

# The Buckingham School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110484
<b>Local Authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	356754
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anne Wellham 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>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	959
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	123
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dr David Gamble
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Angela Wells
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17–18 June 2009
<b>School address</b>	London Road Buckingham MK18 1AT
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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	3
<b>Inspection number</b>	356754

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 36 parts of lessons taught by 34 teachers. Four learning walks, comprising short visits to lessons in English, mathematics and a range of subjects across the curriculum, were carried out jointly with the leaders of English and mathematics, the special educational needs coordinator and the headteacher. Three lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. Meetings were held with leaders and managers, four representatives from the governing body, a representative from the local authority and a local headteacher who had previously provided support to the school. Inspectors also met with groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, as well as 418 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, and those completed by students and by staff.

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

- How well support for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) is being used to tackle a legacy of underachievement.
- The impact of strategies being used to reduce persistent absence and raise attendance for all groups of students.
- The extent to which the curriculum meets the needs of all students and provides them with sufficient challenge.
- The quality of sixth form provision and outcomes.

## Information about the school

The Buckingham School is an average-sized secondary school with a growing sixth form within a local authority that operates a selective system. The large majority of students are White British, with a small proportion of students from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. Few students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly lower than that found nationally. The school has specialist status as a Sports College. It achieved the Healthy Schools award in 2010. When the school was inspected in January 2007 it was given a Notice to Improve. In March 2008, it was judged to require special measures. When it was inspected in June 2009, it no longer required special measures. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2008. Since the last inspection, the senior leadership team has been restructured and there have been many changes to staffing.

**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

The Buckingham School is a satisfactory school where decisive and determined action has been taken to tackle a legacy of underperformance. Students' achievement, which at present is satisfactory, is improving steadily. The good curriculum, supported by a variety of partnerships, gives students access to a wide range of relevant courses and opportunities. Staff at all levels share a strong commitment to ensuring that all students are given equal opportunities to learn and aspire to the very best outcomes. The school communicates effectively with parents and carers and has strengthened its reputation within the local community.

As a result of closer monitoring, a more consistent approach to collecting and analysing data and a drive to make teachers accountable for the progress of the students they teach, the variation in achievement across year groups and between subjects is narrowing. The majority of students make satisfactory progress, with increasing numbers making good and sometimes better progress, especially in English, mathematics and the specialist subjects, where leadership and management are particularly strong. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to other students because of targeted support and intervention. However, systems to track their progress against precise assessment data are underdeveloped, which limits the school's ability to evaluate the impact of the support they receive.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving, with a higher proportion of good and or better lessons than at the last inspection. In good lessons, learning is frequently assessed so that engaging activities are well matched to students' abilities and interests. Where learning is satisfactory, teachers do not consistently check the understanding of students at key points during the lesson or amend their teaching in response to the learning that is taking place. Students know their targets and are mostly keen to discuss their work, but a lack of regular written feedback from a few teachers prevents students from developing a full understanding of how to improve their work further in these subjects.

The school is a lively, friendly community where students get on well together, feel safe and receive good care, guidance and support. Recent improvements in attendance bring it broadly in line with the national average. The school is employing suitable strategies to reduce persistent absence, although the proportion of students who do not attend regularly remains above average. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Students make a good contribution to the community. A

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particular strength of the school's work is the way in which they contribute to the life of the school and are able to take part in decision making. Students are keen to suggest ideas for new activities and projects. An excellent range of clubs and activities are on offer outside lessons, particularly in sports and performing arts, making a strong contribution to students' good social development and personal well-being. The school is building on this success and extending opportunities for students to contribute to the local community and to improve further their spiritual and cultural development.

Since the last inspection, the sixth form curriculum has been reviewed and extended to ensure that students are being placed on courses that better match their abilities and interests. A more consistent approach to using assessment data to set targets across all subjects is helping to eradicate differences in achievement between subjects. However, the sixth form is not improving as rapidly as the rest of the school because provision and outcomes are not analysed precisely enough to drive improvement.

Recent improvements to the school's performance are largely due to the inspirational and determined leadership of the headteacher, combined with a strong commitment to continuing improvement which is shared by the governing body and staff at all levels. Senior and middle leaders are held accountable for their areas of responsibility, monitoring is rigorous and the practice of recording and evaluating the impact of actions taken to improve performance is securely embedded. The few areas of remaining weakness have been identified and are being tackled effectively. The school has good capacity to continue its journey of improvement.

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.

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

- Improve the quality of learning so that it is consistently good by:
  - identifying clear opportunities to assess and check students' understanding during lessons
  - amending teaching in response to the learning that is taking place
  - making sure that all teachers mark written work regularly so that students get detailed feedback on how to improve it.
- Develop rigorous systems to track the progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that the impact of support and intervention can be identified more accurately.
- Provide a more precise analysis of student provision and outcomes in the sixth form to accelerate the pace of improvement.

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

**3**

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Students’ attainment is rising steadily. The proportion of students that achieved five or more GCSEs at the higher grades, including English and mathematics, was in line with the national average in 2011. By the end of Year 11, students generally make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points, with an increasing number making good progress. There are no significant differences between the achievement of boys and girls or different minority ethnic groups.

In the majority of lessons, the quality of learning was satisfactory. Students have good attitudes to learning. They enjoy working independently when the lesson allows. Most are keen to discuss their learning, although some are more reticent. Students behave well in lessons and around the site. They are tolerant of each other and show respect. They report that that they feel safe and if incidents of bullying occur they are dealt with promptly. Racism or discrimination is rare. Students have a good understanding of the risks that have an impact on their physical and mental health and emotional well-being. They recognise the benefits of a healthy diet and regular exercise.

Students make a very positive contribution to the life of the school and the development of ‘student voice’ is a particular strength. Students of all ages take on positions of responsibility, and participation rates in sports-related activities are high. Recent events like Black History Month, the celebration week on Gypsy, Roma and Travellers, and a cross-curricular focus on different cultures are developing a broader awareness of the wider society.

Students develop their enterprise skills and personal qualities well through involvement with local business partners and the town council, and the broad vocational curriculum. The application of skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory although developing well. Attendance is broadly average and this contributes satisfactorily to students’ future economic well-being.

*These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes*

<b>Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</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

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<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Although the proportion of good and outstanding lessons is increasing, teaching and learning are satisfactory because there is not a consistent focus on assessing students' learning. Effective teachers use assessment information well to plan learning activities that are based on what students are capable of achieving and on what they have already learned. In the best lessons, teachers build in frequent opportunities to check the understanding of individuals and groups of students before moving on. This allows teachers and other adults to assess progress accurately and amend teaching and support if required. Precise and detailed written feedback allows students to take responsibility for improving their work and motivates them to try harder, but the quality of marking varies across and within subjects so that students do not get consistent advice on how to improve their work. Where work is left unmarked, students repeat errors and work at the same level for too long. In good lessons, technology is used imaginatively and well, and there are planned opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy.

The curriculum is relevant to the experiences and interests of students and uses the knowledge and expertise of staff to best effect. Vocational subjects develop broad-ranging skills and are helping to raise achievement. Specialist status and enrichment days are used well to develop personal learning and social skills. The extensive range of extra-curricular activities and excellent provision for sports activities provide many opportunities for students to enjoy competitions and work together.

Good levels of support and care are carefully targeted to improve the confidence, self-esteem and achievement of all students. Intervention strategies are carefully planned. The school knows and understands the needs of students and families well, particularly those individual students who face challenging circumstances or who are potentially vulnerable.

*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>

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## How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders communicate high expectations about securing improvement and have introduced significant changes to key areas of the school during the last two years. Areas of weakness identified at the last inspection have been mostly tackled effectively, although improving outcomes in ICT and design and technology, and reducing persistent absence are still areas of priority. Very effective actions have been taken to develop the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders and involve them in evaluating performance in their subject areas. They track the achievement of different groups carefully and take determined action to reduce any variation. As a result, patterns of achievement are becoming more consistent across subjects. A few weaknesses remain but these are being tackled well. The governing body has provided a good level of challenge in identifying previous underperformance and is proactive in working with the local authority and local partners to secure further improvement. There are good strategic plans for further improvement.

A commitment to ensuring the safety of students and to promoting equality of opportunity is well established. The school is tackling the legacy of underachievement effectively so that there has been significant improvement in performance, and variation in students' achievement across different curriculum subjects is reducing rapidly. The school meets statutory requirements for safeguarding and works well with a range of external agencies such as health and social services to promote the safety, health and welfare of all students. The school's work makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. It promotes strong values in the school community, works closely and effectively with local partners and is developing links in a national and global context.

*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	2
<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>2</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>3</b>



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## Sixth form

Students make broadly satisfactory progress in the sixth form. Examination results are broadly in line with national averages, with stronger performance at A level and in vocational subjects than at AS. Students’ achievement varies between curriculum areas, but senior and middle leaders are taking decisive action to improve achievement in lower-performing subjects. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and is providing better progression through vocational, work-related and academic routes. Applications to higher education are increasing. As in the rest of the school, the quality of teaching is improving. Students feel that they are well supported and given useful individual support and advice concerning their future options. They report that they would welcome more opportunities to work flexibly and independently. The school has prioritised and is addressing the need to provide better accommodation and resources. Students are actively involved in the life of the school and lead in organising fund-raising activities and mentoring younger students.

Leadership and management in the sixth form remain satisfactory. Appropriate systems are in place to monitor provision and outcomes, and data analysis is being used more consistently to set challenging targets and track progress. However, the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation are not analysed precisely enough to drive effective improvement planning.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

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

## Views of parents and carers

A large proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. A very large majority of those who responded feel that their children enjoy school and that the school keeps them safe. Inspection evidence supports this view. A few parents were concerned about the support given by the school to help their children have a healthy lifestyle and the opportunities provided for them to support their children’s learning. Inspectors found that provision for these aspects of the school’s work was good. A very small minority were concerned about behaviour. Inspectors observed good behaviour in lessons and around the school.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Buckingham 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 448 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 959 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	166	37	255	56	27	6	5	1
The school keeps my child safe	154	34	276	61	17	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	137	30	249	55	43	9	6	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	122	27	262	58	49	11	4	1
The teaching is good at this school	104	23	297	66	35	8	2	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	85	19	274	60	74	16	2	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	79	17	296	65	55	12	7	2
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)	97	21	279	62	35	8	3	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	98	22	292	64	39	9	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	113	25	249	55	55	12	19	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	82	18	272	60	49	11	10	2
The school is led and managed effectively	159	35	246	54	27	6	5	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	170	38	243	54	29	6	3	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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 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.**



7 November 2011

Dear Students

### **Inspection of The Buckingham School, Buckingham, MK18 1AT**

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting you and your teachers and visiting some of your lessons. Your school is satisfactory. We found that the key areas of the school's work have improved considerably in the past two years. Examination results are rising, especially in English, mathematics and science. You are making the progress expected of you, with more students now making good progress. We were impressed with your commitment to the school community and the important part that you take in decision making. You told us that you feel safe and happy in school and enjoy the many opportunities to take part in sport and other activities. We were very pleased to see that you get on well together and respect each other. We were also impressed with your good behaviour in lessons and around the school.

Learning, although satisfactory, is improving. We have asked teachers to provide more opportunities to check that you have understood everything before moving on to the next part of the lesson. We have also asked them to make sure that your written work is marked more regularly so that you get detailed feedback in all subjects on how to improve it. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported but we have asked the leaders in that area to track the progress of students more accurately. We have also asked leaders to monitor and evaluate the work of the sixth form precisely so that it can improve quickly.

The headteacher, the governors, senior leaders and the heads of department lead your school well. They have achieved much in the past two years and know what to do next to continue the school's improvement. You can help the school improve by working hard and making sure that you attend every day. We wish you all at The Buckingham School a very happy and successful future.

Yours sincerely

Anne Wellham  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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