

Bishopshalt School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137633
Local authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	387190
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2012
Lead inspector	Christine Raeside HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Comprehensive
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	1,304
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	392
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Brown
Headteacher	Mr Kim Rowe
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2009
School address	Royal Lane Hillingdon Uxbridge UB8 3RF
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Hugh Betterton

Additional inspector

Heidi Boreham

Additional inspector

Mandy Snook

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Jim McVeigh

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 49 teachers and lessons, of which seven were joint observations with members of the senior team. In addition, the inspection team made short visits to a number of lessons, sometimes accompanied by a senior leader. They held meetings with four groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and school staff, including senior and middle leaders. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, minutes of the governing body and school policies. They also analysed responses to inspection questionnaires completed by 264 parents and carers, and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

Bishopshalt School is larger than average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion who belong to minority ethnic backgrounds is about double the national average and a higher than average proportion speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is lower than average. The school has specialist status in music and the performing arts. It is a popular choice in the local community and is oversubscribed. It meets the current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2011.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

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 where students achieve well. Since the last inspection the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSEs at grade C or higher, including English and mathematics, has increased by 12 percentage points and is now above average. Overall GCSE results are consistently well above the national average. The sixth form is good. By the time students reach the end of A-level courses, their attainment is above national averages at both the overall pass grades and at the higher, A* – B grades.
- Students make good progress because of teaching that is good and, at times, outstanding. Teachers’ good subject knowledge and a consistent approach to lesson planning make a significant contribution to how well students learn across different subjects and in all year groups, including the sixth form. Some satisfactory teaching remains, however, often when lessons are overly didactic or do not sufficiently address the needs of all students in the group.
- Behaviour is good both around the school and in lessons. Students are proud of their well-deserved reputation for good behaviour. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers say that their child feels safe at school. Inspection evidence strongly supports this view, with all groups of students saying that they feel safe and have great confidence in the school to deal with any concerns that may arise.
- Improvements since the last inspection are marked. The new headteacher has brought a fresh impetus and new strategies for improvement, which are having considerable impact. In particular, an uncompromising determination that every student will succeed, already a feature of the school, has been strengthened and underpinned by a rigorous and forensic approach to monitoring and evaluation. Leaders at all levels are appropriately focused on tracking the progress of every student. The school’s evaluation of its own strengths and weaknesses is now detailed, accurate and sharply focused on achievement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further through teaching that is consistently good and

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increasingly outstanding, by ensuring that all teachers:

- tailor and adapt activities and tasks to meet the needs of all students
- increase opportunities for students to develop and articulate their learning through group work and discussion
- provide written feedback to students on how to improve their work which is of a consistently high quality in all subjects and lessons
- ensure that all lessons are sufficiently challenging, including for the most able, and promote students' confidence as independent learners.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students enjoy their learning and apply themselves enthusiastically in lessons. They are keen to discuss what they need to do to improve and are very responsive to teacher questioning and support. They increasingly see their challenging targets as achievable and track their own progress towards them. Their parents and carers express well-founded confidence that they are making good progress. Highly effective monitoring of achievement is often supported by effective self- and peer-assessment and is building confidence and resilience. In a mathematics lesson, students who had taken an early GCSE used their results to diagnose precisely how to improve. In the course of the lesson they refined and consolidated their algebraic skills. They achieved high levels of success and were confident of achieving their target grades in the May examination.

Achievement is good, and was especially strong in 2011 for students who were eligible for free school meals, those who speak English as an additional language and looked after children. Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers and, over time, make good progress, despite some uneven achievement for this group in 2011. Current monitoring points to their good and strongly improving achievement in 2012. The school's own analysis has shown some potential underachievement among more-able students. Plans are in place to address this, for example a mentoring programme for targeted Year 11 girls.

Sixth form students exemplify the good attitudes to learning across the school. They make good progress on A-level and applied courses from broadly average attainment on entry. Outcomes on AS-level and some double award applied courses have been less strong than final A-level outcomes, partly as a result of students using their first year as orientation as they refine their selection. The alignment of students and courses at AS level is improving, with a consequent positive impact on results.

Quality of teaching

In the best lessons, careful planning for specific individual needs influences the teaching, so that all students make rapid and sustained progress. Teacher

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questioning is targeted, open-ended and searching. Students have time to think and are expected to develop their understanding by articulating what they know. In a lesson on the use of imperative verbs, students with low literacy levels made sandwiches by strictly adhering to one another's verbal instructions, before recording the method on a computer. The controlled talk helped them to understand the role of the verb in the process and to write more accurately and confidently. Teachers in all subject areas have a well-developed understanding of the need to develop students' reading and writing skills alongside their subject knowledge. Well-directed training has increased their capacity to do this and good practice was seen in a range of lessons. The very large majority of parents and carers feel that their child is well taught and helped to develop their basic skills. Inspectors agree with this view.

Conversely, in some lessons, learning is only satisfactory, because there is insufficient opportunity for students to articulate their learning. Teacher exposition tends to be overlong and responses reliant on a few 'hands up' so that it is unclear whether everyone has understood. Students are patient and tolerant of this style of teaching, but it limits the scope of their enquiry and does not promote independence. Where teaching is outstanding it is because it challenges students to take responsibility for their own and one another's learning. A Year 13 dance lesson was awe-inspiring because students constantly evaluated one another's performances, pushing for excellence. The final outcome was polished, professional and moving.

Good teaching has given students the tools to assess one another accurately and constructively. They also make good use of teachers' marking to help them improve, but this is variable in quality and consistency. There is some excellent practice, for example in English and humanities, but also some marking that is cursory and focused on surface features, rather than developmental. Teachers' knowledge of individual learning needs is detailed. Despite this, some teaching remains satisfactory because a single task is aimed at everyone and is not adapted for different levels of ability, so that weaker learners struggle and the more able are not stretched.

Curriculum planning supports teaching in developing students' understanding of wider social, moral and cultural issues. Students worked independently in a history lesson to interpret the German election results in 1933. Their understanding of the emergence of dictatorship was skilfully developed. Year 12 students learning about matter and anti-matter reflected on the moral implications of nuclear arms as they did so. Students spoke of how the well-planned citizenship programme helps them to see the world from other people's perspectives.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students are well behaved, polite and respectful. They move around the site calmly and safely. They are proud of their unique listed building setting, and treat the environment with care. In lessons, they are attentive and well focused on their work. When given the opportunity, they are proactive and creative in directing their own learning. A lesson in Year 11 about crime and punishment elicited impassioned views in a structured context, so that behaviour for learning was outstanding. Students and

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their parents and carers agree that behaviour is good. Disruption to learning is rare and is dealt with effectively by the school. There are clear and well-applied rewards for good conduct and attendance, and sanctions for infringements. As a result, exclusions, already lower than national figures, are dropping and attendance is above average.

Students feel safe at school and their parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that they are safe. The school has good systems in place to ensure the safety of students and takes appropriate measures to review and strengthen these as the need arises. A few parents drew the inspection team's attention to one aspect where such tightening of procedures had been necessary; the school was found to have taken appropriate action.

Students understand how to keep themselves safe and are able to explore issues of different forms of bullying through citizenship lessons. Although a few parents and carers expressed concern about bullying, the very large majority have confidence in the school to handle any issues well, as do students. Inspectors found this confidence to be well founded.

Leadership and management

The school's rate of improvement has picked up pace since the arrival of the headteacher. His vision, shared by governors and staff, is to establish outstanding learning and progress. Levels of accountability are high; expectations are clear and uncompromising. There is robust intolerance of underperformance. The school's commitment to equality is evident in its forensic analysis of performance to ensure success for all. Any gaps in achievement between different groups are identified and closed rapidly. Governors are determined to preserve the unique character of the school and its cohesive and harmonious learning environment, but within a continuous drive for excellence in learning and achievement. They hold senior leaders strongly to account in realising this vision. The capacity for further sustained improvement is very strong.

The impact of good leadership and management on teaching is evident in the best lessons. A coherent approach to self-evaluation, professional development and performance management has sharpened improvement planning. The curriculum centres on an appropriately challenging core offer, but is also well adapted to meet the needs of all students. Curriculum review has led the school to strengthen its 'English baccalaureate' offer, so that students for whom it is appropriate are able to study a balance of academic subjects. Provision for more-able students is carefully reviewed and their progress tracked through GCSE years, although similar processes are less well developed in the lower years.

Governors and senior leaders have taken appropriate steps to ensure the safeguarding of all members of the school community. Training is regular and appropriate for staff and governors. The security of the site is managed well but is set to become leading-edge with the introduction of fingerprint entry technology.

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The school's specialism adds to its distinct character and makes a significant contribution to students' spiritual and cultural development. An assembly on love drew on a range of religious texts and provoked deep thinking on different world views. Students listened attentively and warmly applauded a solo trombonist. High quality dramatic and musical productions are the norm and elicit wide participation, as do sports clubs. Extra-curricular activities are carefully monitored to ensure that students of all abilities, ages and backgrounds are freely gaining access to the provision. Varied and numerous school visits promote wider cultural understanding. Economic awareness is enhanced through the well-developed Young Enterprise initiative, in which Year 12 students have excelled.

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.



10 February 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Bishopshalt School, Hillingdon UB8 3RF

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. Your very positive attitudes to learning and to school generally help you to do well. Your behaviour around the site and in lessons was very good and we heard from you and from your parents and carers that this is usually the case.

Bishopshalt has improved since it was last inspected and is now a good school. You achieve well because of good teaching and because your school is determined that all of you should succeed. Senior leaders keep very careful track of your progress and intervene quickly if anyone is falling behind, so that GCSE and A-level results are now above the national average. Rates of progress are improving for all of you. However, those of you who arrived with high levels from primary school or who are identified as gifted and talented need more challenge in some lessons.

Most of the teaching we observed was good and some was outstanding. In the best lessons teachers give you lots of opportunities to discuss your learning and to get actively involved in the lesson. However, there were also some lessons where students spent too long listening passively, so that levels of interest and the pace of learning declined.

You are good at explaining your levels, grades and targets. Your teachers help you with this by making learning intentions clear and explaining how they relate to assessment criteria. In the best lessons, teachers plan different learning activities, so that everyone makes good progress. In lessons where teachers set just one task, however, some students struggle while others find the work too easy. Many teachers provide regular marking which gives very good guidance on how to improve. This is not true of all subjects, however. Sometimes marking is too infrequent or focused on surface features instead of giving clear, developmental advice.

We have asked your teachers to continue the trend of improvement by:

- adapting tasks to suit the learning needs of everyone in the class
- giving you more opportunities to explain and discuss your learning
- making sure that lessons challenge all of you, including the most able
- ensuring that all teachers mark your work as effectively as the best.

Yours sincerely

Christine Raeside
Her Majesty's Inspector

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