

Bushey Meads School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137872
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	393713
Inspection dates	23–24 February 2012
Lead inspector	David Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
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	1060
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Di Hoeksma
Headteacher	Keith Douglas
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
School address	Coldharbour Lane Bushey WD23 4PA
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

Richard Glasby

Additional inspector

Lin Bartlett

Additional inspector

Catherine Stormonth

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors conducted 50 lesson observations, including joint observations with members of the senior management team. Inspectors were able to see 48 of the 60 teachers on the staff teach; a total of 26 hours was spent directly observing teaching. All staff were offered professional feedback. Meetings were held with parents and carers, groups of students, governors, and nominated staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and observed the school's work. The inspection team looked at a range of documents provided by senior managers, the headteacher's reports to the governing body, the minutes of the governing body meetings, the school's most recent self-evaluation, and the headteacher's evaluation of the quality of teaching. Inspectors scrutinised 344 parental questionnaires and evaluated the pupil and staff questionnaires.

Information about the school

Bushey Meads became an academy on the 1 February 2012 and is part of the Bushey Meads St James Academy Trust, which includes a partner primary school. The academy is larger than the average secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average, although rising rapidly. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average and so is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above average. The academy hosts a unit designated for integrating students with physical and neurological impairments. Academic outcomes have been significantly above the government's minimum floor standards for secondary schools since the last inspection in 2007.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school that has made considerable progress in recent years. Standards at age 16 are above average overall and the proportion of students securing five higher grade passes including English and mathematics was significantly above average in 2009-2011. Groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, are also making better progress than similar groups of students nationally. In order to meet the governing body's and senior leaders' ambition to be an outstanding school, further improvements are required in teaching and achievement to meet the grade criteria for 'outstanding' in the 2012 inspection framework because variations in academic outcomes and students' rates of progress remain between subjects and groups of students.
- Sixth-form provision is good. Standards at A level are broadly in line with or above the national average. Students are making better progress than all students nationally, given their starting points.
- Teaching is good; more than seven out of ten lessons were found to be good or better, a figure that matches the headteacher's most recent analysis of the quality of teaching. However, inspectors judged nearly a quarter of teaching to be satisfactory and observed two inadequate lessons.
- The students' behaviour and safety is outstanding. The school provides a calm and friendly environment and the students demonstrate their maturity on a consistent basis. Attendance is above average and the students' attitudes to learning are very positive. The integration of the students with physical and neurological impairments into the main school is exemplary.
- Leadership and management are good; the improvements secured in behaviour and safety, the quality of provision and leadership in the specialist unit for students with physical and neurological impairments, and the consistent pattern of improvements secured in the last four years have been a significant achievement. The school's capacity to improve is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Improve achievement by:
 - eliminating the remaining inadequate teaching
 - securing consistency in the quality of marking, in line with the best practice available in the school
 - ensuring that professional development opportunities and performance management help secure consistently good teaching in all subjects.

- Eliminate the variations in standards and students' progress between subjects and groups of students that are hindering outstanding achievement.

Main report

Achievement of students

The proportion of students securing five higher-grade GCSE passes has been significantly above average for the last three years. Results in English and mathematics have also been significantly above average during this time. However, the school has identified inconsistencies in performance within science that were evident during this inspection and the proportion of students securing all of the English Baccalaureate subjects was below the local authority average in 2011. Variations remain in the performance of girls and boys and between the progress made by students of different abilities. The results secured by students known to be eligible for free school meals remain below those of the majority. The varied achievements of those students with physical and neurological impairments are outstanding as a result of the quality of care, provision and exemplary inclusion they receive on a daily basis. Notable improvements have been secured in the reading skills of lower-achieving students through well-judged interventions and an effective skills-based programme. Although achievement is good overall, outcomes for middle-attainers are high, whilst those from other groups are closer to the national average. The students' current good learning and performance in the classroom mirrors the quality of teaching seen on this inspection and noted by the headteacher in his most recent review of provision.

Attainment on entry to the sixth form is below average and students make good progress overall. Year 13 outcomes at A level are above the national average, although results in Year 12 are more mixed, with strong performances in vocational and applied GCSE courses and more variable outcomes at AS level. Students made good progress in almost all sixth-form lessons during this inspection.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good overall, with more than seven out of 10 lessons judged to be good or better and nearly one quarter judged to be outstanding. In the best lessons, tasks are well planned, questioning is skilful, and learning is driven forward at a brisk pace by precise instruction. Class teachers and, where available, learning support assistants, are a skilful team that maintain a challenging dialogue within the

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classroom. The use of assessment and the quality of marking evident in the students' books are notable features of these strong lessons. In two outstanding English lessons, the quality of the students' responses was developed to a very high level by outstanding questioning, very good use of simple resources, and the careful nurturing of the students' analytical skills. In one of these lessons, excellent use of 'war poetry' provided a rich spiritual theme in the class discussion. As a result, the students' speaking and listening skills were well above the level that might be expected for their age and ability. Consistently, teaching sought to bring out the moral and social dilemmas highlighted by the task provided. Almost all teaching observed in Years 12 and 13 was good or better, sharing these characteristics, but also being notable for the particular attention paid to the development of new subject-specific vocabulary and the importance of its accurate use in examinations.

Nearly a quarter of all teaching remains satisfactory. In those lessons where students make only satisfactory progress, tasks are not always linked sufficiently well to prior learning; marking is inconsistent in its guidance and impact; and completed work is too variable in its quality and presentation. Where teaching was found to be inadequate, learning activities were not matched sufficiently well to the needs of students so that they made inadequate progress.

Behaviour and safety of students

Students make an exceptional contribution to a safe, positive learning environment. Students show very high levels of engagement, courtesy, collaboration, and cooperation, in and out of lessons. They have excellent attitudes to learning, enabling lessons to proceed without interruption. They are highly adept at managing their own behaviour in the classroom and in social situations and appreciate the school's consistently applied approaches to behaviour management. The students' behaviour in class was consistently a very positive feature of the lessons observed and their positive attitudes to learning often sustained the least effective lessons. Instances of bullying are rare and students note the school is highly effective when identifying and tackling bullying of any sort, including cyber-bullying, about which they are knowledgeable and positive. All groups of students and their parents and carers noted that they feel safe at school at all times and clearly understand what constitutes unsafe situations. More than nine out of 10 parents and carers, staff, and students who responded to the inspection questionnaires, expressed confidence that students were safe, although some of the parental responses regarding behaviour appear to be related to past incidents and were contradictory when set against a wide variety of student comments elicited by inspectors. Inspectors spoke to groups of students in formal meetings and in a variety of informal settings regarding behaviour and bullying. All were very positive about behaviour and sixth-form students were clear that behaviour began to improve after the current headteacher's appointment.

Attendance has risen steadily for the last two years and has been above average since the beginning of the academic year. Effective monitoring of attendance and rapid follow-up procedures are making a difference. Punctuality to school is good and

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students move between lessons without hesitation and in good humour, showing consistent consideration for others. The consistently mature manner in which students worked in pairs and small groups set by the teacher were a consistent strength noted by the inspection team.

Inspectors took the opportunity to speak to parents and carers of students attending the Physical and Neurological Impairments Unit, who were keen to praise the quality of inclusion support provided, but also highlighted the very positive attitudes, behaviour, and respect consistently demonstrated by students in the main school towards their children.

Leadership and management

The senior leadership team's pursuit of excellence has been uncompromising and increasingly successful. Standards have been improved each year since the last inspection and achievement for all students, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs, is good. The improvements secured in teaching and learning have been at the core of the school's progress in recent years, although teaching is not, as yet, consistently good. The headteacher made an accurate reevaluation of the quality of teaching against the 2012 inspection criteria; his predicted proportion of good teaching matched the inspection outcomes exactly. The school's capacity to improve is good. All leaders and managers, including the governing body, are highly ambitious for the school and lead by example. Senior staff base their actions on solid understanding of the school's performance and of staff and students' skills and attributes. Effective direction and support by senior staff have secured recent improvements in identified areas, such as design technology.

The consistently above-average performances secured in the English and mathematics departments reflect well on the leadership of those subject areas. However, such performance is not yet true in all subjects as, for example, in science, where the headteacher's self-evaluation highlighted areas requiring improvement to meet the performance of the other core subjects. Inspectors noted inconsistencies in the presentation of the students' work and their rate of task completion in science. The impact of strong leadership of post-16 provision since the last report can clearly be seen in the A level results, although a greater focus is required on performance at AS level in Year 12.

The school's curriculum is good and provides positive, memorable experiences, both in the classroom and within a programme of extra-curricular opportunities; curriculum changes have helped raise standards. Parents and carers have been advised of the curriculum changes planned to address the requirements of the English Baccalaureate.

The improvements in teaching, learning and curriculum have secured outstanding levels of inclusion for students with physical and neurological impairments which, in turn, has had a very positive impact on all students' behaviour and safety. The leadership of the special educational needs department and the related unit for

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students with physical and neurological impairments is one of the strengths of the school. This highly inclusive provision contributes well to students' achievement and contributes towards effective spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. The school has highly successful strategies for engaging with parents and carers, including those who might traditionally find working with the school difficult, to the obvious benefit evident in rising levels of attendance and outstanding behaviour. The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.

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 students' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its students well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its students.
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 students. 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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the students' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of students at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well students behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Students' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well students acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which students are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the students' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe students are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Students' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



27 February 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Bushey Meads School, Bushey, WD23 4PA

As you will remember, inspectors visited your school just after half term; we were very impressed by your outstanding behaviour and the levels of courtesy and respect for one another that you displayed. Your attendance has risen and is currently above average. Well done!

The quality of teaching you receive is often good and sometimes outstanding. As a result, standards and achievement have risen steadily over the last few years and currently you are making good and sometimes outstanding progress.

The school's leadership team has made a good contribution to securing the improvements to the school in recent years. I have asked the headteacher to bring about further improvement by ensuring that teaching is consistently good and that the remaining variations in achievement are addressed. I look forward to hearing about your future success.

Yours sincerely

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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