

The Bewdley School and Sixth Form Centre

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Unique reference number | 135035 |
| Local authority | Worcestershire |
| Inspection number | 381778 |
| Inspection dates | 25–26 January 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Brian Cartwright HMI |

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

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|--|---------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Foundation |
| 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 | 930 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 109 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Wilf Talbot |
| Headteacher | Julie Reilly |
| Date of previous school inspection | 26 November 2008 |
| School address | Stourport Road Bewdley DY12 1BL |
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Introduction

Inspection team

Brian Cartwright

Her Majesty's Inspector

Catherine Robinson-Slater

Additional inspector

Victoria Matthews

Additional inspector

Peter McKenzie

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 47 lessons delivered by 46 teachers, met with groups of staff, groups of students from all key stages, and spoke to representatives of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, looked at school self-review and planning documents, minutes of the governing body, school performance data and the work of students in lessons. They considered the results of 205 parental questionnaires, 150 student questionnaires and 36 staff questionnaires.

Information about the school

The school is of average size for secondary schools with a small sixth form. A lower than average proportion of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities at school action plus and with statements is higher than the national average. There is a low proportion of students whose first language is not English, and a low proportion of students who are not from White British backgrounds. The school became a specialist Arts College in 2009. The school was formed in 2007, following the reorganisation of school provision in the Wyre Forest, and occupies the site of a former 13-18 high school. The school meets the current floor standard.

Inspection judgements

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 2 |
| Leadership and management | 2 |

Key findings

- This is a good school. Good leadership and strong staff commitment to the school are bringing about improved achievement for all students. Academic standards are above average.
- Teaching is good, especially in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. This is ensuring good progress for students overall, with exceptionally good achievement in mathematics. The best teaching ensures students experience the thrill of learning a subject well. Teachers have good teacher subject knowledge that inspires and motivates students, and use data on students' prior learning well to make lesson activities interesting and challenging.
- Where teaching is satisfactory, teachers do not challenge and engage all students quickly enough in lessons, do not provide sufficiently demanding activities to stretch more-able students, and talk to the whole class for too long. Occasionally in these circumstances, a few students can become distracting to others.
- Nevertheless, overall student behaviour is good and the school keeps students safe.
- Marking and feedback to students varies in quality, usually resulting in good developmental advice to students, but in other examples giving no clear instruction on what was good, and how to improve shortfalls.
- The sixth form is good. The progress of sixth form students accelerated in 2011 because of systematic increases to the taught time per subject, and a concerted approach to sharpening arrangements for private study.
- The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, helped by staff contributing to a substantial and varied range of extra-curricular activities.
- Provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective, allowing them full access to the good curriculum; they achieve well and for many, become fully self-sufficient and no longer in need of special support as they move through the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 by using the good information available on students' prior learning to plan lesson activities that

challenge the full range of student ability.

- Ensure students begin these tasks promptly, and then maintain the pace of their learning without stopping the lesson flow for unnecessary whole class interventions, to minimise the scope for students to lose attention.
- Ensure the consistent application of the school marking policy so that all students know how well they are progressing, what to do to improve their work, and have them time to respond to that advice.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The attainment of students when they join Year 7 is a little above average, and they make at least satisfactory and usually good progress through Key Stage 3 before embarking upon an almost entirely academic programme of GCSE study at Key Stage 4. In 2011, students gained above average results in most subjects at the end of Key Stage 4, particularly in mathematics. The proportion of students getting at least two grade C's in science was high, although the proportion of A/A* science grades was lower than expected. This was in part thought to be a consequence of the first cohort studying triple science. This year, no such concerns are evident, with the current Year 11 securely on target to achieve high standards. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities do well. Many become self-sufficient in their learning as the school works effectively in giving these learners the training and skills needed for their future. Students known to be eligible for free school meals make the same or better progress than all pupils nationally in English and mathematics respectively.

The vast majority of parents and carers in the survey are correct in believing that their children are making good progress because teaching is good and they are well looked after. Written work shows clear improvements over time, for most students. Students know what grades they are aiming for, where they are on that journey, and have a reasonable idea, at least in Key Stage 4, of what they need to do to hit those targets. All subject areas provide frequent additional revision sessions as needed or requested by students.

In the sixth form, in 2011, students made good progress in AS level examinations, much better than in previous years and are expected to repeat this at A-level. Achievement of students in the sixth form has improved and is now good. This is because of an increased time for teaching per subject, and much more rigorous monitoring and support for students in their private study time. Students now know and appreciate that school is a place to work hard and so achieve well.

Quality of teaching

Teaching overall is good with some outstanding practice. In most lessons teachers ensure students are each fully engaged in learning activities quickly. In these lessons, teachers challenge and question students well, for example by demanding

full sentences in response either verbally or in writing. All students, including those with special educational need and/or disabilities, participate fully in the school's curriculum. Teaching assistants are usually well deployed in helping to support the particular specific learning difficulties of individual students. Lessons include opportunities for students to consider moral and ethical issues. Learning activities often require group work, giving students the chance to develop social skills and improve their verbal literacy.

Teachers' expertise is used to the full, for example in a lovely reading of a poem tackling racism, or in the skilled teaching and demonstration of high-quality carpentry. Examples such as this also help expand students' awareness of other cultures. Where teaching is good, students have to take some responsibility and thus develop independence in organising their work, carrying out practical activities, and researching at home, which they enjoy. Teachers monitor students' progress individually, intervening only where learning flags a little, and rarely interrupting the whole class. The best teaching demands the highest quality of work from students irrespective of their abilities, and seeks to put the knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject at the heart of each student's learning experience. This expertise is evident in all curriculum areas of the school, and is a strong feature of sixth form teaching. It ensures that the satisfaction of mastering a difficult concept or skill is at the heart of students' enjoyment of learning. Students come to experience the real thrill of new learning, and the self-recognition of their growing competence affirmed by teachers they respect. Such experiences build up their self-esteem and are key to maximising students' spiritual development. Most students surveyed, and most parents and carers in their survey say that students are taught well.

Not all teaching is of this high quality yet. A common feature of satisfactory teaching occurs when teachers spend too long talking to the whole class, and then assign tasks that are too easy or too difficult for some students. In these lessons, teachers are very active, but most learners are at best listening, at worst becoming bored and tempted to misbehave. Teachers' questions become too 'closed', resulting in single-word responses (if any) from one or two students.

Day-to-day marking and feedback to students varies from 'excellent' to being missing completely; overall, it is generally good enough to ensure students are rewarded for success, and have some idea of their progress in addition to regular summary tests. But even where this feedback is precise, not all students are yet acting upon the advice; for example, students asked to complete a task do not always do so.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students behave well in lessons and around the school, moving about in a calm and friendly way, and are rarely late to lessons. Lunchtimes and breaks are pleasant social occasions, with groups of students happy to chat to each other and to supervising staff. All students arrive in school uniform, and some manage to wear it smartly throughout the day, although others need reminding. Attendance is high, with effective action taken by the school to encourage the few students with persistent absence. About 70% of students in the survey, many from Key Stage 3, think that behaviour is 'good in lessons most of the time'. This figure mirrors some

views expressed in the parental survey, even though most parents and carers say behaviour overall is good. Inspectors probed this issue by talking to several different groups of students. They say that lesson disruption is rare, almost always dealt with effectively, and is not stopping them from learning. Inspectors note that off-task chatter, and occasional reluctance to cooperate initially with teacher instruction, occurs in some satisfactory lessons, and these lessons are more likely in Key Stage 3. Serious incidents are very rare; formal records show well below average occurrences of exclusion.

Students and their parents and carers in surveys overwhelmingly say they that the school is safe, and indicate that bullying, if it occurs, is dealt with well. Students are involved in developing anti-bullying policies and receive good advice on how to manage the range of threats they may encounter, including cyber-bullying.

Leadership and management

The school's formation in 2007 provided both opportunities, and challenge, that have required continued attention by senior leaders and the governing body. Staff turnover has been high, with some long-term illness requiring the deployment of supply staff and a high teaching load for senior leaders. Professional development for staff includes effective pairings between middle managers, who share practice that leads to mutually beneficial improvements in teaching. Over time, and with the continuing dedication and commitment of staff, attainment has steadily improved in line with better teaching. Almost all the staff surveyed were positive about every aspect of the school.

The school has stayed true to its curriculum that emphasises traditional GCSE subjects, and is now seeing the impact of that in the good progress made by students from all backgrounds and groups. There is no discrimination between different groups, so for example students known to be eligible for free school meals are following the same curriculum as everyone else and achieving equally well. For a few students, vocational pathways are available that also involve a consortium of other local providers, and this helps in maintaining attendance for students whose circumstances otherwise make them vulnerable or at risk of disaffection. As well as systematic opportunities across all curriculum areas for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, there are regular 'deep learning days' that students enjoy, for example through artistic-based activities. A rich range of clubs, sports activities, music and drama clubs and productions, school trips, visits and visitors contributes well to students' understanding of their local and regional culture.

A recent Ofsted subject inspection found that the overall effectiveness of personal, social and health education is good. The school maintains its good capacity for further improvement, and is effective at tackling discrimination. Equality of opportunity is promoted well through the curriculum, and one key result is that no Year 11 student has failed to find a place in education, employment or training in 2011.

Recent revisions to the structure of the governing body have improved its members' understanding of school performance data. A programme of 'governor days' in school systematically gives them training, and access to classrooms during the day, and

gives them first-hand knowledge of the working ethos in school. The governing body keeps site safety under review, mindful of the proximity of the River Severn. Students receive periodic instructions on how to deal with an emergency. The school is fastidious in meeting statutory requirements for safeguarding and child protection, including up-to-date training of staff and the governing body.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

| Grade | Judgement | Description |
|---------|--------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. |
| Grade 2 | Good | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. |

Overall effectiveness of schools

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 46 | 46 | 8 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 8 | 47 | 40 | 5 |
| Secondary schools | 14 | 38 | 40 | 8 |
| Special schools | 28 | 48 | 20 | 4 |
| Pupil referral units | 15 | 50 | 29 | 5 |
| All schools | 11 | 46 | 38 | 6 |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Attendance | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance. |
| Behaviour | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement. |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school. |
| Learning: | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners. |
| Overall effectiveness: | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. |
| Progress: | the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started. |
| Safety | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning. |

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 January 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of The Bewdley School and Sixth Form Centre, Bewdley, DY12 1BL

Thank you for your polite welcome and positive conversations with my inspectors and myself during our recent visit to your school. Our judgement is that Bewdley School is continuing to improve, is now good, and set fair to get even better. Students are achieving well and leaving with above average qualifications. Your teachers and support staff work hard to help you learn, most of the time delivering good or even better lessons that help you to enjoy learning and ensure you make good progress. The range of subjects you study is wide, giving all of you a broad curriculum that will support your future learning and employment.

You behave well, particularly around and about the school premises, and in most lessons, so we were puzzled by the results of our survey of 150 students that suggested students 'behave well in lessons' for 70% of the time, not all the time. When we spoke to many of you, however, we found that you think almost all of you behave well all of the time. The survey picked up that unfortunately one or two of your fellow students do sometimes cause a momentary delay in your learning as teachers apply the school's behaviour management system, but this is rare. It would help teachers to focus even more on your learning if they did not need to keep reminding some of you about wearing your uniform as smartly as you can.

To improve still further, we have asked teachers to:

- make sure lessons get you quickly engaged on activities you each find interesting and challenging
- consistently mark your work with comments that acknowledge what is good, advise you of how to improve it, and then give some lesson time over to you to make those improvements.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector

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