

Blythe Bridge High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124396
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	380883
Inspection dates	8–9 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Blakey

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1005
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Parry
Headteacher	Shan Schanda
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2009
School address	Cheadle Road Blythe Bridge Stoke-on-Trent ST11 9PW
Telephone number	01782 392519
Fax number	01782 388261
Email address	office@blythebridge.staffs.sch.uk

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.

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'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They observed 40 lessons, taught by 40 teachers, and held meetings with groups of students, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised a range of documentation including policies and procedures regarding the safeguarding of students, and departmental development plans. Inspectors analysed 169 questionnaire responses from parents and carers.

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

- Inspectors assessed the effectiveness of leadership and management in using data to improve attainment and progress, particularly in English.
- They examined the impact of the school's strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- The team looked at how well partnerships are used to provide students with high quality 16-19 education.

Information about the school

Blythe Bridge High School is an average-sized high school. Almost all students are White British and a few are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average but rising. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are also well below the national average. The school achieved its sports specialist status in September 2008, and gained the International School Award in 2010.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Skilful leadership and management and an effective, supportive and challenging governing body ensure that Blythe Bridge High is a good and improving school, which successfully enriches students' lives. As one parent said: 'the head has brought a clear and outstanding vision for the school.'

The school's sports specialism contributes significantly to the outstanding health outcomes of students. They make healthy eating choices at lunch and their participation rates and enjoyment in extracurricular activities, including trampolining and netball, are very high. The school's approach to managing the curriculum, learning and pastoral care through the house system is innovative and effective. For example, it promotes relationships between students so that they get on well together and enables subject departments within the same house to support one another and share best practice. Inspectors confirmed the views of students who spoke passionately about the impact that the house system has had on their wellbeing and learning.

Teaching is good, and was good or better in the large majority of lessons observed during the inspection. Since the previous inspection the school's focus on teachers' professional development and effective monitoring of teaching has led to significant improvement in the quality of lessons. Consequently, attainment at the end of Year 11 is securely above average. In the lessons that were outstanding, group work and challenging learning activities were highly personalised and assessment was used well by teachers to ensure that students made outstanding progress. In the small minority of lessons where progress is satisfactory, students do not know in detail what they need to do to improve further and some activities are not personalised to challenge all learners. Teachers' questioning is not always probing. This is the case at times where teaching is satisfactory but also in some lessons where teaching is good.

The sixth form has improved since the last inspection. The school has recently developed the curriculum and improved teaching so that learning and progress in sixth form lessons are good. However, the use of data to track students' progress, and identify those who require targeted support, is less developed than in the main school. Consequently, attainment of students at the end of Year 13 has been broadly average in recent years and improving in 2010. The school has correctly identified raising attainment in the sixth form as one of three main areas for improvement in the school development plan.

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

The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good. The school has an effective approach to self evaluation, which permeates throughout the school and has led to significant improvements in sixth form provision and attainment in English and business studies, for example. All staff and governors are clear about the school's development priorities and subject departments produce high quality evaluations and action plans on an annual basis. This whole school approach to development, coupled with external visits to learn from best practice in other schools, ensures that the school is continuously striving for excellence and improving.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and learning to greater than twenty per cent by:
 - embedding effective assessment techniques, including high quality teacher led questioning, in all lessons
 - providing high quality individual oral and written feedback to students so that they always understand how to improve
 - ensuring that activities are personalised in all lessons to meet the needs of all learners.

- Improve outcomes for students in the sixth form by:
 - embedding the effective use of data to track the progress of individual students so that timely interventions ensure they make good or better progress and their attainment rises.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Good teaching ensures that progress in lessons is good for all groups of students including those from minority ethnic backgrounds. In the large majority of lessons teachers set high expectations and personalise learning so that students are appropriately challenged, engaged and enjoy learning. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson, students calculated angles around a point effectively because of the excellent individual support provided by the teacher. Learning in lessons is typified by students' good working relationships with their peers and their positive behaviour, which contributes to their good progress and development of interpersonal skills for the future world of work. Teachers and teaching assistants provide targeted support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they make good progress in lessons. Their attainment is better than the average for students with special educational needs nationally. The school has driven improvements in attainment and the majority of attainment measures over the last three years have been significantly better than average. In English, for example, the headteacher has worked closely with an interim head of department to effectively improve achievement in English. The percentage of students achieving

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

five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics has risen steadily and was a little above average in 2011. A higher percentage of current Year 11 students are on track to attain five good GCSE grades including in English and mathematics, thus, continuing this pattern of improvement.

A very large majority of parents who responded to the parental survey stated that their children enjoy school and almost all said that their children were safe at school. Inspectors confirmed these views in their discussions with a wide range of students of all ages and abilities. The rewards and sanctions policy, which was co-developed with students, ensures that they behave well in lessons and at other times throughout the school day, so that little time is wasted and disruption to learning is minimal.

Students make a positive contribution to the school and community through a range of leadership activities including the Community Sports Leaders Award and the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award. Students’ learning and personal development benefit from the wide range of visits and trips to places such as Sea World to study the marine environment and the United Nations in New York. The school’s approach to the creative arts promotes the enjoyment of music, for example, and the jazz band performs contemporary music to a very high standard. Students’ have a strong understanding of how to be healthy and choose healthy food options at lunchtime. They enjoy learning and demonstrate interest in other’s ideas, feelings and values. Students are thoughtful and reflective, as evidenced by their mature approach in the remembrance day assembly.

Students’ attendance is above average and they are punctual to lessons. Their literacy, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT) skills are well developed through the effective curriculum. For example, in a Year 10 science lesson, students were observed using the internet to research the impact of drugs and alcohol on the human body and producing leaflets for other students to explain the risks.

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	2
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1

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

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

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

How effective is the provision?

The school has an effective and relatively unique mixed age house system, which embeds the values of friendship, excellence, respect, courage, equality, determination and inspiration well throughout the school. Each house is made up of more than one subject department and includes pastoral support. Each has its own profile, which clearly describes what its focus is. For example, 'Derwent' is focussed on business and enterprise and the contribution that this makes to society. Derwent students promote 'Young Enterprise' and invite guest speakers into school. Each house profile clearly sets out its approach to teaching and learning, support for gifted and talented students, and how it engages with the sixth form for example. This approach has made a positive contribution to engendering a strong sense of community and improving students' academic and personal development outcomes.

Strong subject knowledge and strategies to promote effective collaborative learning are strengths of teaching in a wide range of subjects. Marking in students' books is a little variable, with much that is good and some excellent examples of effective feedback to students in subjects such as mathematics. However, sometimes, feedback to students is not detailed enough to help them understand what they need to do to improve their work. Overall, teaching is generally typified by well planned lessons, good use of ICT, targeted support by teaching assistants and clearly defined learning outcomes and well managed positive behaviour.

Care, guidance and support are good. Students, with a wide range of additional needs are provided with timely and appropriate one-to-one support. Strong partnership working with a wide range of external agencies and professionals, including Child and Mental Health Services, enables the school to provide targeted support to individuals experiencing difficulties or who may be in circumstances that make them vulnerable.

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

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

The effectiveness of care, guidance and support

2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers are ambitious and set high expectations for students and staff, so that outcomes for students continue to improve. Leaders clearly articulate and embed the school's drive and ambition to continuously improve. They implement well considered actions effectively to improve outcomes further. The school actively, and very effectively, engages teachers in continuing professional development to help achieve the school's targets for more outstanding teaching. Teachers routinely share their own research, learning and practice with each other through teaching and learning forums. In addition, senior leaders co-facilitate on national leadership development programmes for middle leaders from Blythe Bridge High School and local primary schools. The impact of these activities is evidenced by the large majority of teaching judged to be good or better, and the good progress that students make.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Students' progress is tracked rigorously and any who are underachieving are identified quickly and provided with effective support or intervention. Overall, the use of data to highlight and address issues in attainment and progress is good and used successfully to secure improvements in achievement in English. All groups of students, including those with disabilities or special educational needs, make good progress overall and there is no significant variation between any groups. In addition, the school does not tolerate any form of discrimination.

Safeguarding practice, including for child protection, is effective and the school works very well with a range of agencies including social care and police to protect students. The school regularly convenes multi-agency meetings to target support for individuals who may be vulnerable.

The school has achieved the International School's Award, which recognises its effective approach to promoting cultural diversity across the curriculum. Students also enjoy and learn about a wide range of cultures through a variety of activities including local, national and international activity weeks.

Governors provide good support and challenge across the school, and have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and areas development. They work closely with senior leaders to ensure that statutory duties are met, for example, safely recruiting staff and safeguarding students on school trips by ensuring that risk assessments are properly completed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and

2

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

driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
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	2

Sixth form

Attainment on entry to the sixth form is broadly average.

The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. In lessons, students are effectively challenged and engaged, and, consequently, enjoying learning. For example, in a Year 13 psychology lesson, students made good progress learning about biological rhythms and were able to identify and name a wide range correctly.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. Effective self-evaluation with a rigorous focus on teaching and learning has enabled leaders and managers to secure tangible improvements to the quality of teaching, so that the majority. This improved teaching is securing better learning and progress so that attainment is beginning to rise. However, leaders and managers have not made as much progress in embedding the use of data to track students' progress and ensure that any underperformance is identified early enough and addressed. This is holding back the progress and attainment of some students.

Curricular provision has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Leaders and managers have expanded provision to include a range of vocational programmes which better meet the needs of a wider range of learners. Leaders and managers have correctly identified that partnerships with other providers are limited and the governing body is in the process of evaluating a range of options to further improve sixth form provision. In 2010 over 50% of Year 13 students went on to higher education.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
--	----------

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

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

Views of parents and carers

The response rate to the questionnaire was broadly average. Parents and carers were generally positive in their views, particularly citing their child’s enjoyment and safety at school as strengths. Inspectors confirmed these views. Seventeen per cent of parents and carers disagreed that the school helped them to support their child’s learning. However, inspection evidence indicates that the school supports parents and carers adequately. A few parents and carers commented on how well the school communicated with them and inspectors judged this to be good overall.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blythe Bridge 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 169 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1005 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	35	101	60	6	4	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	66	39	98	58	5	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	46	28	95	57	20	12	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	52	31	95	57	14	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	23	106	63	15	9	2	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	28	17	101	61	22	13	6	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	16	112	67	22	13	2	1
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)	38	24	89	56	11	7	4	3
The school meets my child’s particular needs	43	26	104	63	11	7	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	41	25	94	57	17	10	6	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	18	94	58	14	9	8	5
The school is led and managed effectively	46	27	100	60	6	4	6	4
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	58	35	93	55	9	5	4	2

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).

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">■ 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.



10 November 2011

Dear Students,

Inspection of Blythe Bridge High School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST11 9PW

I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome. We judged your behaviour to be good and we were impressed by the wide range of activities that you enthusiastically take part in. In particular the Jazz band's performance of contemporary music. We agreed with your views that the house system and vertical tutoring had brought about a stronger sense of community in the school.

We listened to what you told us about the strength of the school's specialism, and observed some of the extra curricular sports activities that you take part in. These are clearly helping you to be healthy and contributing to your enjoyment at school. Your information communication and technology, literacy and numeracy skills are good and you are usually punctual to lessons. Your attendance is also good, which means that you are well prepared for the future world of work or further study.

We judged the sixth form to be satisfactory overall, because students' attainment at the end of Year 13 has remained broadly average over the past three years. However, we recognised that the school has done much to strengthen the sixth form and that this is clearly beginning to have an impact on the quality of teaching so that learning and progress is good in lessons.

The school knows what it needs to do to improve and has very clear plans to make it even better for you. We have, however, asked the school to do the following things:

- Make more lessons outstanding by helping teachers to ask even better questions and providing you with more specific feedback so that you know exactly what you need to do to improve your learning.
- Improve the sixth form by using data to track students' progress and provide additional support where necessary so that their achievement improves.

Many thanks for all your help. We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Blakey
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. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**