

Acland Burghley School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number100053Local AuthorityCamdenInspection number354795

Inspection dates4-5 November 2010Reporting inspectorGlynis Bradley-Peat

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

Type of school

School category

Age range of pupils

Gender of pupils

Gender of pupils in the sixth form

Number of pupils on the school roll

Of which, number on roll in the sixth form

Secondary

Community

11–18

Mixed

Mixed

1288

Of which, number on roll in the sixth form

383

Appropriate authority The governing body

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 42 lessons, observing 42 teachers, and had meetings with senior and middle leaders, governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' exercise books. They checked documents including the school improvement plan, systems for tracking the pupils' progress, safeguarding documentation and school policies. They analysed questionnaires from 107 parents and carers in addition to those received from staff and students.

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

- How well do teachers use assessment data to ensure that all groups of students make equally good progress including the more-able and those with special educational needs/and or disabilities?
- Are leaders and managers effectively measuring the impact teaching is having on learning and whether good teaching is moving towards becoming outstanding?
- Are leaders and managers, at all levels, including governors driving improvements effectively?
- Does the sixth form provide well for its students?

Information about the school

Acland Burghley is larger than most secondary schools. Almost two thirds of the students are boys. One in three students, an above average proportion, speaks English as an additional language. The largest group of students is of White British heritage with the remainder coming from a wide variety of different heritages. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is just over twice the national average. Almost a third of all students, a proportion higher than that found nationally, have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These are mainly moderate and specific learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties. The school has specialist arts status and has gained the Arts Mark Gold award.

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

The highly effective leadership of the newly appointed headteacher has ensured that the school has continued to improve. It offers a good standard of education for its students. Her ambition for the future of the school is already well embedded and staff say overwhelmingly that the school is well led and managed. This is also the view of inspectors. Some parents speak highly of the new headteacher, her team and the school. One wrote, 'There is a very special ethos at Acland Burghley School and we feel very, very lucky that our daughter has had the opportunity to go there.' These sentiments echo the views of many parents.

Learning and progress in lessons and over time is good overall and improving because most teachers have high expectations of all students. Teaching has improved from satisfactory to good, although there is still some inconsistency across subjects and classes. The school is fully aware of this and is working alongside staff successfully to provide support and direction. Teachers' planning provides for a range of activities in most lessons and these are often linked to a variety of learning styles. Teachers check students' understanding and promote progress through questioning. Sometimes, however, targeted questioning to challenge the more-able and make them think deeply about their work is underdeveloped. In addition, some teachers do not always take full account of students' starting points by making good use of data provided for them. Therefore, in a few lessons, more-able students waste time covering topics which they already know well. Many teachers ensure that students are able to learn through well organised group and paired work. However, in some lessons there is less opportunity to learn independently in this way. This results in a few students being over reliant on the teacher leading to an occasional reluctance to persevere. Teaching assistants are well deployed and have skills which are well tailored to enabling students to become more independent in their learning. Consequently those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress in line with their peers and in some cases exceed it. As a result of better rates of progress, over the last three years, the percentage of pupils gaining 5A*- C grades, including English and mathematics, at GCSE is broadly average and steadily improving. Students' achievement is good.

The good curriculum offers students a range of pathways that meets their needs well. These include a broad range of applied learning and vocational programmes, for example, 'Young Apprenticeship in Business Administration'. Many of these are delivered in partnership with other schools and colleges and enhance learning. The sixth form is a part of the LaSwap consortium and the range of courses offered is broad and varied. The school ensures that the curriculum is enhanced for the students through a range of extracurricular activities, which are attended and enjoyed by large numbers of them. Many of these enhance students' healthy lifestyles and contribute well to their personal development. Students are happy and safe; they behave well. The work to create a

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

welcoming and cohesive community has been highly effective. Students' contribution to outstanding community cohesion has been enhanced by a series of events which examine cultural diversity and celebrate activities undertaken by them at the school. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding as shown by their great willingness to reflect on their own and other's experiences. Outstanding pastoral support and guidance, especially for vulnerable students and their families make an excellent contribution to the school's good relationships with parents and carers in the local community.

Monitoring information is used regularly and with accuracy to identify what the school does well and to plan for improvement. Governors play a full part in this process. Since the last inspection, leaders have systematically improved the progress students make. This has been particularly successful in English. The school's hard work has also been rewarded and is reflected in improved attendance figures which are now above average. These actions demonstrate that there is good capacity to make further improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress and learning in lessons to raise standards by:
 - ensuring that teachers use data more effectively so that activities provided are challenging and carefully matched to the needs of all students, particularly the more-able
 - developing teachers' targeted questioning skills so as to challenge students to think more deeply
 - ensuring that teachers afford more opportunities for students to learn independently.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

From just below average starting points on entry to the school, students make good progress overall. In some subject areas, for example in English, progress has improved year on year and more recently has been outstanding. This is because teaching has become increasingly effective. Progress in mathematics has also improved and good progress is clearly linked with teaching which encourages students to think for themselves. In an effective Year 7 lesson, pupils tackled tasks which developed their thinking skills and abilities to solve problems involving equivalent fractions. Consequently, standards by the end of Year 11 are rising in these key areas. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language also make good progress because of effective support from teaching assistants.

Pupils behave well and demonstrate a desire to learn. Relationships between students and adults are very positive. In lessons, students are confident to ask questions and enter into dialogue with teachers. Students say they feel safe and enjoy their education. They make a particularly good contribution to the school and local community. Many are keen to take on responsibilities. The school's arts status has enabled students to work well with each other and improve their confidence and self-esteem. Consequently, the majority are on track to meet their challenging targets in these areas. Students are prepared well for the world of work. Their basic skills are average and their team working is good. The school

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has worked hard with students, parents and carers to emphasise the importance of good attendance, which has improved markedly over the last year and is now above average. The number of persistent absentees has reduced significantly.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2	
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹		
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		
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2	
Pupils' behaviour	2	
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles		
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community		
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	1	

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 has moved from satisfactory to good and is improving steadily. In the majority of lessons, teachers use a variety of strategies to stimulate students' thinking skills. In some particularly good lessons, high level questioning promotes lively debate and engenders in students a thirst to know more. As a consequence many are articulate and are confident about suggesting ideas to promote further discussion. This approach was evident in an excellent business studies lesson where students talked about company liquidity and in an English lesson where students compared the differing language and structure of World War I poetry. Students were very clear that their best learning took place in lessons which were interactive. However, this good practice is not consistent. In a few lessons seen during the inspection, students did not make the progress of which they are capable because the tasks set were pitched at too low a level. This is because data was not used as effectively as it could be to ensure that teaching builds upon what students already know and can do. Sometimes teachers' questioning is too superficial and is not targeted well enough to challenge the more able, in particular. In some lessons, well organised paired and group work ensures students learn well both independently and collaboratively.

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

However, teachers do not plan actively for this type of approach to learning as often as they could. Consequently the promotion of thinking skills through open-ended problem solving is underused. Whilst there is good evidence of oral feedback to students in lessons, written feedback in books indicating how students can improve is not as consistent; not all students know what it is that they specifically need to do to improve.

The curriculum is increasingly effective at meeting the needs and interests of all students, for example a range of cross-curricular themes ensure that learning is more enjoyable. The 'Holocaust Project' was particularly effective and blended history, English and art together well. Alternative provision is made available for students with very specific needs and this is monitored well by the school. Cross-curricular provision for information and communications technology is good and is embedded into all areas of the school. The provision for literacy and numeracy is improving but opportunities to write for a purpose across a number of subjects are sometimes missed. The school has used the expertise from the specialist areas to promote high quality teaching across the school, for example, in the 'Visual Literacy' initiative. Specialist college provision continues to have a positive impact on learners and the number of students who are leaving the school with an arts qualification is rising.

The target setting process is now very thorough and is better understood by staff. As a result they are able to identify any evident underachievement early. This has assisted the clear improvements made to intervention strategies and the support given to students with special educational needs and/or disabilities in particular. Students whose circumstances have made them vulnerable benefit exceptionally well from highly effective links with external agencies.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's commitment and determination to improve the school further are impressive. Her intentions and a clear vision have been shared effectively with all staff, who embrace them wholeheartedly. Middle leaders promote the vision for the future of the school well, an improvement since the previous inspection. Strategies for tackling weaker teaching have been successful and there is a clear ambition to ensure that all lessons are good and that all students achieve well. Consequently, teaching is improving and learning and progress are accelerating. Areas of good practice have been identified and these are beginning to be used to support staff training and development. The importance of data to accurately identify the starting points for all students and to use this to plan effective and challenging lessons is now more fully understood. However, this is

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not always successfully translated into practice. Self-evaluation is constructive and, hence, leader's views of the strengths and shortcomings within the school are accurate.

The school has a strong commitment to ensuring that every student has an equal chance to learn. It works hard to eradicate any differences in the achievement of groups of students, for example by narrowing the gap between girls' and boys' performance. A number of students have profound learning or physical difficulties and these students are equal members of the school community. Community cohesion at local, national and global level is excellent and benefits learners in a number of different ways. The governing body fulfil their statutory duties and have had a clear impact on the work of the school, for example in financial management. They have a clear understanding of the performance data and are diligent in carrying out their safeguarding duties. The school has good procedures for safeguarding and risk assessment.

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		
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		
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures		
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion		
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money		

Sixth form

Acland Burghley school is part of a large consortium, 'La Swap'. It is one of four other schools. This arrangement affords the provision of an outstanding curriculum which is able to offer a very wide variety of courses and opportunities for the students. Good retention rates indicate students' satisfaction with their education. Attainment is average and checks on the progress of current Year 12 and 13 students indicate that the vast majority are on track to meet their challenging targets, so that achievement is good. This is the result of good teaching and assessment. Students are particularly successful at 'A' level in dance, English literature, history, law, mathematics, performing arts and sociology. Applied business repeated the high attainment levels of 2008 and applied art also demonstrates above average attainment. Vocational courses also experienced success and attainment at the top grades was significantly above those achieved nationally. Attainment at 'AS' level

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is less successful. The school is aware of this and is currently implementing strategies to address shortcomings. Attendance is above average and has improved since the time of the last inspection. This is because the school has ensured that this has been top priority.

Under the good leadership of the head of sixth form, the care, guidance and support of the students are good. As a result, students' personal development is good and most enjoy their lessons. Students' contribution to the community is good. The tutorial system contributes well towards developing skills for later life and the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for the sixth form

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

Views of parents and carers

A very small minority of parents and carers returned questionnaires. The school enjoys the support of the overwhelming majority of these. Almost all respondents were very positive about the school and felt that it keeps students safe and helps them to prepare for the future. Most feel that the school is well led and managed and that their children enjoy school. A few parents and carers raise concerns including, progress and the school's help afforded to parents and carers about how they may support learning. Some felt the school did not help their children to have a healthy lifestyle. This was brought to the attention of senior leaders.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Acland Burghley 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 107 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1288 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Stro agı		Ag	ree	Disa	gree	Stro disa	ngly gree
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	41	56	52	5	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	40	37	62	58	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	56	52	46	43	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	35	57	53	10	9	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	35	33	66	62	4	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	28	56	52	14	13	3	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	20	60	56	19	18	4	4
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)	36	34	51	48	2	2	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	29	62	58	9	8	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	39	55	51	6	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	26	59	55	8	7	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	42	39	54	50	2	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	43	54	50	7	7	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)					
Type of school	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 suc	ccess of a pupil in their learning,
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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: 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.

■ 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.



8 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Acland Burghley School, Burghley Road, London NW5 1UJ

On behalf of the inspectors and myself, I would like to thank you very much for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and seeing you at work. We very much valued the discussions we had with you. You, your parents and carers, told us that Acland Burghley is a caring and happy place where you feel safe. The vast majority of parents and carers feel that the school is well led and managed. Inspectors agree with this and believe that the school provides a good standard of education.

Even in good schools some improvements are needed to ensure that you all achieve as well as you can during your time there. The great majority of you are making at least good progress and getting broadly average GCSE results and other qualifications at the end of Year 11. However, some of you, particularly those of you who are more able, are not always challenged effectively in your lessons and teachers do not always ask you questions which ensure you think hard about your work. Sometimes you are not always given enough opportunity to work independently in pairs and groups without too much help from your teacher. We have asked your school to:

- look closely at information about your performance, in order to accurately plan work that will challenge and engage you in all lessons, particularly the more able amongst you
- ensure that your teachers ask more challenging questions which make you think hard about your work
- plan actively to show you ways to learn by yourselves.

You too can play your part in improving the school by working hard and talking to your teachers about your learning. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Glynis Bradley-Peat Lead inspector

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