

# Bedford High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106523
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	355966
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 January 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Patrick Geraghty HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	968
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr David Whitehead
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Stephen Preston
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 May 2008
<b>School address</b>	Manchester Road Leigh Lancashire WN7 2LU
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors spent the majority of their time observing teaching and learning in 35 lessons observing the same number of teachers. They held meetings with staff, groups of students, and members of the governing body. Documentation was scrutinised including: information related to the tracking of the academic and personal progress of students; detailed analysis of students' attainment and progress; school development planning; school and subject self-evaluation; records of recent classroom monitoring; minutes from meetings of the governing body; and evidence to demonstrate how the school supports students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Inspectors also examined evaluations undertaken by the school to ensure that it meets statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding. In addition, 89 parental questionnaires were scrutinised along with questionnaires returned by a representative sample of staff and students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether strategies to improve student attainment and progress at Key Stages 3 and 4 have been effective.
- Whether teaching and learning are sufficiently challenging to promote better outcomes for students.
- Whether the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation by leaders and managers at all levels is sufficiently well embedded to drive improvement
- Whether leaders and managers, at all levels, have the necessary capacity to sustain improvement trends.

## Information about the school

Bedford High School is an average-sized comprehensive school. Its specialist status is Business and Enterprise with the second specialism of Applied Learning. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are both below the national average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average as is the proportion of those with a statement to support their special educational needs. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The school has a number of awards including the Sportsmark, Artsmark Gold, Investors in People, Healthy Schools Status and Work-Related Learning status.

**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: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good school. When students join the school in Year 7, their attainment is just below average. Across a broad range of subjects students make good progress by the end of Key Stage 4. However, historically the school has had a record of underperformance in GCSE English and mathematics. Evidence from the inspection, together with data for examinations already taken and the school's tracking, firmly indicates that this trend has been reversed. There has been a 22% increase over three years in those achieving five or more GCSE grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics. Data indicate that this upward trend will accelerate further in 2011.

Students are well behaved, enjoy their learning and feel safe. They are highly supportive of the school. Relationships across the school are good. While there is a significant amount of good teaching, too much remains satisfactory. Some marking fails to indicate to students what they need to do to improve. There is insufficient identification and sharing of good practice. The curriculum matches students' needs well. The specialism of business and enterprise has had a positive impact on developing curriculum opportunities and external partnerships. Dedicated curriculum initiatives at Key Stage 4 have contributed to improved attainment across all groups of students. The accelerated reading programme at Key Stage 3 is resulting in improved students' reading ages as well as a growing enthusiastic commitment to reading. There is good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to promote learning. A high proportion of students progress to further education or work-based learning. Good care, support and guidance enable students to succeed. These additional factors mean that students achieve well even though the teaching is satisfactory.

The headteacher has a strong commitment to embedding a culture of continuous improvement and challenge. He is ably supported by a strong and enthusiastic senior management team. Equality of opportunities for all is well promoted. Parents are supportive of the school and its ethos. Safeguarding is good. Governors provide effective links with the local community and are supportive of the school. The school provides good value for money and has a good capacity to improve further.

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

- Improve the percentage of good and better teaching by:
  - ensuring questioning is used effectively to challenge individual students according to their needs and to improve their oracy skills
  - ensuring that teacher marking in all subjects gives a clear indication to students of what they need to do to improve

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- ensure consistency in the use of data for lesson planning across the curriculum
- improve the internal system for recording and evaluating lesson observations so that best practices can be shared and areas for improvement are identified more effectively.

## **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**2**

Analysis of data indicates that overall students make good progress from average starting points as they move through the school. In the best lessons, students work with much enthusiasm and make good progress in developing their abilities in learning. This was exemplified in an outstanding mathematics lesson on the formation of equations. Students took responsibility for the organisation of their learning by engaging in the full range of learning activities and were highly cooperative in challenging each others understanding of the topic. All exuded a sense of enjoyment and delight in inquiry. The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. The proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE rose significantly in 2010 to well above the national average. When English and mathematics are included this figure is broadly in line with the national average. The most recent modular examination results and scrutiny of current tracking information indicate that a strong trend of improvement is continuing, especially in English and mathematics. Gaps in performance between groups of students, especially the more able and those on free school meals are narrowing as a result of very focused intervention. The school is aware of the continuing need to ensure that the more-able students achieve to their potential.

Students' personal development is good. They report that they feel safe and that instances of bullying are dealt with quickly. Older students act as positive role models for younger pupils, often through their responsibilities as prefects and enterprise leaders. Students behave very well, both in lessons and around the school; any minor lapses in behaviour are dealt with quickly and effectively either by peer mediators or staff. Students understand what they need to do to lead a healthy lifestyle but not all of them take advantage of the healthy food options in the canteen and insufficient numbers of them participate regularly in the ample sporting opportunities provided by the school. The school has rigorous procedures in place to follow-up student absence and, as a result, attendance is now above average. This, together with good development of business enterprise and ICT skills, is ensuring that students are prepared well for the next stage of their education or the world of work. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

While there is a significant amount of good teaching, too much remains satisfactory and lacking in sufficient challenge. In the best lessons time is well used and planning is good. These lessons are characterised by enthusiasm, a good pace, student engagement, challenge and high expectations. Good teaching was consistently observed in mathematics and English and this is reflected in much improved outcomes in these areas. In English, teachers are particularly proficient at organising effective individual and group activities which fully engage students. There is good use of technology to support learning. Outstanding teaching was observed in mathematics, food technology, and drama where students demonstrated exemplary enthusiasm and engagement in learning.

In satisfactory lessons the pace is slow and there is too much teacher talk. Students have few opportunities to explain or reflect upon their learning. Questioning is not used to challenge and develop students' participation. The school's lesson observation planning does not sufficiently encourage the identification of teaching strengths and areas for improvement. There is inconsistency in marking across the curriculum and an over-reliance on self or peer assessment that results in less teacher marking and acceptance of poor presentation. Consequently, much marking does not give a clear indication to students of what they need to do to improve. Data are not always used to effectively plan lessons and to inform on the variety of activities that will meet the needs of all students.

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The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of all students. Curriculum provision is constantly re-evaluated. The format of Key Stage 3 has changed to facilitate a greater focus on improvement in literacy and numeracy. The accelerated reading programme has resulted in improved reading skills. Students now make their option choices at the end of Year 8 and have the opportunity to commence their Key Stage 4 courses in Year 9. There are a wide range of GCSE and BTEC options in addition to the diplomas in creative media and business finance and administration. In partnership with other schools, a number of vocational courses are offered off-site and include hairdressing and construction. The school has also developed a successful alternative curriculum programme for students disaffected with learning. The impact of the specialism of business and enterprise is good, especially in the development of curriculum and progression partnerships. These curriculum changes have successfully contributed to the reduction of exclusions, improved attendance and improved students' attitudes to learning. Progression rates to further education courses and to work-based learning programmes are high.

Students speak highly of the care and support they receive from teachers and other adults in the school. They are positive about feeling safe and are clear about the opportunities they have to follow-up on any concerns. Transition arrangements for students joining from primary school are excellent with additional individual support packages for the most vulnerable students. There is good guidance and a high proportion of students progress to further education and sixth form colleges as well as into employment. The dedicated inclusion team provide a wide range of support to enable vulnerable students and those at risk of underachieving to play a full part in school life. Students particularly value the range of support offered by the support unit before, during and after school. The school works well with many external agencies whose expertise complements the school's effective care. Highly effective strategies have led to much improved attendance and a reduction in persistent absence. The school recognises the need to embed targeted guidance for the most-able students.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders have been the driving force behind raising ambition and setting challenging targets for students and teachers. Potential underachievement is now rapidly identified and intervention programmes put in place. Successful strategies to raise attainment have been introduced, for instance through regular revision classes, extra-curriculum time for English and mathematics and a revision weekend for Year 11 students. Robust systems to track and monitor students' progress are embedded.

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Although subject leaders are enthusiastic and determined to raise standards, there are some inconsistencies in the leadership and management of teaching and learning. For example, the school's lesson observation process does not clearly identify best practice and areas for improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate and self-critical. Governance is satisfactory. Governors have recently become more involved in the monitoring of the school's work, receive regular reports and are now attached to departments.

Partnerships are good, well promoted and enhanced by the business and enterprise college status. There are very strong links with local schools and colleges which add to the students' learning opportunities. Links with a variety of other agencies add to the good quality of care, support and guidance for students. There is effective promotion of equality of opportunity through pastoral programmes and the broad and balanced curriculum. Students say that they are all valued and there are very few racist incidents. Strong analysis of the performance of different groups of students has enhanced improved outcomes. The school is developing its work in community cohesion. Local and international initiatives are being promoted. Safeguarding is good. Policies and procedures are comprehensive in range and coverage. A significant strength is the productive use of school safeguarding mentors. Given its record of sustained improvement over a three-year period, the school has a good capacity to achieve further improvements. The school's value for money, set against outcomes, is good.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Views of parents and carers

An analysis of responses to the questionnaire indicates that the majority of parents and carers are happy with their child's experience at school and that appropriate steps are taken to ensure that their child is well prepared for the future. However, a small minority



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felt that their children do not lead healthy lifestyles. Inspectors noted these parental concerns and have asked the school to look at this area.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bedford High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 89 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 968 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	39	49	55	4	4	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	35	39	50	56	2	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	32	36	53	60	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	37	53	60	1	1	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	26	29	60	67	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	26	56	63	7	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	27	53	60	9	10	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	25	28	55	62	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	33	52	58	4	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	35	47	53	4	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	24	54	61	7	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	33	56	63	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	40	51	57	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.

**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.**



14 January 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Bedford High School, Leigh, WN7 2LU**

Thank you for the warm and friendly welcome that you gave my colleagues and me when we inspected your school recently. We would particularly like to thank those of you who spoke with us.

Our inspection found that yours is a good school. You are making good progress throughout your time at the school. Your GCSE results are improving particularly at GCSE English and mathematics. There is good teaching in the school; however, we found too much that was satisfactory. In the good lessons, you respond well to the teachers' high expectations but many of you are not sufficiently challenged to do better in the satisfactory lessons. Your curriculum options are good. The teachers and support staff care for you and give you good support.

The leaders in your school worked with us to decide on some ways in which your provision could be better. We decided that to achieve this, the school should improve the percentage of good and better teaching so that you are all challenged and achieve your best.

You can help your school to improve further by ensuring everyone focuses on the pursuit of excellence for all of you and trying hard in your studies so that you can achieve your full potential in life. I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty

Her Majesty's Inspector

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