

# Old Buckenham High School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121169
<b>Local Authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	358950
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 May 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Roderick Passant

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<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>	604
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Hicks
<b>Headteacher</b>	Peter Whear
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 May 2008
<b>School address</b>	Abbey Road Old Buckenham NR17 1RL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01953 860233
<b>Fax number</b>	01953 860944
<b>Email address</b>	office@oldbuckenhamhigh.norfolk.sch.uk

---

<b>Age group</b>	<b>11–16</b>
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	<b>23–24 May 2011</b>
<b>Inspection number</b>	<b>358950</b>

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2011



## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed most of the school's 34 staff teaching 34 lessons. They included lessons taught across ability grouping and focused observations on groups of students in lessons.

Meetings were held with members of the senior leadership team, heads of house, special needs coordinator, a range of middle managers and representatives from the governing body including the Chair of the Governing Body. In addition, inspectors formally met with groups of students from each year group and conducted many informal conversations with students around the school. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including school policies on child protection, safeguarding and the school improvement plan. Questionnaire responses from 112 parents and carers, 120 students and 38 staff were also scrutinised.

## Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average sized secondary school. Most students are White British. The percentage known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The number of students on the register for special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average although the proportion with statements detailing their educational needs is above average.

The school became a specialist sports college in September 2010. It also has Sportsmark and Healthy Schools status. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2010. At the time of the inspection Year 11 were on study leave in preparation for their GCSE examinations. Examination results have exceeded government floor targets for the last three years.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety</b>	<b>2</b>
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

## Key findings

This is a good school. Strong leadership and management at all levels have brought about significant key improvements since the school was last inspected. These have enabled the school to make a step-change in its development. The school has introduced clear systems and developed a range of initiatives which require consistency in their application to embed them across the school. The school's leadership is clear what needs to be done to improve further and has the sustained capacity to ensure that it happens.

Attainment is above average by the end of Year 11. The proportion of students gaining A\* to C grades including English and mathematics in GCSE examinations in 2010 was well above average. Almost all students gain at least five A\* to G grades. Most students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress and achieve well. Students develop self-confidence because the school provides a range of opportunities for them to gain success. Nine out of ten students in Year 11 went on to further education and almost all of the remainder of the year group went into employment or training.

Good teaching in key subject areas coupled with very close tracking of students' progress ensure that most students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress and achieve well. Students' lesson by lesson experience is not consistently good because in a minority of lessons teaching is only satisfactory. The school's leadership acknowledges that there are still issues that need to be tackled, particularly the consistency in the use of assessment to promote consistent good learning so that students' achievement is raised further.

Students said that behaviour has improved significantly and is now good. The large majority of students behave well most of the time. Management of behaviour is now

**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

more consistent, with clear expectations. Students conduct themselves well in classrooms and around the school, helping to ensure that students feel safe. In the large majority of lessons they show positive attitudes to learning.

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

- Assure greater consistency in students' learning experiences, so that students engage in consistent good learning by ensuring that staff are:
  - making better or consistent use of assessment information to identify students' next steps in learning and planning future work
  - being very clear about the learning objectives for each lesson to meet the needs of students and ensuring the steps in the lesson lead to that objective
  - using on-going teacher assessment in lessons and students' self-evaluation of their understanding to verify their learning and, if necessary, adjust lesson-planning
  - providing students with timely and high quality feedback for their work.
- Broaden students' horizons and awareness of the cultural diversity of the society in which we live by:
  - giving greater emphasis to the European and global dimension within the curriculum
  - establishing links with other schools in this country and abroad.

## Main report

In 2010, higher attaining students did particularly well in Design Technology, English Language and mathematics. Overall the percentage gaining A\*/A grades in the school was higher than average.

Almost all students with special educational needs and/or disabilities gained 5 A\* to G grades. Teaching assistants provide carefully planned and challenging work. There is a clear focus on developing students' literacy skills in lower sets in English and a flexible approach to enable a personalised curriculum so that they can achieve. In addition, the close scrutiny of the progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures that all staff are aware of their needs and accountable for their achievement.

The school was able to pinpoint the reasons why the underperformance of a small number of girls facing particular difficulties had had an effect on the overall attainment of the group of students identified as requiring some additional support. Students with more complex learning needs, attained above average.

**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

Boys' performance showed significant improvement in 2010 and results are above average. They are on track to challenge or exceed girls' attainment in mathematics and science. Case studies show that the school uses a wide range of strategies and agencies to support individual students often through very challenging circumstances with significant success.

The headteacher has brought to the school ambition, clarity of purpose and determination. He has built on existing strengths in the school, established a strong senior leadership team and, together with staff, they are effectively changing the culture of the school.

Leadership is challenging aspirations and establishing positive attitudes towards change and ongoing improvement. Most staff know what the school is trying to achieve because there is clarity of vision to which they and other stakeholders have contributed. The school's leadership has also empowered middle leaders and fostered their independence. The governing body provides good strategic leadership, and a wide range of personal and professional expertise. They provide both support and challenge, for example in the attendance panel, based on good knowledge of the school through their various link roles. They share the headteacher's ambitions for the school and its students and staff. The governing body ensures that the school meets its statutory obligations and that safeguarding arrangements are effective. Leadership at all levels is good.

The school's senior leadership operates in an open, transparent manner. It seeks to work in partnership with parents and carers and communication has improved significantly since the last inspection. The views of parents and carers are sought and listened to. There is acknowledgement of mistakes and problems. For example, recent staffing difficulties have not been easy to solve but parents and carers were informed of the steps taken.

The school has a strong momentum, focused on improving students' learning. It is fully committed to promoting equality and tackling discrimination. A key element in this is the improvement in the school's monitoring of students' progress since the last inspection. This is now detailed and the information used well. It is tracking each student's progress towards challenging targets.

The school is now able to identify early those students who may be slipping behind so that appropriate support can be put in place. The close and sustained focus on the progress made by students who might be vulnerable because of learning or other needs and the actions taken as a result of these formal fortnightly reviews is a key to ensuring their good progress.

Assessment information is shared regularly with parents and carers. Tracking and external assessment data also informs the strategic school development plan. This is well considered and thought-through. Self-evaluation is accurate, draws on a wide range of evidence and leads to positive action. Inconsistencies in subject performance are being tackled effectively.

**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

There is an effective whole-school focus on improving teaching and learning by support, challenge and coaching. Teaching and the learning ethos have improved as a consequence, resulting in improvements in students' progress and achievement. The school has the skills, systems and processes in place to tackle further areas and the inconsistencies that still exist, systematically and effectively. There is good capacity to sustain improvement.

Teaching is good because learning cumulatively over time ensures students' make good progress, particularly in a strong central core of subjects. Teachers have a good rapport with students which underpins the learning. There is a strong network of informal support to help students in their learning. Support staff are used well, are experienced and make a good contribution to students' learning. Staff have good subject knowledge which allows them to challenge students' thinking. The contexts of the lessons in the majority of lessons are interesting and relevant and engage students' interest.

Teachers model good speaking and listening skills, valuing students' contributions. They encourage students to use technical subject-specific vocabulary and the standard English required for examinations. In a variety of subject areas they reinforce the way they encourage students to write at some length using correct terminology relevant to the subject. The physical education GCSE course, for example, provides a good context to develop language skills for the group dominated by boys. Development and encouragement of reading is a focus in the school and the effectiveness of the work is seen in increasing book issues from the library with younger readers.

Individual lessons vary in quality and a student can have a mixed experience during the course of a day. In satisfactory lessons, the objective for the lesson is not always sharply enough defined to meet the needs of the group. While there are some outstanding exceptions within some departments, assessment, as a key ingredient to foster good learning, is not yet embedded across the school nor used consistently well.

Students in conversation are clear that behaviour has improved. Older students appreciate that the headteacher is visible around the school. They feel he is 'more assertive', he has 'greater control of the school' and that he 'follows things through.' They recognise that some teachers are 'stronger' with regard to managing behaviour. Bullying is very rare according to students but 'dealt with'. Students conduct themselves well around the school, respecting the premises, leaving very little litter, for example, after eating their lunch on the field. The large majority of parents judge behaviour to be good in school.

There is a small minority of students that present challenging behaviour but this improves over time because there is greater consistency in the use of behaviour management strategies across the school. These systems have also given staff confidence to challenge students to go the step further in their thinking. A degree of

**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

personalisation of the curriculum, matching it to the needs of the students, has also helped improve behaviour. The specialist sports college status is providing additional opportunities to build on students' interests and foster their motivation.

Year 7 students described the school as a friendly place and older students 'look out' for them. These students have absorbed the sports concept of achieving a 'personal best' with a clear understanding of how this applies to their life in school. They felt that the school had improved since they had started. They feel proud of the school and 'valued' and 'recognised' as individuals. Older students wear their badges of responsibility with pride and Year 10 students are keen to apply for posts of responsibility.

Students have a good understanding of risks including use of the internet through the citizenship and personal social and health education programme. Most students and nearly all parents and carers judged the school to be a safe place in which to learn.

Attendance is average. However the figures include small numbers of students with serious medical problems and students on roll who did not attend all year, with resultant involvement of the education welfare officer, prosecutions and court cases. Given the small size of the school, these make a significant difference to the overall figures. The school has rigorous systems in place to monitor and follow-up attendance.

The school fosters students' self-confidence well. It provides a wide range of activities in which students can gain a sense of success and self-worth. This is reinforced by staff's informal positive recognition of students as they move around the school.

Students' opinions are valued, formally through the school council and their involvement in departmental reviews. They develop skills in empathy through the work in literature and drama. Also they have opportunities in subjects to reflect on important issues which help them develop a moral framework. There are many and varied opportunities to work together, take responsibility and leadership roles, for example in the sports leaders' course. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The weaker element, although satisfactory, is students' cultural development. Students currently lack opportunities to link with schools in this country and abroad as part of the process of broadening their horizons and preparing them for the diversity of our society.

In most lessons students work well. They persevere, developing independence and a willingness to take responsibility for their learning. They show interest and engage with the learning. Across the school there is the sense that students work in partnership with their teachers. They develop confidence in their speaking skills so that older students can make astute and extended answers to questions. They are able to work independently and in groups, sharing ideas and organising themselves. A top set class of Year 10 English students were rigorously challenged to respond to



**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

a question in a sophisticated way, drawing on evidence to support their points of view and explanations.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Old Buckenham 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 112 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 604 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	41	37	68	61	2	2	1	1
Q2 My child feels safe at school	40	36	70	63	2	2	0	0
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	31	28	63	56	11	10	0	0
Q4 The school meets my child’s particular needs	27	24	71	63	5	4	2	2
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	35	31	70	63	1	1	0	0
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	20	18	78	70	6	5	0	0
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	18	16	70	63	14	13	1	1
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	15	13	51	46	37	33	3	3
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	23	21	60	54	7	6	1	1
Q10 The school helps me to support my child’s learning	23	21	65	58	13	12	3	3
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	26	23	61	54	21	19	1	1
Q12 The school is well led and managed	36	33	60	55	7	6	3	3

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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 achievement of all pupils.</li> <li>■ Behaviour and safety.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of leadership and management.</li> </ul> <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.</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.**



25 May 2011

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Old Buckenham High School, Attleborough NR17 1RL**

Thank you for making us welcome. We were impressed by your thoughtful comments about the school. You told us that the school had improved a great deal. We agree with you. This is because the school is led and managed well at all levels. We came to the judgement that the school has turned a corner. You attend a good school and you are right to feel proud of it.

Year 11 students attain standards which are above the national average – particularly in the proportion gaining five A\* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics. You gain in self-esteem, develop social skills and learn to take responsibility for how you want to conduct your lives. Your awareness of the diverse society in which we live is more limited. I have asked the school to develop this further. The school gives you a good foundation. This is reflected in the fact that nine out of ten students last year went onto further education and almost all of the rest into employment.

You make good progress and overall achieve well. This is because there is a strong core of skilled teaching. However not all lessons are consistently good and you can have variable experience during the course of the week. I have asked the headteacher to work with staff to ensure greater consistency so that you achieve well in the large majority of lessons. The large majority of students behave very well for most of the time. This is a significant improvement. Your conduct in lessons and around the school is good. As a result you feel safe. In the large majority of lessons you are interested and engaged by what you are learning so that you make good progress.

The school's leadership has the determination and the skills to ensure that this momentum for improvement continues. You all have a real part to play in that process. Not only by ensuring that you make the most of the opportunities that the school provides, but also, because you act as ambassadors for the school, considering what you can contribute to its development.

Yours sincerely

Roderick Passant  
Lead inspector

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**