

The Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School

Hampton Dene Road, Tupsley, Hereford, HR1 1UU

Inspection dates 12–13 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress and examination results have improved since a dip in 2010. Students are proud of their school, work hard in their lessons and take an active part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Teaching is good and much is outstanding. In these lessons, teachers show enthusiasm for their subject; their planning is sharply focused with clear objectives and the lessons themselves capture students' interest, with good pace and challenge.
- The behaviour of students is exemplary in class and around the school. Students feel outstandingly safe and have a mature understanding of safety and risk. Their attendance is above average and is improving further. Bullying is rare and is dealt with swiftly.
- School leaders are rigorous in monitoring students' progress and the quality of teaching. They have taken effective action to improve the school. As a result, the gap in achievement between boys and girls has been eliminated. School leaders have also improved the education of disabled students and those with special educational needs.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teaching requires improvement. In these lessons teachers' plans are not shaped enough by clear objectives and students are passive for too much of the lesson. The achievement of students is, therefore, not as high as it could be.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 lessons and made shorter visits to six other lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with five groups of students, school senior leaders, middle managers and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors examined a questionnaire completed by staff, along with 113 responses submitted by parents and carers to the online website Parent View.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of school documents including governing body minutes, school self-evaluation, school plans, behaviour records and documents related to the management of performance.
- Inspectors looked at records showing the development of skills in reading and heard a number of the weaker students read.

Inspection team

Robert Barbour, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Hughes	Additional Inspector
Sean Thornton	Additional Inspector
Wendy Davies	Additional Inspector
Huw Powell	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average secondary school.
- The school is a voluntary aided Church of England School.
- The school has local authority funded specially resourced provision for students with special educational needs; these are students with autism. Provision is also made for students with learning difficulties through specialist teaching alongside mainstream teaching. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with statements of special educational need is larger than average. The proportion of students with special educational needs supported at school action is low.
- A below-average proportion of students are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school belongs to a network of City of Hereford schools in which there is some shared provision in Years 10 and 11.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress.
- The school holds the Artsmark gold award, the Sportsmark gold award and the International School Award from the British Council. It has Investors in People accreditation. It is an affiliated member of the Woodard Corporation.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by:
 - sharing the good and outstanding practice currently in the school
 - ensuring that all lessons are planned with clear objectives
 - ensuring that students have more opportunities for active learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **is good**

- Results in GCSE examinations have improved significantly since 2010, when there was a dip in performance. Students make good progress in each of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and are well prepared for their future education, training or employment. Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium also make good progress.
- In 2010, the gap in attainment between girls and boys was wide. This gap has now closed, and indeed the latest results indicate that boys are outperforming girls on some measures.
- Disabled students, and those with special educational needs, make good progress. The local authority resourced provision is effective and provides a safe and secure environment. Students with complex learning difficulties have been increasingly integrated into mainstream provision and this has led to improved outcomes.
- Students are fluent and articulate. In a Year 9 science lesson, students discussed aspects of conservation in a mature and thoughtful way. In a Year 8 history lesson, students responded to the enthusiasm of the teacher by taking an active part in whole-class discussion.
- Students work hard and make good progress in most of their lessons. Where the teaching does not engage them actively, however, their progress is slower and requires improvement.
- Some students enter the school with weak skills in reading. Through a range of interventions, these students make good progress. Some students make substantial progress in a relatively short time. Progress is less marked when the range of special educational need is wider.
- Students benefit from wide participation in extra-curricular activities. Competitive sport and music are particularly strong, and students are emphatic about the benefits they gain in self-esteem and confidence from taking part in the wide range of activities on offer. The school has used some of its relatively small pupil premium funding to make sure that disadvantaged students are able to take a full part in these activities, for example by providing extra-curricular music tuition and extended access to information and communication technology.

The quality of teaching **is good**

- A great deal of teaching engages and stretches students. In a Year 7 religious education lesson, students circulated round the class looking at famous paintings that showed incidents from the life of Jesus. Using a series of highly effective activities, the teacher enabled the students to explore and respond to the link between artistic medium and religious message and also to consider the impact on them as individuals. The lesson was planned in a highly imaginative way, but with sharp objectives for what was to be learned.
- In a Year 8 mathematics lesson, the teacher developed students' mathematical thinking outstandingly well. She modelled the method for multiplying decimals with high-quality explanation and then encouraged the students to use similar reasoning in their own explanations. Again, the teacher's objective was clear, and the students were required to be actively involved in the calculation and explanation. Often they were called up to the front

of the class to demonstrate their methods.

- In a Year 10 food technology lesson, students made outstanding progress due to the very high expectations of the teacher, the clear planning and the effective checking of understanding and progress. Students were fully involved in a highly practical lesson.
- Some teaching, however, requires improvement. These lessons have objectives that are very general, and lead to vaguer planning. As a result, the teacher often talks for too long, and students simply sit and listen, and respond to mundane and closed questions. Because pupils' behaviour is so good, students still learn, but not as much as they should.
- Disabled students, and those with special educational needs who need high levels of support, are being increasingly integrated into mainstream classes. This change has been successful and has led to improved progress. Most teachers adapt their teaching and planning well but, where teaching is weaker, the needs of these students are also considered less thoroughly.
- Teaching assistants have been trained to deliver specific interventions to support the progress of individual students and groups of students. This has made a considerable impact. Teaching assistants also support students well in mainstream lessons but, where teaching is weaker, they are deployed less well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is outstanding

- The school is imbued with a very strong ethos, and one aspect of this is a very constructive climate for learning. Students are very positive about their learning in the classroom and their extra-curricular opportunities. They are very proud of their school and of their achievements.
- Students' excellent behaviour makes a strong contribution to their learning, as the teachers' energies can be spent in teaching and teachers can take more imaginative approaches in their lessons.
- Behaviour recording is meticulous and confirms the high standards of behaviour. The school has a successful record on integrating students who have been excluded from other schools.
- Students were adamant that they felt safe. Incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with swiftly. A group of senior students has been trained as student counsellors and they provide an effective, and appropriately supervised, support for other students. Some disabled students, and those with special educational needs, find the sheer volume of students in the narrow school corridors a challenge. The behaviour of students around the school is, however, impeccable.
- Students are punctual to lessons. Their attendance is above average and is improving. The incidence of exclusions is well below the national average.

The leadership and management is good

- School leaders have taken effective action to raise standards. There is good evaluation of teaching, and senior leaders are accurate in judging the quality of teaching and also in

identifying what improvement is needed. The performance management of staff is rigorous and is supported by clear processes. The school had a weakness in the achievement of boys. Concerted action has enabled this to be rectified in a short time period.

- The school's curriculum provides well for the needs, interests and aspirations of students. It is broadened by the links with other local secondary schools which enables more options to be available in Years 10 and 11. The number of students who take advantage of these courses is relatively small, but for these students they are important.
 - Now that students with complex special educational needs are more integrated into the main school, their curriculum has become much richer. Extra-curricular provision is broad, and the range of experience available to students in competitive sport and music makes a major impact on self-esteem and wider life skills. At age 16, the number of students who do not progress to further education, training or employment is very low: currently it is zero.
 - Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well developed, both in the curriculum and in the wider life of the school. It is fostered, for example, by an active link with a school in Tanzania; through the wide opportunities in music, sport and drama; through school assemblies and registration periods; through religious education lessons that give strong emphasis on other religions in Britain.
 - School leaders have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and of its development needs. Middle managers understand their role and are effective.
 - The school's development plan is detailed, but the link between self-evaluation and the development plan is not always apparent. The lack of clarity of some actions in the plan makes it harder for the governing body to hold school leaders to account, and also means that middle managers and teachers are unsure, for example, in what ways the senior leaders are currently planning to improve teaching.
 - The governing body and senior leaders take their responsibility to keep students safe very seriously. All aspects of safeguarding are exemplary.
 - The local authority regards the school as good and improving. It has supported the development of the teaching of certain subjects and aspects of school leadership and management.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - the governing body maintains a good strategic oversight of the school, especially through an annual weekend away with senior leaders to review progress and plan the direction of the school's development
 - in its main meetings and committees, the governing body holds senior leaders to account, but would be assisted by simpler and clearer evaluation and planning
 - the governing body manages the finances of the school very well, and is actively involved in allocating the use of the pupil premium
 - the governing body manages the performance of the headteacher very well.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	116991
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	395661

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Lawton
Headteacher	Sara Catlow-Hawkins
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2008
Telephone number	01432 347500
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