

North Bromsgrove High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116928
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	358056
Inspection dates	4–5 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Ahson Mohammed

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	14–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	929
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	159
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Maclachan
Headteacher	Sue Ballard
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors, one of whom focused on safeguarding across the school. Inspectors observed 24 lessons and 25 teachers. Inspectors looked at a variety of documentation including local authority monitoring reports, development plans, safeguarding documents and the school's evaluation of its effectiveness. Meetings were held with groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and staff. Responses to questionnaires from 103 parents and carers, 48 members of staff and 80 students also provided additional evidence.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- Is attainment rising strongly, especially in English and mathematics, and are students' learning and progress improving securely because of the quality of teaching?
- How effective is the quality of leadership and management in tackling underperformance and in sustaining improvement over time?
- Is teaching sufficiently challenging to stretch the more able?

Information about the school

This is an average-sized secondary school. Almost all of the students are from White British backgrounds, the remainder representing a variety of different ethnic heritages. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is almost half of the national average. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The school has been a specialist media arts college since 2007 when it moved to a new building and was re-designated earlier this year. The school has achieved a number of awards including Artsmark Gold for the third time and Healthy Schools status. The school is a member of the Forward consortium of schools. The school has two local authority managed bases on site: one is an autism resource centre and the other is provision for students with moderate learning difficulties. Students in these bases are directed to the school by the local authority.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a rapidly improving school. The school's inclusive ethos ensures that all students feel able to play their part in this caring and supportive environment, enabling them to feel safe and achieve well. The media arts specialism has enhanced the school's work in raising aspiration and securing achievement. Students enjoy school life and behaviour is good. The strong leadership of the headteacher and the restructured leadership team has resulted in good improvement to students' achievement over the last academic year and this reflects the school's good capacity for sustained improvement. The impact of the school's work on developing leadership, teaching and curriculum is evident in the rising trend of attainment, which is now broadly average throughout the school.

A particular strength of the school is the good quality of care, guidance and support. Students and parents are aware and supportive of the effort the school makes on their behalf. Students' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Their social skills are particularly strong, as is their knowledge of what is right and wrong.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas in need of further development. The school is developing its monitoring and evaluation systems across curriculum areas. This is to ensure that staff at all levels rigorously monitor and use assessment information to further develop teaching and learning. In English and mathematics, improvements in teaching and learning are being driven by effective planning, monitoring and feedback to teachers, but in other subjects this is not yet robustly applied.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, and is supported by the 'NBHS challenge', a school-based initiative which effectively tracks student progress, particularly in English and mathematics. Any underperformance is identified at an early stage and support allocated. This is improving classroom practice which is complemented by the use of new technologies including podcasts to support learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and effective classroom management skills to create well-planned learning activities. The resource based provision is satisfactory overall; they are all effective in providing specific support for the students in their care. However, the school also recognises that some inconsistencies in teaching quality and the use of assessment exist. Lessons do not always provide sufficient challenge for more-able students and the quality of verbal and written feedback to students is inconsistent across subjects.

Current tracking data show that students are making expected progress, including in English where standards in GCSE results dipped in 2008. The senior leaders' determination to tackle this dip through changes in leadership and teaching are already making a difference. The proportion of students who gain five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics has been rising over recent years. The 2010 pass rate on this indicator is broadly in line with the national average, representing

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improvement, particularly in English. Challenging targets have been set for 2011 and senior leaders are confident that they will be met in the light of students' current progress. The results of students who have taken their examinations in Year 10 rather than Year 11 support this.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate students' progress and raise achievement by:
 - through increasing the proportion of good or better teaching across the school by embedding the good practice that already exists in the school, but is not applied consistently
 - providing students with oral and written feedback which routinely identifies how they should improve their work and challenging the more able.
 - Strengthen the planning, monitoring and evaluation by middle leaders through:
 - extending the good practice that exists in English and mathematics across to all subject areas.
 - Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The school has worked hard to improve students' attainment and overall achievement. The good relationships that exist between students and adults create a positive atmosphere in which to learn. As a result, most students behave well and respond enthusiastically when teaching is paced appropriately to their needs. They enjoy practical learning, especially when supported by the use of new technologies such as video or podcasts, and appreciate the opportunity to extend their thinking. In the better lessons, careful matching of the work to individual students' needs and regular opportunities to reflect upon learning ensure good progress. Students, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities along with those who attend the resource centre make a satisfactory level of progress over time due to the constructive support they receive. However, the progress of the more able is variable due to lack of challenge at times.

Historically, attainment has been low but the current set of results and grades of examinations already taken by students in Year 11 indicate that the situation has improved. In the majority of lessons observed, the quality of learning was satisfactory. Scrutiny of students' work and the school's own analysis of data on students' progress confirm that the attainment of all current year groups is broadly average and achievement continues to improve.

The media arts specialism makes a significant contribution to students' achievement, development and enjoyment of school life. They gain useful life skills that prepare them for education, training and employment. This is complemented by enterprise education and working with the many partners. As a result, students' aspirations are continually being raised and a majority choose to continue into further education.

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Students say that they feel cared for, supported and safe in school. They report that bullying is very rare and dealt with quickly and effectively. Behaviour overall, both in lessons and around school is good. Students are aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and take advantage of the healthy food available in the school canteen. Participation in extra-curricular activities by student groups is impressive. Students are eager to get involved in school, are aware of their rights and responsibilities and readily take on responsibilities.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

¹ 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?

Teaching is satisfactory overall and is characterised by positive relationships between teachers and students, which provides a sound base for learning. New technologies are used well to engage, support and extend learners, with innovative practice evident in the specialism subjects. The better lessons are characterised by effective classroom management, good pace throughout the lesson and a variety of engaging learning activities which provide support and challenge for all groups of learners. As a result, students are motivated and generally make good progress relative to their starting points. The better teaching is supported by constructive feedback to students though effective questioning and meaningful dialogue in lessons, enabling all students to develop their own thinking and understanding. In a few lessons, teachers over-direct proceedings which

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prevents students from engaging fully with their work and results in low-level off-task behaviour because assessment of prior learning has not informed lesson planning.

The school provides a good dynamic curriculum which is responding to the needs and interests of the students very well. It has breadth and balance with a range of academic and vocational options. There are a number of emerging strengths in the development, planning and evaluation of the curriculum to further raise the student aspiration and achievement. This has been particularly evident in the collaboration with the Forward consortium of schools and other partners to offer greater choice. The formal and alternative curriculum is supplemented further by a broad range of extra-curricular activities including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, visits and international trips.

Levels of support and guidance are targeted well. Students talk positively of their transition both from middle school and into the sixth form. Appropriate use of outside agencies is made to ensure that support is tailored to individual need. The school has worked hard to improve attendance, which is now above average. The resource centres cater for students across the consortium and offer a good range of curricular options.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and the leadership team have a strong belief in the schools success. This is shared by staff, parents and students. They have established a clear vision and agenda for raising aspirations. A 'movers and shakers' group delivers best practice workshops to encourage staff to develop their teaching approaches. The school promotes an ethos of teamwork and collaboration amongst staff who are successfully engaged in raising standards and improving achievement for all groups of students.

The school's development plan, verified by the local authority, provides clear direction and focus for strategic improvement and is systematically reviewed. This approach provides clarity of purpose and has led to increased accountability, spreading across leadership at all levels. The school's progress, together with largely accurate self-evaluation, demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement.

The governing body has taken on its role with rigour in supporting and challenging the school. It is developing its use of the committee structure to monitor curriculum areas. Governors are fully involved in setting targets and monitoring the strategic direction of the school, and are fully aware of the school's strengths and priorities. All safeguarding regulations and duties are met; arrangements are rigorously applied and systematically reviewed along with other policies.

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Community cohesion is promoted well. The school has a clear analysis of its context and good links exist. A good example has been a 'window in the community' project with the local hospice. There has been a long-standing relationship with a school in Gambia and exchanges take place annually, which provide students with insights into different cultures and ways of life. Students' understanding of Britain as a diverse society is evolving, with further links being established with inner city schools.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Sixth form

Good leadership has made significant improvements to the effectiveness of the sixth form. There is a strong, improving trend in students' attainment which is now average and attendance is above average. This has built on the work of the main school. The proportions of students staying on in the sixth form, progressing to A level courses and further education are also rising due to satisfactory progress from their starting points. Clear systems are in place to monitor and track students' progress. This has enabled more effective intervention strategies to address any concerns. Students receive good advice and guidance from staff who are prepared to go the extra mile for the benefit of the students. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Inspectors did see some examples of outstanding practice, such as a lesson where all were engaged and developing high standards of dance. The curriculum is good and meets the needs of students by further collaboration with the college across the road which provides vocational courses. Students present themselves well and are good models to younger students. They take on wider responsibilities in school and the wider community.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents who responded to the questionnaire were supportive of the school and many wrote to the inspection team to comment on the improvements that have been made. A majority commented favourably on the support that their child received along with guidance on leading healthy lifestyles. A very small minority of parents expressed concern about behaviour in some lessons. The inspection team investigated this through lesson observations and found that behaviour both in lessons and around the school during the inspection was good, and that the school has effective provision and procedures in place to promote good behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at North Bromsgrove 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 103 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 929 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	32	58	56	9	9	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	13	13	79	77	5	5	2	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	16	67	65	13	13	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	19	64	62	10	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	10	10	78	76	5	5	3	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	14	64	62	14	14	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	11	69	67	14	14	3	3
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)	19	18	65	63	7	7	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	17	71	69	10	10	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	8	60	59	16	16	4	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	12	57	55	12	12	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	14	14	71	69	8	8	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	22	69	67	9	9	1	1

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



6 October 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of North Bromsgrove High School, Bromsgrove, B60 1BA

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you during our visit. We were impressed with your good behaviour and with the positive contribution you make to the life of the school and local community. You told us that you enjoy school and this is one reason, of many, that we judge your school to be satisfactory and rapidly improving.

The headteacher and other senior leaders are effective in ensuring that all staff share the common purpose of raising standards and improving your learning further. Their drive for improvement is evident in the most recent GCSE results which reflect a rising trend. Attendance is above average and there is a good range of curriculum opportunities. You appreciate the positive benefits that the media arts specialism has brought as well as the enrichment activities. We were particularly impressed by how many of you took part in the extra-curricular activities that are available.

We judged that teaching is predominantly satisfactory and improving. A minority of lessons are not as good as others because teachers talk for too long before you get down to work. Staff care for you very well, and make sure you settle in well and are able to go forward to the next stage of your education.

We have identified a number of areas to make the school even better and have asked the school leaders to ensure that they:

- increase the number of good or better lessons that challenge and support all of you so that you make faster progress
- share the good practice that exists in some departments, so that teachers with responsibilities keep a closer check to improve the planning, monitoring and evaluation of their subject areas.

You can all play your part by rising to the challenges teachers set for you. We wish you well in your studies in a school of which you are justifiably proud.

Yours sincerely

Ahson Mohammed

Lead inspector

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