

Bideford College

Abbotsham Road, Bideford, EX39 3AR

Inspection dates 14–15 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Sixth form provision		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Leaders have failed to tackle the key issues identified at the previous inspection. Improvements that have been made are too slow and fragile.
- Achievement is inadequate. Students make too little progress across subjects, including English and in the sixth form.
- Disadvantaged students make poor progress compared to their peers both nationally and within the college. This impedes their chances of progressing to further education.
- Teachers' expectations of what students are able to achieve are too low. Teachers' planning does not provide students, particularly the most able, with enough challenge or support.
- Learning is not checked thoroughly by teachers during lessons. As a result, students often spend too long on tasks which are too easy for them.
- Students' literacy skills are not developed well enough in subjects other than English.
- Students do not routinely act upon their teachers' feedback to improve their learning.
- Students lack enthusiasm. They give up too easily and too few show any determination to do well.
- The sixth form is inadequate. Too many students drop out of the sixth form. Those that do complete their courses do not make enough progress. This is partly due to the weak teaching that they receive.
- Leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching are over generous. The processes in place to judge the quality of teaching lack rigour. Leaders fail to pay close enough attention to the impact teaching has on students' achievement.
- Governors have little understanding of the reasons why students underachieve. They are over reliant on information from the Principal. They fail to hold leaders to account for the college's performance.

The school has the following strengths

- Disabled students and those with special educational needs receive effective extra support outside of lessons.
- Students benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Students conduct themselves well around the college site.
- The college's work to keep students safe and secure is good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 51 episodes of teaching. 14 of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. There were also a number of short visits to classes.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body and groups of students. Phone calls were made to representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including information on students' achievement, the college's self-evaluation and improvement plan, minutes of meetings, and records relating to the monitoring of teaching, behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors took account of 82 responses to the online Parent View survey and 48 staff questionnaire returns. There were also three written submissions from parents.

Inspection team

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Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Bideford College is a larger-than-average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of disadvantaged students eligible for the pupil premium funding is broadly average. This is additional government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- The college has a specialist hearing support unit. This provision is accessed by five students.
- The college meets the government's floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A very small number of students access their education at the North Devon Personalised Learning Service and through the Medical Tuition service.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, including in the sixth form, so that it is at least good, by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan activities that ensure high levels of challenge for all groups of students, particularly the most able and those that are disadvantaged
 - check students' learning during lessons and adapt their teaching to accelerate the progress students make
 - insist on the highest of standards with regards to the quality and quantity of work produced
 - ensure that students act upon the feedback they receive so that they understand how to improve their learning.
- Raise achievement across the college, particularly in English and in the sixth form, by:
 - ensuring teachers have the highest expectation of what students are able to achieve
 - developing a consistent approach across all subjects to improving students' literacy skills
 - identifying the individual needs of disadvantaged students to ensure they receive highly effective support.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - increasing the rigour with which leaders monitor the quality of teaching across the college
 - developing leaders' skills so that they can accurately judge the quality of teaching by linking it closely to students' achievement
 - effectively monitoring the spending of extra government funding to ensure it is accelerating the achievement of disadvantaged students
 - ensuring that governors develop a clearer understanding of the college's performance to enable them to challenge leaders more rigorously.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the college's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leaders have been ineffective in bringing about the necessary changes to enable the college to improve quickly enough. As a result, the quality of teaching across the college, including in the sixth form, is inadequate. Far too many students underachieve, particularly in English.
- Leaders' evaluation of the effectiveness of the college is too generous. In particular, their processes and judgements on the quality of teaching are inaccurate and do not take into account the impact teaching has on students' learning. During joint observations in this inspection, senior leaders' identification of strengths and developmental points were in line with inspectors' evaluations. The college's written records of teaching, however, provide little evidence to justify leaders' positive view of teaching over time.
- There is little evidence to suggest that the quality of teaching is improving. Recent initiatives implemented by new leaders have, as yet, had minimal impact. However, new leaders have a clear understanding of the key areas in need of improvement.
- The college should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- The evaluations that middle leaders produce from regular monitoring of their departments are inaccurate. Despite their observations of teaching, scrutiny of students' work and short visits to lessons they do not focus on how well students are learning, nor do they reflect the poor quality work in students' books.
- As a result of leaders' unrealistic view of the quality of teaching, too many teachers are deemed to be performing at an acceptable level. However, leaders have recently strengthened the targets set for teachers which raise the expectations of teachers' performance. Targets set for teachers now require the students they teach to make at least good progress. Teachers have been refused pay awards for poor performance.
- Leaders do not closely monitor the spending of the pupil premium funding. Consequently this funding is having little impact on raising the achievement of disadvantaged students who underachieve significantly. As a result they are poorly prepared for the next stage of their education or life. Extra government funding for students that enter Year 7 with low levels of attainment is used to raise their reading and literacy levels. Students are cared for and supported well outside of lessons.
- Underperformance in key subjects, such as English and GCSE re-takes in English and mathematics in the sixth form, leaves too many students poorly prepared for life beyond the college and for success in modern Britain. The curriculum is broad and balanced for the majority of students. A good range of subjects is available to students in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Students exhibit good relationships with each other and have an understanding and tolerance of people from different backgrounds, cultures and faiths.
- Students receive helpful careers advice. Through a series of assemblies, outside speakers and whole college focused days, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well developed. Students appreciate, and access, a wide range of extra-curricular activities including sporting, drama, art and dance activities.
- The local authority has brokered significant support from consultants. Records of consultants' visits scrutinised during this inspection correctly identify the underperformance of the college.
- The college's safeguarding procedures and checks on staff meet statutory requirements. Leaders closely monitor the progress, attendance and behaviour of students attending alternative provision.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governance of the college is inadequate. Governors rely on information from the Principal and do not have an accurate view of the college's performance or the quality of teaching. Governors do not challenge senior leaders and, as a result, the college is not improving quickly enough. Governors are aware of the targets set for teachers and how teachers are rewarded and when pay awards are refused through information provided to them. Governors know how extra government funding is allocated, but they do not know if this is making a difference for students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement.
- Too many students are slow to commence their work in lessons and are not enthused by teaching. Often, work is poorly presented and the students doodle in their books.
- Students conduct themselves well in and around the college. Positive relationships exist between teachers

and students.

- Students indicate that low-level disruption is rare. No poor behaviour was observed during the inspection and this is reflected in the college's records of behaviour over time. Most parents who responded to the Parent View survey feel that the college makes sure its students are well behaved.
- The number of students that receive a fixed-term exclusion has fallen and remains below the national average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students have a well-developed understanding of different types of bullying and how to keep themselves safe. The college provides effective education for students to ensure they understand how to protect themselves when using the internet.
- Incidents of bullying are rare. When they do occur, students are confident that the college will deal with issues promptly.
- Attendance levels have improved and are now at the national average. The proportion of students who are persistently absent is decreasing and is now below national levels.
- The college liaises regularly with students who attend alternative provision. They ensure that these students attend regularly, behave well and feel safe.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Students underachieve at the college due to the inadequate teaching that they receive.
- Teachers do not provide adequate challenge for students in many subjects and in the sixth form. Teachers give limited emphasis to providing suitably challenging work for the most able students or to support those students that require it. Students routinely all complete the same work. These weaknesses in teaching limit the progress students make.
- Teachers' low expectations of what students should achieve result in students choosing the pace at which they work. Consequently many do not achieve well enough. Teachers fail to assess how well students are working and do not move learning on swiftly enough. Students are capable of much more.
- Too many students do not offer their thoughts and ideas during lessons. As a result, teachers' questioning does not adequately assess students' understanding of key concepts and ideas, or deepen their learning.
- Students' key skills of literacy, reading and mathematics are not routinely developed well enough across subjects.
- Students' books contain work that does not challenge them. In addition teachers too often accept students' work that is poorly presented and incomplete, emphasising teachers' low expectations.
- Teachers do not make sure that students act upon feedback they receive about their work. As a result, students do not have a clear understanding of how to achieve higher levels despite regular and thorough feedback which informs students of what they have done well and how to improve.
- Learning support assistants have strong working relationships with students and provide helpful support for them.

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- From their starting points, students do not make enough progress. Students make particularly poor progress in English and in the sixth form. Very few students who re-take GCSE mathematics and English in the sixth form attain a grade C or higher.
- The proportion of students who leave Year 11 with five or more GCSE grades A* to C remains below the national average although there has been some improvement. This represents poor progress as students enter the college with levels of attainment that are broadly average.
- Teachers' assessment of students' levels have been inaccurate in recent years. Work in students' books shows that they are making inadequate progress in many subjects. The targets set for students are not always demanding enough. The information the college has on students' current achievement indicates that they expect outcomes to rise this year but the work seen does not support leaders' predictions.
- Disadvantaged students and those entitled to the pupil premium funding make inadequate progress. Their needs are not well known by staff. The extra support they receive has little impact. The gaps between the achievement of these students and their peers nationally and within the college are large and show little sign of narrowing. In 2014, disadvantaged students in Year 11 were almost two years behind their peers

nationally in English and almost one and a half years behind their peers at the college. In mathematics these students were over a year and a half behind their peers, both nationally and within the college. Only a small minority of these disadvantaged students progress to the college's sixth form.

- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make poor progress in lessons because teachers do not provide the support needed.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs receive effective support in sessions outside of lessons. Staff delivering these sessions are well trained and support students to achieve well. Within the classroom, however, teachers do not provide the support needed for these students and they make similar poor progress to other students.
- Students make better progress in physical education, humanities, drama and art. This is due to the good teaching they receive and to teachers' higher expectations of what students are able to achieve.
- The hearing support unit is well led and managed. The small number of students who access this behave well and receive effective, personalised support and teaching. These students make good progress from their starting points.
- The most able students' progress requires improvement. They are not always sufficiently challenged by teachers. In 2014, all students in Key Stage 4 sat their GCSE mathematics examination early which contributed to some of these students not attaining the higher grades of A* and A. The college no longer enters students early for their examinations.
- Only a small number of students access their education at alternative providers. Many of these students have particular social and emotional needs. They do not achieve as well as their peers nationally but they do receive effective support to meet their individual needs.

The sixth form provision

is inadequate

- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is inadequate. Teachers do not expect enough of students. They do not challenge students to think deeply and to wrestle with complex ideas and concepts. In some cases students' work is not assessed frequently enough or the feedback provided is not precise enough to promote better learning. However, the quality and quantity of marking and feedback is variable and some detailed feedback provides useful points for improvement.
- In recent years, students have made inadequate progress across many subjects. Currently too many students are behind their target grades and not making enough progress although there is wide variation in the achievement of students currently in the sixth form. The success rates for students re-taking GCSE English and mathematics are poor.
- Over half of the students who joined the sixth form in Year 12 left before the end of their courses in 2014. Consequently the improved outcomes for Year 13 students in 2014 do not take into account the very high drop out rate from sixth form courses.
- Teachers' relationships with students are often comfortable and undemanding so that teachers do not challenge students' variable attitudes to learning. Students behave well and take care of their dedicated study space. They are aware of key safety issues and how to keep themselves safe.
- The quality of tutorial support is too dependent on the commitment of individual tutors. College leaders do not check the quality of the tutorial programme thoroughly enough. Although tutors make a valuable contribution to supporting students' higher education applications, too much reliance is placed on individual tutors to develop students' understanding of issues in contemporary Britain and worldwide. Tutorial time is not used consistently well to support the programme of events that helps students to develop their personal, social and employment skills. This programme includes trips, visits and external speakers and enables sixth form students to take positions of responsibility in the college and work with younger pupils. Few students benefit from the opportunities to gain useful work experience. A large majority of Year 13 students progress to university.
- Leadership of the sixth form has been inadequate over time. The leadership of teaching is having too little impact on improving the quality of teaching. Leaders' evaluations on the quality of teaching are too generous and take no account of students' achievement, or retention, in individual subjects. Leaders do not routinely check the quality and accuracy of teachers' assessments, including matching teachers' predictions against actual examination results once these are known.
- The current sixth form leader has, since her appointment in September 2012, taken steps to improve the management of the sixth form. Staff monitor attendance much more closely and take swift action where this is a concern. Leaders' and teachers' more regular assessment of student progress means that leaders are now more able to identify where provision is weak and where students are making slower progress.

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	113516
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	453844

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation Trust
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	1,451
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Douglas Bushby
Principal	Veronica Matthews
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 May 2013
Telephone number	01237 477611
Fax number	01237 428114
Email address	mail@bidefordcollege.org

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