

Bower Park School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102348
Local Authority	Havering
Inspection number	376702
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	814
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Shaw
Headteacher	Mary Morrison
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 March 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 44 lessons involving 42 teachers, observed tutorial sessions and attended celebration assemblies. They held meetings with the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at planning documents, including those relating to safeguarding students, assessment information and students' work. In addition, inspectors analysed questionnaires from 114 parents and carers, and looked at others from staff and students.

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

- The extent to which teaching takes account of the needs of boys, lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities to enable more students to achieve five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics.
- How well teachers use assessment information to plan lessons which promote rapid learning and help students to understand how to improve their work.
- The impact of the work of the senior leadership team and middle leaders in developing consistency of good practice across the school.
- The success of the school's drive to improve students' attendance, particularly that of those whose attendance is very low.

Information about the school

This smaller-than-average-sized secondary school serves pupils from diverse cultural backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is above that found in most schools, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. This includes a number of students who are in the early stages of speaking English. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion who join or leave the school after the usual time of entry in Year 7 is high. The school holds Media Arts specialist status.

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

Bower Park School provides its students with a satisfactory and improving education. Since its previous inspection, the school has tackled the key areas for development effectively and a number of aspects of the school's work are now good. Self-evaluation is good. Consequently, the school demonstrates good capacity to sustain the momentum for improvement. Older students reflected on the improved ethos and wider range of interesting activities developed during their time in the school in comments such as, 'The headteacher is pushing us in the right direction' and, 'We are like one big family.' Determined and effective senior leadership has brought about clear systems which are being used consistently across the school. The school uses its accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses well to target actions for improvement. Students are generally well motivated to learn because they find the curriculum interesting and tailored to meet their needs, although they do not always show this in well-presented work. Good quality care and guidance are seen in sensitive and well-targeted support which has successfully helped individual students resolve difficulties which were slowing their progress.

As a result of the steady improvement in GCSE results, the gap between school and national performance levels has been eradicated. Attainment is in line with national averages, with a significant improvement in the proportion of students achieving five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics. Although students' progress, including that of those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language, is still satisfactory overall, more students are now making good progress. This is because the improved tracking of their progress means that earlier action is taken if a student begins to fall behind. The success of these interventions is seen, for example, in the significantly improved performance last year of boys, lower-attaining students, those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school's data, scrutiny of work and observations in lessons show that this trend is set to continue. There is much good and better teaching as the basis for further sharing of effective practice, but teaching is satisfactory overall because of remaining weaknesses in a few lessons, including, for example, some aspects of target-setting, marking and the management of behaviour. These mainly relate to inconsistent use of assessment.

The school is harmonious, well-ordered and safe, reflecting a community with a strong commitment to ensure that all students have an equal chance to succeed. While behaviour is good in most lessons, it is satisfactory overall because sometimes

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a small minority interrupt the flow of learning or are overly boisterous out of lessons. This contrasts to the otherwise considerate attitudes of the majority of students. Students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in the way they reflect on and understand the feelings of others and in the support they give to others, such as sports leaders running activities to benefit pupils in local primary schools. The school's specialist media arts status provides students with many opportunities to take performances into the wider community. The mature way students undertake responsibility effectively supports the school's strategy to raise students' aspirations. As a result of the school's robust challenge of absence and its rewards policy, attendance has improved over the last two years and is now average. However, it is still low for too many students, often because of the number of family holidays taken in term time.

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?

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good to raise students' achievement by making sure that:
 - the work set for students is always closely matched to their prior attainment and needs
 - there are more structured opportunities for students to talk about their learning
 - day-to-day marking gives students regular feedback about how their work could be improved
 - students are clear about the expectations for the presentation of their written work
 - students' behaviour is managed well in all lessons.
- Work with students and families to improve the attendance of those students whose attendance is low.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students achieve satisfactorily from their starting points when they join the school. Those from minority ethnic backgrounds, many of whom speak English as an additional language, make similar rates of progress to others in the school and achieve equally well. Most students show a genuine interest in their learning and respond well to the school's celebration of their achievements. They are generally respectful so that they learn by listening to the views of others as they respond to teachers' questions. Often learning is most effective and engaging in lessons where students are actively involved and have to sustain their concentration to complete their tasks within a given time. For example, in vocational lessons where students work practically, they are motivated because they see how their skills are developing,

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and consequently gain confidence and pride in their achievements.

In a few lessons, students lack concentration to work hard when they find the work less interesting or when behaviour is not managed well by the teacher. Generally, students lack sufficient care with the presentation of their work, which does not reflect their desire to do well. Many Year 11 students greatly value the regular opportunities they have to discuss their work with their mentor and the additional support they have in lessons beyond the school day and during the holidays. A whole-school emphasis on boys' performance has effectively reduced the gap between boys and girls, while at the same time improving attainment for all groups because boys are more engaged throughout the whole lesson. For example, in a geography lesson on tsunamis, students worked well together in mixed groups to highlight information and remained actively involved throughout the lesson. Students' average literacy, numeracy and computer skills, together with their commitment to work, equip them satisfactorily for their future education or work.

Relationships are good and students feel safe. They are confident that issues will be dealt with promptly and effectively by the school. The recently introduced 'vertical' tutor groups are proving successful in improving behaviour, with older students 'looking out' for younger students because of the daily links they have in tutor time. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour are rare, indicating the success of the school's 'SHARP' strategy to prevent bullying. However, students indicate that they do not believe that behaviour is good enough because of some inconsiderate behaviour in lessons. The 'student voice' is an important feature of school life. The student leadership team and house leaders are very effective in ensuring that students' views are listened to. Students are involved well in a range of activities, from undertaking risk assessments to advising on how learning could be improved.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

¹ 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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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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How effective is the provision?

The broadening of the curriculum, particularly in Key Stage 4, means that students have a choice of courses which interest them and give them clear progression routes to further education and training, or in some cases directly to work. Students' satisfaction with their curriculum is reflected in increased rates of progress, and in their desire to follow more challenging programmes, such as taking three separate sciences, which involves additional lessons beyond normal lesson times. The opportunity for early GCSE entry in some courses has increased motivation and is raising aspirations for some students. Students' school experiences are enriched well by a wide range of additional activities, most particularly through the growing range of visits, including trips abroad, each with a particular learning focus. These give students from different backgrounds and age groups valuable opportunities to work together.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and positive working relationships with students. They plan lessons to capture students' interest, such as in a science lesson on speed when the lesson started with a video clip of the Monaco Grand Prix, which made learning relevant and illustrated the concept being studied. Teachers know their students and their capabilities well because of frequent assessments. However, the use of assessment information is variable. Frequently students are required to undertake the same tasks, rather than at differing levels in line with their abilities. In some lessons, there was a predominance of teacher-led activities, with students remaining passive for too long. Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support for individuals, often using probing questioning, but overall there are limited opportunities for students to deepen their understanding by articulating their thinking, for example by working in groups, before having to undertake independent work. Students value the time teachers give to help them beyond lessons. There are many examples of good marking which gives students detailed feedback on how well they are doing, for example in English. However, this is inconsistent across the school so that misconceptions in students' understanding are not always addressed at an early stage, incomplete work remains unchallenged and students do not routinely respond to the points made for improvement.

Students who join the school, including those who speak English as an additional language, are quickly settled and supported in lessons with appropriate resources, for example translated information sheets, so that their progress in learning is not unnecessarily halted. In addition to well-trained teaching assistants who support students in lessons, the school employs a wide range of additional adults, including a home-school support worker, school counsellor and school nurse. Together with effective links with external agencies, those students and their families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are supported well. Students arriving at the start of Year 7 settle quickly. Links are being strengthened with primary schools to further aid transition, introducing students to the practices and styles of learning

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in Year 7 and for teachers to develop their understanding of Key Stage 2. Provision for students who are ill or excluded enables them to continue their learning through a virtual learning environment where they can access resources, submit work for marking and assessment and, by arrangement, have live chats with teachers or support assistants.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body are successfully driving improvement, although the impact has yet to be fully realised. Staff share a clear direction for the school and morale is high. Middle leaders feel especially empowered to make decisions about their areas and they are effectively sharing practice and developing consistency across the school. Because of the success they have had in raising achievement, they are confidently setting increasingly challenging targets for students' attainment. Professional development is well focused, giving staff opportunities for whole-school and individual training, so that a core of good teaching has been established from which to build further. Good links with the local authority have strengthened professional practice, for example developing examination skills and higher-order thinking in science. As part of its work through its specialism, the school takes the lead in a collaborative partnership with other institutions in developing and offering the creative media diploma.

The accuracy of the tracking students' performance through the school means that the action taken to tackle discrimination and promote equality of opportunity is effective, so that gaps are closing rapidly. The school places an emphasis on promoting respect and nurturing the different skills of individuals. It has a clear understanding of its locality and an effective strategy to promote community cohesion. The school's reward system and student fundraising for visits enable all to feel included. Students from different backgrounds and experiences get on well with each other and are broadening their horizons and understanding of global issues through direct links with activities in other countries, such as reciprocal visits to a school in America.

Good governance is informed by an in-depth understanding of the day-to-day work of the school, including visits to lessons, shadowing staff, and the strategic scrutiny of performance data. Requirements for safeguarding are met well, ensuring that staff and students are safe. The governing body does not have formalised systems to hear

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parental views, other than through questionnaires distributed at events such as consultation evenings. However, a particular strength of the school is the involvement of parents and carers in celebrating students' successes, for example, in celebration assemblies. Parents and carers value the information about the school and events through text messages, and the facility to access the confidential reporting system.

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	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	3

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were positive about all aspects of the school's work. These views were also reflected in a number of supportive comments, particularly about how staff listen to and address concerns promptly when they arise. The most common concerns expressed by parents and carers relate to how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour and the support for students to have a healthy lifestyle. These were also the two areas of greatest concern raised by students. The inspection found that the school deals well with unacceptable behaviour and that exclusion rates are declining, but that a few students still find it difficult to meet the school's high expectations at all times. Parental comments did not provide any reasons why they believe that health is not promoted well. Students indicated that they do not always eat as healthily as they should. However, the inspection judges that students have a good understanding of a wide range of issues, such as the need for exercise and emotional well-being, relating to living healthy lifestyles and that they know where to go for advice and support in such matters.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bower Park 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 114 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 814 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	24	82	72	2	2	3	3
The school keeps my child safe	29	25	80	70	3	3	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	48	42	58	51	6	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	33	69	61	6	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	37	32	67	59	5	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	23	70	61	10	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	16	73	64	16	14	1	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)	31	27	70	61	7	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	24	67	59	9	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	25	64	56	17	15	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	16	75	66	12	11	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	43	38	62	54	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	42	37	65	57	6	5	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

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.



30 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Bower Park School, Romford RM1 4YY

I am writing to let you know the outcome of the recent inspection. Thank you for the welcome you gave the inspectors and to those of you who gave up some of your lunch time to speak to us. We found that yours is a satisfactory school, and we share your views that there have been a number of improvements over the last few years.

The GCSE results have improved well and are now in line with those found nationally, which means that you are making satisfactory progress. The curriculum is suited well to your interests and abilities and the care, guidance and support you receive is good, particularly when individuals have difficulties. You have a wide range of clubs and activities, including visits abroad, which broaden your horizons well beyond school. Most importantly, you enjoy school and are proud of all that it offers. Although we saw mostly good behaviour in lessons, we agree with those of you who think that behaviour could be improved further so that no more time is lost in lessons. Many students help others and take on roles of responsibility, and they discharge their duties well in making your views known to school leaders. The new vertical tutor groups are effectively promoting a 'family' feeling across the school.

Your headteacher, the senior team and staff share the same determination to give you the best possible education. You appreciate that teachers are always on hand to give you extra help when needed. Although teaching is satisfactory, we have asked them to help you to do even better by improving lessons further. We have asked them to make sure that lesson activities are closely matched to what you can do already so that your learning moves forward quickly, and that you have more opportunities to talk about your learning before you have to carry out your own independent tasks. We have also asked more teachers to give you helpful feedback comments about how to improve when they mark your work and hope that you will follow up their suggestions more often than you do now. We noticed that you do not always take care to work neatly and urge you to take more care with your presentation, which will help you when you look at your books for revision. Although the whole-school profile of attendance has improved recently, some students take too much time off, for example, for holidays in term time, and their attendance is too low.

Thank you again for your help during the inspection. We wish you well in your studies and every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings
Lead inspector

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