example, pupils have requested more advice on the safe use of social media when they are out of school.
- While the majority of parents express strong support for the school, a small number of parents voiced concerns about bullying. Leaders and governors are aware of this and have strengthened their approach to tackling bullying. Pupils told inspectors that bullying is now rare and that it is handled well by teachers when it occurs.
- Leaders are aware of the need to improve pupils' progress in mathematics, and increase the levels of challenge for the most able pupils. They are taking appropriate action to address both issues, although the impact has yet to be seen.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They have recently made changes to the structure of the governing body which have helped them to gain a clearer oversight of key areas of the school's work. Meetings are run efficiently and focus sharply on safeguarding, outcomes for pupils and finance.
- Governors have ensured that all safeguarding policies are now up to date, following Ofsted's unannounced inspection in July 2017. Since the publication of the report in September, they have acted with urgency to probe the effectiveness of leaders' actions on tackling bullying and on the impact of the PSHE programme. They meet leaders regularly and check what they are told by visiting the school to see for themselves the impact of leaders' actions.
- Governors are committed to the school and carry out their statutory duties, including those for safeguarding, diligently. They challenge leaders on the impact of funding for

disadvantaged pupils, those who have SEN and/or disabilities, and pupils in Year 7 who need to catch up. Consequently, outcomes for these groups of pupils are improving.

- The recently appointed chair of the governing body was already a governor in the school and has been inducted well into her new position. All governors benefit from training appropriate to their roles.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Considerable improvements have been made to the school's child protection policies and practices since Ofsted's unannounced inspection in July 2017. The new headteacher has quickly created a caring, nurturing climate in which pupils thrive. Governors ensure that pupils' safety and well-being have the highest priority. They check that all policies have been properly implemented.
- Required checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers are carried out to a high standard. Staff benefit from regular training on all aspects of safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities. They are vigilant and know what to do if they are concerned about a pupil. Leaders are alert to the risks that pupils face outside school, and are in the process of ensuring that pupils receive more support for this.
- Leaders call on a range of services to support pupils' welfare. A trained mental health professional provides counselling for the most vulnerable pupils. Representatives from other local charities and agencies work with groups of pupils to help them to cope with anxiety or to boost their self-esteem when necessary.
- The school's designated leaders for safeguarding have undertaken relevant, high-level training. They keep meticulous records of all child protection concerns. Leaders work closely with a range of external agencies. They are tenacious in ensuring that pupils who may be at risk of harm get timely help and support.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and are ambitious for their success. They are proud to work at the school and are passionate about the subjects that they teach. Teaching is particularly effective in English, science, physical education (PE), art, drama and in vocational subjects.
- Teachers' planning meets pupils' needs in most subjects and in most year groups. Teachers devise engaging activities that motivate pupils to do their best. For example, in history pupils relished evaluating the effectiveness of various kings and also deciding where best to build a new castle.
- Teachers provide high levels of challenge in most lessons. They use questions well to probe pupils' thinking and encourage them to explain their ideas. For example, in a Year 8 music lesson skilful questioning enabled pupils to agree on how to improve their fluency in playing a piece of music on the keyboard.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm. Pupils try as hard as they can, take pride in their work and pay attention to their teachers. Pupils feel confident in

expressing their ideas, and listen to each other respectfully.

- Teachers give pupils helpful written and verbal feedback in line with the school's policy. Pupils make good use of the time they are given to reflect on their next steps and make any necessary improvements to their work.
- More than 80% of parents who responded to the online questionnaire felt that they received valuable information about their children's progress. A similar proportion of parents agreed that their children receive appropriate homework for their age. However, some parents felt that communication between school and home is not always timely or clear.
- Leaders have correctly identified that teaching is less effective in mathematics than in subjects such as English, and that pupils' knowledge and understanding are not being built up as strongly as they could be.
- Leaders and teachers also recognise that in some cases the most able pupils do not receive the challenge they need to attain the results of which they are capable. They have devised credible plans to ensure that most-able pupils are given work to do that provides consistently high levels of stretch and challenge.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities in lunchtime and after-school clubs to develop new interests and make new friends. Pupils also enjoy participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, deepening their experience of art, music, dance and drama or keeping fit in the school's new fitness suite. The annual drama production is a popular event with all members of the school community.
- Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to contribute to the wider life of the school. For example, members of the school council are currently working with senior leaders and developers to design outside spaces for the new school.
- Pupils feel safe in school and are taught how to keep themselves safe from a range of everyday risks. In response to concerns expressed by some pupils, leaders are in the process of providing more advice and information on how to stay safe online
- At break and lunchtimes, pupils in all year groups mix together well, and there is a harmonious atmosphere in the school.
- Some parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire expressed concerns about bullying. However, pupils say that bullying has declined considerably, particularly since moving into the new school building. When bullying does occur, pupils say that teachers are quick to respond and resolve it. Pupils enjoyed taking part in the recent anti-bullying week. Leaders' detailed records demonstrate that incidents of bullying have declined sharply and are now rare.
- Pupils believe that their school is a warm and tolerant community. They are taught to respect people who have different cultural backgrounds or religious beliefs to their own. They understand why all forms of discrimination are wrong. As a result, pupils are

well prepared for life in modern Britain.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school. They wear their uniforms with pride and are polite to visitors. Pupils cope well with the lack of available outside space while the new playgrounds and sports fields are under construction.
- Pupils are punctual to school and to lessons. They move around the school in a calm and orderly manner. Pupils value and take good care of the bright, airy spaces and classrooms they now study in. The site is free from litter.
- Pupils and staff say that behaviour has improved significantly since moving to the new school. They say that lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour or low-level disruption. This is because leaders and teachers have put in place a clear approach to behaviour management that is rooted in the school's values of respect, achievement, community, enjoyment and relationships. Pupils like to receive awards when they have excelled in one of the values. Over the last year, the number of pupils who have been excluded from school more than once has fallen sharply.
- Attendance overall is above the national average for secondary schools. Teachers emphasise to their pupils the importance of being in school every day. Pupils who have consistently high rates of attendance receive awards in assembly.
- Leaders work closely with the families of pupils who are frequently absent. Where necessary, leaders make good use of the pupil premium to help remove barriers to regular attendance. As a result, there have been significant improvements in the rates of attendance for a small number of disadvantaged pupils who were persistently absent.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Provisional results for 2017 show that pupils made progress overall that was broadly similar to that seen nationally. Pupils' progress in the subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate was in line with the national average. While pupils' progress in English was broadly average, progress in mathematics dipped compared to previous years and fell below the national average.
- Provisional results for 2017 also show that the proportion of pupils who achieved standard passes at GCSE in both English and mathematics was in line with the national average. Pupils' attainment overall was above national averages, with pupils doing particularly well in science, performing arts subjects and vocational subjects.
- The difference between rates of progress overall for disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally diminished sharply between 2016 and 2017. At GCSE, disadvantaged pupils made much better progress than all other pupils nationally in the 'open' element of the curriculum, where pupils can select subjects. This is because leaders made, and continue to make, effective use of the pupil premium to remove barriers to learning. Current pupils' workbooks suggest that overall rates of progress for disadvantaged pupils are improving and are similar to those of all pupils across a wide range of

subjects.

- Pupils who have high levels of SEN and/or disabilities, and those who are particularly vulnerable, benefit from highly effective teaching and care. As a result, they make very rapid progress from their starting points. A very small number of pupils who need lower levels of additional help in the classroom are less well provided for and currently make less rapid progress in some subjects.
- In English, pupils make strong progress because they are given challenging work to do. Pupils rise to the challenge willingly, well supported by teachers' skilful questioning. All pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, those who have SEN and/or disabilities and the most able, are appropriately stretched in English, and so make good progress from their starting points.
- In other subjects, pupils with high prior attainment do not routinely build well enough on their starting points to achieve high standards as they progress through the school. Consequently, too few of the most able pupils achieve high grades at GCSE when they reach Year 11.
- In science, pupils make good progress because the curriculum provides them with well-planned opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills, for example when designing their own experiments.
- Pupils make very strong progress in PE because they are exposed to a wide range of engaging activities. Levels of participation are high, and pupils achieve above-average outcomes in PE at GCSE.
- Pupils who opt to take vocational subjects in key stage 4 enjoy their learning and make rapid progress because teachers' planning meets their needs well. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities do particularly well in these subjects. Teachers are adept in tailoring the work to meet different pupils' needs.
- While attainment in mathematics is at least in line with national averages, leaders rightly recognise that pupils' progress in mathematics has dipped compared to previous years. They are taking effective action and have credible plans in place to change the curriculum and further increase the levels of challenge in mathematics.
- Pupils are prepared well for their next steps because they achieve outcomes that are similar to those found nationally. The proportion of pupils who do not move on to education, employment or training is lower than the local authority average.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- Outcomes for students in the sixth form are similar to those seen nationally. Students do particularly well in vocational subjects, and many make very strong progress from their starting points. Those students who need to retake GCSEs in English achieve above-average outcomes. However, outcomes for those who need to retake mathematics are below average.
- Teaching is typically effective. Teachers ensure that students receive appropriate levels of challenge. For example, students in an A-level art class were engrossed in learning printmaking skills. They spoke with insight and genuine enthusiasm about their individual work and the artists that had inspired them. Elsewhere, skilful questioning



and engaging activities helped students to understand new concepts in economics. On occasion, the work provided is not stretching enough to enable students to achieve the highest grades of which some are capable.

- While overall outcomes are in line with national averages, the proportion of students who achieve higher grades in academic A levels is below average. Leaders provide well for those students in the sixth form for whom a vocational curriculum is more appropriate, leading to strong and improving outcomes for these pupils. For example, the proportion of students achieving higher grades in the new technical qualifications is above average.
- Students who have SEN and/or disabilities are particularly appreciative of the additional support that their teachers give them.
- Teachers speak with considerable warmth and pride about their students' achievements and future plans. Students say that they receive helpful careers advice. During the course of the year, students get impartial advice on university and apprenticeship applications. They also have the opportunity to visit local universities.
- Students behave well and their attendance is good. They are considerate, thoughtful and caring. They are good role models for younger pupils in the school.
- The leadership of the sixth form is effective. Numbers applying to join the sixth form have risen steadily. The curriculum meets the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes. In 2017, all leavers entered education, employment or training. Around 50% of students progressed to higher education, 43% went on to apprenticeships or employment and the remainder took courses at a further education college.
- Leaders are aware that some group sizes are very small and may not be financially sustainable in the future. In addition, retention figures have fallen below national averages.

## School details

Unique reference number	116458
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10036913

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	Community school
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	1,679
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	111
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Claire Doble
Headteacher	Graham Wilson
Telephone number	02380 325 200
Website	<a href="http://www.bitterneparkschool.org.uk">www.bitterneparkschool.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@bitterneparkschool.org.uk">info@bitterneparkschool.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	10 June 2014

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is a larger-than-average non-selective secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is similar to that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- In July of this year, Ofsted conducted an unannounced inspection, focusing on safeguarding.
- The headteacher took up his post in September 2017.
- The chair of governors also took up her post in September 2017.
- Staff and pupils moved to their new school building in September 2017. Pupils have limited access to outdoor space while work continues to demolish the old school building and replace it with playgrounds and sports facilities.
- The school is part of a federation with a nearby junior school.
- The school is a teaching school, providing support for teacher training, leadership development and the induction of newly qualified teachers to other schools in the area.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 84 lessons to observe learning, including in form time. Almost all of these observations were carried out jointly with a school leader.
- Inspectors held several meetings with school leaders to discuss and evaluate various aspects of the school's work.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and seven members of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils by holding a total of eight meetings with pupils from all year groups and talking to pupils in lessons and around the school. Inspectors analysed seven pupils' responses to Ofsted's online survey.
- Parents' views were taken into account by evaluating 272 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 170 written responses. The lead inspector also received two hand-delivered letters from parents.
- The views of staff were considered by analysing 140 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, and by talking to members of staff in meetings as well as informally around the school.
- Inspectors evaluated a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, action plan, records of behaviour incidents, minutes of governing body meetings and assessment information.
- Safeguarding procedures at the school were reviewed.

## Inspection team

Gary Holden, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nicholas Simmonds	Ofsted Inspector
Debbie Godfrey-Phaure	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Kearsy	Ofsted Inspector
Gary Tostevin	Ofsted Inspector
Colin Lankester	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Davies	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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